

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, June 27, 2014*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, there are three questions on the Order Paper, the Government is prepared for questions 154, 155. Regrettably, the question that is listed for the Minister of Local Government is, in fact, for the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources. I will ask that this question be deferred by one week.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (Point Fortin):

**Guapo River
(Details of)**

- 156.** Could the hon. Minister of Local Government state when last was the Guapo River in Point Fortin dredged and when next will it be dredged?

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Point Fortin Civic Centre
(Details of)**

- 154. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (Port of Spain South)** on behalf of Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development to indicate:

- (a) Whether the anticipated completion date of the Point Fortin Civic Centre is still December 24, 2014, as previously stated?

- (b) If the answer to part A is in negative, what is the reason for the inordinate delay?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Winston Peters):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Part (a) to the question: the date for the completion of the Point Fortin Civic Centre will have to be revised from December 24, 2014.

Part (b): the inordinate delay regarding the completion of the Point Fortin Civic Centre has resulted because of the unsettled valuation issues between the contractor and the project consultant of the National Commission for Self Help Limited, the latter of whom is the project manager.

This has resulted in stoppage of work on site. The National Commission for Self Help has assured the Ministry of Community Development that the matter should be resolved by the end of June following which the work schedule will be revised.

**Chatham Community Centre
(Details of)**

155. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development to state:

- (a) Whether the Chatham Community Centre has been completed?
- (b) The reason for the delay?
- (c) When will this Centre be opened?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Winston Peters):

Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Part (a) to the question: the centre has not be completed. The project is approximately 85 per cent completed. The Ministry of Community Development is required to seek the approval of the

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Cabinet to meet the variations in costs which arose during the construction process. This process is in train for the centre.

Part (c): the centre should be completed during the first quarter of fiscal 2015.

**LIFESPORT PROGRAMME
 (CENSURE OF MINISTER OF SPORT)**

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just read this Motion into the record:

Whereas the LifeSport Programme of the Ministry of Sport was launched in June 2012 as an initiative of the Ministry of Sport; and

Whereas the Minister of National Security stated publicly in May 2014 that alleged gang leaders, and persons of interest to the Police have been hired by the Ministry of Sport as coordinators of the LifeSport Programme; and

Hon. Member: Gawd!

Mr. Imbert: You will find out who these people are. Do not worry. Hold your horses.

Mr. Speaker: Please.

Mr. Imbert:

Whereas a person of interest to the Police has publicly confirmed his engagement in the LifeSport Programme; and

Whereas the Minister of National Security stated publicly in May 2014 that the funding of criminals and criminal enterprises by the LifeSport Programme has adversely affected the ability of the country's security apparatus to control crime; and

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Whereas the Auditor General has reported serious financial irregularities in the accounts of the Ministry of Sport and/or the LifeSport Programme in the financial years 2012 and 2013:

Be it resolved that this Honourable House censure the Minister of Sport for facilitating through the LifeSport Programme the funding of criminals and criminal enterprise.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with respect to this matter, there have been some quite amazing statements made in the public domain by the hon. Prime Minister, by the hon. Minister of Sport, by the hon. Minister of National Security, and the person charged with the responsibility to protect our citizens, the Minister of National Security, has made some very, very alarming statements with respect to this LifeSport Programme, and has been contradicted by a contract worker in the Ministry of Sport who has described the Minister's statements, with respect to the criminality in the programme, as a figment of his imagination. Minister Griffith's statements about LifeSport have been described as absurd, nonsensical, foolish and so on, and I will read into the record, Mr. Speaker—and you see, this is what is wrong with this country. This Government is encouraging indiscipline. The Prime Minister is encouraging indiscipline in this country, and I will explain why, and then you wonder why—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, the Member is imputing improper motives on the part of the Prime Minister. Good or bad, it does not matter, you cannot do it.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, I sustain that particular point. And may I suggest this is a very serious matter before us, it is a matter involving the Minister of

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Sport, do not incorporate in this debate any other Member of this honourable House. It must be confined only to the Minister of Sport. That is why this matter is before us. Do not incorporate the Prime Minister or do not incorporate any other hon. Member of this House. You want to deal with the Prime Minister, bring a substantive Motion to deal with the Prime Minister. So let me make it very clear and you are guided accordingly.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker, but in order to deal with the Motion, which deals with the LifeSport Programme and serious financial irregularities in the accounts of the Ministry of Sport and the funding of the LifeSport Programme, of necessity, I must make passing reference to the persons who have authorized this expenditure. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me give you my assurance here today, it is not my intention to attempt to use this Motion as a means to have some sort of foray into the conduct of other persons who are Members of this honourable House, but of necessity, since taxpayers' funds are being used to fund this programme, I must make reference to the persons who have authorized the expenditure on this programme and in particular an audit into the programme.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I will guide this matter and if I see you going off course, I will draw it to your attention. Continue.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence that you will do so, I just wanted to give you an assurance that I shall not use this Motion as a means to attack other persons unnecessarily. So, let us go now to the *Guardian*—[*Crosstalk*] I am not questioning anybody, be quiet, I am speaking to the Speaker, not you.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please.

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Mr. C. Imbert: But, Mr. Speaker, he is attacking me across the floor. Please protect me.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I will deal with that, but do not tell a Member be quiet, I will handle that.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is mumbling and muttering, I seek your protection. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, let us not be disrespectful in this debate. If you need my protection, seek my protection, but do not be disrespectful to any hon. Member of this House. Please be guided and you have my protection. Continue, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I expect I have your protection. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, hon. Member for—please. This is a very serious debate and if Members cannot listen, I will ask you to leave the Chamber. I seek your cooperation in this particular debate. This is a serious matter before this House and I am taking it very seriously as you are taking it seriously, and I intend to invoke the Standing Orders to ensure that there is discipline, decorum, dignity in this House. Continue, hon. Member, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, on May 27, this year, an article was published in the *Guardian* and the headline of the article is “‘Life Sport troops’ show strength”, and the article goes as follows:

“‘A figment of his imagination.’ This is how Life Sport programme director Cornelius Prince yesterday described National Security Minister...Griffith’s allegations that there was misappropriation of

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funds under the Sport Ministry-controlled programme. Griffith also alleged the programme was fraught with criminals. On Saturday, Prime Minister...Persad-Bissessar announced the programme would be reassigned to the National Security Ministry...

Prince, in describing Griffith's allegations as 'scandalous' and 'unfounded', said an investigation should be done by 'any official...body that has not yet formulated any conclusions, real or imagined'. Griffith was quoted over the weekend...alleging several improprieties under the programme, including the payment of some \$18 million to Life Sport Carapo co-ordinator Rajae Ali, a Jamaat-al-Muslimeen member. But Prince said the figures quoted in the article were based on a flawed supposition that one organisation could be paid an 'astronomical, mind-boggling' sum of...\$18 million... 'This is a figment of the Honourable National Security Minister's imagination'...

Prince said had he been contacted to respond to the minister's allegations..."

Now, this is a contract officer—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Price.

Mr. C. Imbert: Price, sorry, but they are calling him Prince, it is Cornelius Price, you are quite right. A contract official said that if he:

“...had...been contacted...he would have ‘debunked this dangerous myth.’”

—of the Minister and then he goes on to rip to shreds the Minister's allegations about ghosts and other allegations about criminality and criminal

enterprises in the programme.

Now, I have not heard a word from the Minister of Sport; not a word, not a funeral drum. You have an employee of the Ministry of Sport stating publicly, in May, one month ago, that a Government Minister, the Minister of National Security, is a man who is prone to making statements that are figments of the imagination, that are absurd, that are preposterous, that are nonsensical and so on, insulting, insubordination, and the Ministry of Sport and the Minister of Sport have not said a word, have not done anything, and I am certain that this individual—this insubordinate individual is still running this programme.

He has not been suspended for insulting and ridiculing a Government Minister. Nothing has happened to this individual, and that is what I mean by persons encouraging indiscipline in this country. Because when the ordinary man can see that an employee of the Ministry of Sport, when dealing with a matter as controversial and sensitive as this, where persons are being killed—I was horrified when I saw the TV6 news last night and read the papers today that a person associated with LifeSport—and I will get into that in a little while—was murdered, was assassinated, allegedly because of his association with the LifeSport Programme. That is what is happening in this country. Officials in the LifeSport Programme are reporting death threats to the police. The police commissioner is investigating, but an official in LifeSport is saying that the Minister of National Security, who has all arms of the security forces under his control, who has access to all security intelligence in this country, who has access to information gathered by the police and other agencies of the State, who

should know where the criminals are in this country and what the criminals in this country are doing, a contract official in the Ministry of Sport described the Minister in terms that one would conclude the Minister is mad, he is deluded, he is talking rubbish.

And what has the Minister of Sport done about this individual? What has the Ministry of Sport done about this individual? What has the Government done about this individual? Nothing.

1.45p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in any other country that individual would have been summarily dismissed for gross insubordination; summarily dismissed. But not in this country where, it appears that indiscipline is the order of the day.

Now, let us move on. [*Interruption*] Mr Speaker, please could you ask—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I appeal to all Members to allow the Member to speak in silence. Everybody will have a chance to speak. Continue, hon. Member, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: What is shocking, Minister Griffith sits in the Cabinet with all of them and he has been insulted and ridiculed and humiliated by a person who is running a very questionable programme, where people are being killed. And that is a joke to you, hon. Members opposite? No wonder this country is going down the tubes, Mr. Speaker.

But let us go to today's story. *Guardian*, June27, 2014.

“Bodyguard slain in bed

Gunman storms Life Sport employee's house

The future of the controversial Life Sport programme was thrown into

further gloom yesterday, after employee Curtis ‘Tallman’ Gibson was murdered days after he received death threats.

Over a month ago, Gibson and two other Life Sport officials were reported as being put on a hit list by the criminal element said to be attached to the programme, after financial improprieties in the programme were exposed and an audit into the programme was ordered.

In an interview with TV6 earlier this month, Ruth Marchan, the deputy director of Physical Education and Sport at the Ministry of Sport, said she, Gibson, Life Sport director Cornelius Price”—that is the same insubordinate man—“and two other Sport Ministry officials’ lives had been threatened. Marchan said then that a plan by the ministry to expel the Carapo segment of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen from the Life Sport programme had resulted in the situation becoming tense, bringing with it the threats against her life and those of her colleagues.

Fearing for her life, Machan is reported to have agreed to go into a police protection programme.”

Now, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: It is in the papers already.

Mr. C. Imbert: Could you ask the Member behind me to stop interrupting me?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West, he needs no help, so could you maintain your silence? Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. C. Imbert: And to deal with that interruption, it is obvious that hon.

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Members opposite do not read the papers, because they do not know that there is criminality and criminal enterprises in the LifeSport programme. They do not know that there are issues inside of there, because they treat it as a joke and we just did an appropriation in this House, two days ago, where millions and millions of additional dollars are being provided for the said programme, on Wednesday. It actually went into the wee hours of Thursday morning 6.00a.m. While the Salaries Review Commission was happily in their beds, we were here at 6 o'clock in the morning, after having debated for 16 hours. Yes, the SRC. While the Salaries Review Commission were happily in their beds, Members of Parliament were debating an appropriation of \$3.8billion for the service of Trinidad and Tobago and contained within that appropriation of \$3.8 billion was large sums of money, \$32 million, for this LifeSport programme.

So while we were here debating this and while the Government told us that the money is just being allocated but will not be disbursed until the audit is completed, that is the excuse we got—that is Thursday morning.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And the SRC sleeping.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thursday night, yes and the SRC sleeping. Thank you, Prime Minister. Sometimes you are of great assistance. While the SRC is sleeping, we here, 6 o'clock in the morning. I spoke at 1.08 until 2.20a.m. or something like that. My colleague from Port of Spain South spoke at 5.00a.m. because we had to be here to do the people's business. But while that is going on, Mr. Speaker, while we were here debating the people's business and looking at expenditure for the service of Trinidad and Tobago, criminals were plotting to kill this unfortunate individual. This Curtis

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'Tallman' Gibson. Because we were here Thursday morning and they killed Gibson Thursday night. Thursday morning we were here questioning the Government on why are you giving additional funding to this programme, because it is associated with criminals, we were brushed off and told: "we just allocating, we would not disburse until the audit is finished" and how many hours later, they killed Mr. Curtis 'Tallman'? Let me see—
[Interruption]

Dr. Browne: They shot him multiple times.

Mr. C. Imbert: They burst into his house and shot him multiple times. I do not remember seeing the Member for Chaguanas West here at 6 o'clock in the morning. So that is why I have to read the papers into the record.

Now, let me give some more details.

"Gibson, 42, was at his home... "in" Malabar, sleeping with his wife when a gunman kicked down..."

Oh, I see, 1.15 a.m. while we had not even concluded the debate; while we were asking the Government to explain why they were putting \$32million more in the LifeSport programme, while we are here doing that, they killed this man, at 1.15 a.m.

"a gunman kicked down their bedroom door and opened fire on Gibson.

Gibson, who worked at the...(PTSC), died at the scene.

Police said he was Marchan's personal bodyguard and they believe his death was directly linked to his involvement in the—
 LifeSport—"programme."

Police saying that, Mr. Speaker, police saying that.

Now, there is some sort—as I said, the Members opposite, they live in little worlds. They deny reality. They allow persons who are benefiting from this programme to insult and abuse Government Ministers and they laugh at that. Big joke. Instead of sending the man packing, give him a box and let him clear his desk, no, he is continuing to run the programme.

Mr. Speaker, to reinforce this, on June 25, in the *Guardian*:

“LifeSport death threat probe not yet complete

A special team of investigators, appointed by acting Police Commissioner Stephen Williams...”

That is June 25. They killed the man on June 26, the next day. They were probing on the 25th and they killed the man the next day.

“A special team of investigators, appointed by acting Police Commissioner Stephen Williams to probe alleged death threats made against senior Life Sport officials, is yet to complete its enquiries. Senior police said yesterday that the team, which includes Special Branch officers, was still pursuing several leads into the death threats made to the deputy director of Physical Education...Ruth Marchan, and director of Life Sport Cornelius Price. Once the enquiries are completed, a file will be sent to Williams.”

That was on June 25. They killed Gibson on June 26.

“Williams could not be reached for comment..., as calls to his...phone went unanswered. Since the threats were reported”—the—“Opposition Leader said the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Sport...had fled the country because of receiving a death threat. Creed also did not answer his cell phone.”

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I find very curious as well is the entire situation with Mr. Ashwin Creed. I have known Mr. Creed for a long time. He is a public servant that has been in the public service for a very, very long time. But the fact of the matter is Mr. Creed, a Permanent Secretary, the accounting officer in the Ministry of Sport, has been missing in action for months. Months! Who is running that Ministry now? Who is signing cheques? Who is the accounting officer in the Ministry of Sport, while Mr. Creed cannot be found? What is going on in that Ministry?

I read an article where the head of the public service said that, first the man take emergency leave, then he take compassionate leave, then he take family leave, then he take vacation leave. This is the accounting officer in the Ministry of Sport and the Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister was asked to report. Where is this man? And that is the answer. First emergency leave, then compassionate leave, then family leave, then vacation leave now he cannot be found.

and Remember the story, Mr. Speaker, about two Permanent Secretaries who have disappeared? One went to Argentina to watch a football match and that one is being terrorized by the Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister. But the other one in the Ministry of Sport, what is being done about that? Two Permanent Secretaries under the microscope, one in tourism or somewhere that went to Argentina and some allegation that that person did not get authorization but there are arguments for and against. That particular Permanent Secretary claims she got permission. They are investigating that. But the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Sport, who is missing in action now for months and it is alleged is the recipient or

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the target of an assassination, he cannot be found and they are not investigating that. Or if they are investigating that, they are not telling us what is going on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me now read something that—for the benefit of the hon. gentleman behind me—might not be in the papers. It might not be in the papers. I am not entirely—Mr. Speaker, I read into record a memo dated the 12th of June 2013. Is this in your paper? Is this in any paper?

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, sure. I would give you a copy.

June 12, 2013.

Memorandum from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy
From: The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and the Economy
To: The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Sport
Attention Mr. Ashwin Creed.

The invisible Mr. Ashwin Creed.

LifeSport programme 2013 Financing facility in the sum of \$77,233,050.

This is from PS Finance to PS Sport.

Reference is made to your memorandum dated May 08, 2013, requesting our approval in respect of the amended invoices for the mobilization fee, catering meals and coordinating services under the second drawing from the captioned facility.

Please be advised that the Ministry of Finance can only approve a drawing of \$971,000.

And it gives the breakdown of the disbursements that they could approve.

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Obviously, there were problems with all of the other requests for disbursement to caterers and other contractors to the programme.

Please note we have reviewed the invoices submitted and observed the following:

- Differences with respect to the format and layout of invoices tendered.

by the same contractor, which are dated one day apart.

- Material differences with respect to the quoted amounts and the information on the amended invoices.
- Invoices not certified by the Permanent Secretary.

How he go certify them, he not there. He not there. How he certify anything.

Given the above observations it obviously appears that new invoices were generated for the LifeSport programme February expenses when our intent was that you would certify the originals which were returned to you. So the Ministry of Sport sent original invoices to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to get funds to pay these criminals in LifeSport and finance, some conscientious public servant in finance, sent it back and said: "these invoices are out order. We would like you to make sure that all the amounts tallyed, that everything is a valid document", et cetera, et cetera.

2.00p.m.

Instead of dealing with the invoices, the originals, the Ministry of Sport makes up new invoices, fabricates new invoices, I dare say. Let us go on:

Given the above observations, it appears that new invoices were

generated for the programme when our intent is that you would certify the originals which were returned to you.

In addition, with respect to the letters of engagement between each coordinator and the Ministry of Sport, we have observed that a Mr. Hugh Grant executed the contracts for the Permanent Secretary on behalf of the Government.

The Ministry of Finance and the Economy wishes to remind you that the PS Sport, is the Ministry's accounting officer and the appropriate officer for executing these documents.

So Hugh Grant, who is not a Permanent Secretary, who is not an accounting officer, is executing contracts between LifeSport coordinators and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

I have to listen to the Minister of Finance and the Economy say, we have identified these weaknesses. It is a culture. "Wha culture yuh talking about? Dis is ah" culture that has crept in, in the last two years, Mr. Speaker, with this programme. [*Desk thumping*] I am talking about LifeSport, and there is a culture that has crept into that Ministry, in the last two years since the initiation of the LifeSport Programme. Now, if you go back into the Auditor General's Report in 2011 and going back, Mr. Speaker, you are not going to see these kinds of things. The culture that has come in, is in the last two years with the introduction of the LifeSport Programme. Let us go on:

Further, with respect to the letter of engagement between Mr. Ragaee Ali and Ministry of Sport, for the provision of services as a community coordinator, for the two-month period commencing

January 02, 2013, it should be noted, that letter bears the signature of Mr. Ali as both the Permanent Secretary and the community coordinator. [*Crosstalk*]

“He writing” to himself, and “he signing” for himself, and “he signing” for the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Ragae Ali. This is the fella from the Carapo—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Ministry of Finance and the Economy is saying that?

Mr. C. Imbert:—Ministry of Finance and the Economy is writing—this is not me saying this, Mr. Speaker. It is not I. This is the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Sen. Howai’s PS, is writing Minister Roberts’ PS, and saying:

The letter of engagement between Ragae Ali and the Ministry of Sport, bears the signature of Mr. Ali as both the Permanent Secretary and the community coordinator. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I know you have some experience in trade union matters, you would have seen a contract before, a contract of employment, and it is a contract between employer and employee, but in this case, Mr. Ali signed both as employer and an employee. Let us go on.

Hon. Member: “He running de Ministry?”

Mr. C. Imbert: Clearly, “he running de show” inside that Ministry:

Furthermore, it should be noted that while we are unable to approve the payment to coordinators until the contracts are executed by the Permanent Secretary, we have observed there are inconsistencies in the certification of the coordinator’s invoice. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy is very concerned about the inconsistencies in

invoices submitted for payment, most notably in respect of the fact that new invoices are being generated in lieu of a request for the original invoices to be appropriately certified.

So when the Ministry of Finance and the Economy catch them submitting bogus invoices, they just fabricate more invoices. And then we have to come here and be told, approve another \$32 million for this, that is going on in this Ministry, Mr. Speaker? Where the PS is missing in action, where the contracts are being executed by someone who is not an accounting officer, where they are fabricating documents inside that Ministry, and we are told “doh worry, is just ah allocation, when de audit finish, we go see whether it is ah disbursement”.

To this end, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy wishes to advise that these matters will be raised with the Auditor.

Signed,

Permanent Secretary,

Ministry of Finance and the Economy on June12, 2013

Mr. Speaker, it has also come to my attention that one of the mechanisms being used in that Ministry to commit fraud is, in manipulating the procedures for the invitation of tenders for good and services. The public service procedures require that you have a minimum of three bids whenever you are seeking quotes, soliciting quotes for services, Mr. Speaker, goods and services.

My understanding is that what is being happening in the Ministry and it is borne out by the statements made in the Auditor General’s Report, that what has happened is that quotes are, in fact, coming in from three or four

companies, but several of these companies are imaginary, they are not listed in the Companies Registry. So what they are doing is making up fake invoices from fake companies, sending them in, with a high bid because you have to give the contract to the lowest bidder. So what they do, you have one company sending in a correct invoice with a price, and then two other fake companies sending in fake invoices, with fake prices which are higher than the lowest bidder so of, course, the lowest bidder will get the contract, because he is in reality the only bidder, Mr. Speaker. That is what is going on in this Ministry and it is borne out by statements in the Auditor General's Report which I will refer to in a short while. [*Interruption*]

And just for the benefit of Members opposite. I would like—
[*Interruption*]*—*Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please!

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, hon. Members opposite obviously think that this is something to be—I realize the Prime Minister is taking me seriously, thank God for that. I would like the Prime Minister to—[*Interruption*] well, you are listening at least. Yes, you are listening. I would like the Prime Minister to look into SOS West Indies Limited, Nisal Construction and Maintenance Services Limited, DNB Engineering Company Limited, Home and Commercial Interior Furnishings. Find out how many of those four companies bid for contracts in the Ministry of Sport. Find out how many of them got contracts, and find out how many of those four companies are bogus and do not exist; four companies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, may I also say, that I have been following these comments that I am seeing in the papers, and I am sorry if it offends the

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Member for Chaguanas West if I refer to the papers, but I have noticed a comment in the papers from the Minister of Finance and the Economy, and he is telling us that they need more time. You know, if you go into the records, Mr. Speaker, and you look at the whole question of an audit, you have the Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, who is also, I think, a junior Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, stating on June 04, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy audit into the controversial LifeSport Programme, will be completed "...within a week or so...".

Now, when I went to school, Mr. Speaker, a week had seven days in it. So if on June 04, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and Economy is telling us, the audit will be finished in a week or so, the audit should have been finished by June 11, or let us say, or so, by June 15, but it is June 27, and we have no information on the audit. Minister Bharath also said:

"From what I gather, it is the third audit into the LifeSport programme."

Third—this is coming from a Government Minister, you know:

"We have to wait until those investigations are concluded. I suspect that within a week or so they will be concluded."

So that is the information being given by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Vasant Bharath.

Then you had the Minister of Finance and the Economy saying they need more time. The LifeSport auditors need more time because when they are going into these high risk areas, their lives are being threatened, they are not able to go and do the audit, because they fear for their safety, Mr.

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Speaker. So this LifeSport audit is going on for a month, at least a month, eh. We were told it would be finished mid-June, it is almost the end of June, no audit. And we are hearing from no less a person than the Minister of Finance and the Economy himself, that they need police protection to go and audit this programme. Since when you need police protection? Since when Government officials need police protection to audit a Government programme? Since when?

Mr. Deyalsingh: “Since dey gettng kill.”

Mr. C. Imbert: Since when? Well, obviously since they are getting murdered and assassinated at one o'clock in the morning in their homes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: That is right! That is right!

Mr. Speaker: Member for St. Joseph, please?

Mr. C. Imbert: I agree with you, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*] I should have chastised him. I apologize for not chastising him. [*Laughter*] But, Mr. Speaker, you know, I am hearing all this talk about, they cannot do the audit because they are getting threatened, and when they go there, you know, they are not getting cooperation and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I did an audit. I audited two, just two of these LifeSport Programmes in two centres in Trinidad. The audit took me 24 hours. You know what I discovered, Mr. Speaker? And I will pass this information on to the hon. Prime Minister. In one area there are supposed to be 60 persons in the programme. There are 60 persons on the payroll, and 60 cheques are prepared every month in an amount of \$1,500. Sixty by one 1,500 is \$90,000. So in this centre \$90,000 is paid every month for 60 persons whose names are on a piece of paper.

Mr. Speaker, based on my audit, the number of persons who are in that particular centre, receiving alleged instruction in the LifeSport Programme is 20; 40 persons are unaccounted for, Mr. Speaker, and this is a physical audit. I went and looked with my own eyes. This is not a question of somebody tell me or “ah hear”. I went and I looked and I counted, and there were 20 persons receiving instruction in LifeSport in this particular centre, 60 persons on the payroll. I left that area. Now, I “eh need no police protection to go with me”. I do not need—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yet!

Mr. C. Imbert:—well, yes, we will talk about that “yet”. I do not know what will happen at the end of this debate. I may become a statistic like Mr. Gibson, who knows? Or Dana Seetahal? Who knows what is going on in this country? But anyway, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*—yeah “ah hear dem say that, yuh woulda said dat before Dana Seetahal got murdered, doh?”

But, Mr. Speaker, I went to the second centre. Again, in that centre, 60 persons on the payroll, 60 persons receiving a cheque of \$1,500 a month, \$90,000 being paid, I counted 10, 10! Fifty ghosts in centre two and 40 ghosts in centre one. I saw it with my own eyes, Mr. Speaker. But the Ministry of Finance and the Economy cannot do that, and the Government cannot do that. I did a physical audit.

So in these two centres, this is two out of however many centres there are. I do not know how many they are. I think it is over 100. I cannot remember what the numbers are, it is in my documents here. So in these two centres alone, in every single month, Mr. Speaker, over \$100,000 is being

stolen. Over \$100,000 of taxpayers' money is being stolen because you are supposed to have 120 persons in the programme, in those two centres, and they have 30; 90 ghosts in two centres, Mr. Speaker. And if you take and you translate that all over the country, you can see why the Minister of National Security said that they are raking in one and a half million dollars a month, \$18 million a year through the financier. I saw the ghosts for myself or the place where the ghosts are supposed to be. Yeah, "allyuh tink it is ah joke."

What I was also told, Mr. Speaker, that in these centres \$80,000 a month is paid for catering. They provide them with breakfast and lunch, but they prepare—I am not sure they prepare 60 meals, because I am sure it has racket in that too. They are contracted to prepare 60 meals, they probably show up with 30 or 40, but they only have 10 persons in the centre, Mr. Speaker. So you know what they do? They take the additional meals and they share it around to the general public, to passers-by, "de fella who washing car at de side" of the street. They just share the food, and I saw this with my own eyes. Eighty thousand dollars a month for food, and maybe \$8,000 of that \$80,000 is going for the intended recipients.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the programme is supposed to have academic instruction in the morning and sporting activities in the afternoon. These 10 persons did nothing in the morning and nothing in the afternoon, just sit in the centre doing nothing whole day long. So, Mr. Speaker, if the Ministry of Finance and the Economy needs help to audit, I will help them. It took me 24 hours to gather that information.

Well, let us go back to the Auditor General's Report, Mr. Speaker,

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because I find that the Auditor General's Report on this programme is frightening, Mr. Speaker. I have discovered that contained within the Auditor General's Report, I believe it is 2013, Mr. Speaker, just let me—no, it is 2012. So on page 45 of the Auditor General's Report, into the public accounts for 2012, this statement appears under non-profit institutions. Payments totalling \$180,737.50 were made under the non-profit institution's vote as the Ministry's contribution to funeral arrangements for one individual.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this is ANR Robinson they are talking about. The sum of \$180,000 for a funeral; who is this person? Who is this person that the Ministry of Sport decided that it was appropriate to take \$180,000 of taxpayers' money and make a contribution to the funeral arrangements of a single individual? And the Auditor General tells us this is contrary to Financial Regulation 65(2), which states that a vote may not be applied for a purpose for which it is not intended.

Let us go directly to what the Auditor General had to say about the LifeSport Programme because, with respect to the LifeSport Programme, what the Auditor General discovered was that multiple payments were being made to the same people but in different areas. Let me read now the Auditor General's Report of 2013, page 59, and let me just corroborate what I said just now.

“Non-Profit Institutions”

Ministry of Sport.

“From the sample selected, invoices were not presented to support a

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payment of \$400,000.00 to one company.”

That is neither here nor there, on the face of it; but listen to this. This is the Auditor General saying this:

“A search of the online Companies Registry did not reveal any company registered in the name given.”

The Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago—this is not Imbert saying this—has said that \$400,000 has been paid to a company that is not registered with the Companies Registry.

“Invoices were also not seen for an amount of”—\$63,000—“paid to one person under this vote.”

And the Auditor General makes a general comment: controls under this programme are weak.

Now listen to this:

“Five payments totalling”—\$680,000—“were...made to 2 companies with a common Director for work of the same description undertaken at 5 recreation grounds, namely, Maloney, Samaroo, Mayaro, Moruga and Morne Diablo. Serious concerns were expressed in the 2012 Report...about payments totalling”—\$1,996,000 for—“one of these companies.”

So, you see they are not learning. In 2012, the Auditor General flagged obviously irregular and illegal payments to a particular company—\$2 million. “Dey gone back and dey pay the company again, Mr. Speaker. Dey gone back and dey pay the company again, in 2013, Mr. Speaker.”

But listen to this:

“From a review of one month’s”—they only did one month’s review,

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eh—“of one month’s payment under the LifeSport Programme, 59 participants who were seen to have been paid stipends totalling”—\$88,000—“for St. Joseph,”—the same participants—“were also seen to have been paid”—\$88,000—“for Maloney.” [*Crosstalk*]

This is the Auditor General; this is not Imbert saying this. The Auditor General, page 60, 2013 Public Accounts Report, says:

“...59 participants who were seen to have been paid stipends totalling \$88,500.00 for St. Joseph,”—the same participants—were also seen to have been paid \$88,500.00 for Maloney.”

The same people, the same ghosts, because they are not working. They are not getting any education; they are not there and those that are there are just sitting and doing nothing and they are getting paid twice. In addition—check this out:

“...a further amount of”—\$76,000—“was paid to 61 participants from Maloney.”

So they have two sets of ghosts in Maloney because they are saying it is \$88,000 for Maloney and also the same people from St. Joseph. And then they pay a “next” set of people in Maloney another \$76,500.

Also, payments to six:

“participants in the Maraval area were made to the same bank account.”

What kinds of controls do we have in this Ministry? Six payments were made to the same person in the same bank account for being in the same programme at the same time in the same place and, in all likelihood, that person does not exist; that person is just on paper. This is what is

happening now.

Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: You have until 2.49.

Mr. C. Imbert: 2.49, thank you very much. I have half an hour. Okay, good—and my time has not even been extended. Thank you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that bothers me the most because if you look at my Motion, let us—[*Interruption*] Okay, thank you. One of things that bothers me with respect to this whole issue and why I crafted the Motion in this way is the obvious criminality in this programme. Only a blind man, after seeing that assassination of that Gibson man last night, would close their eyes and say, “All is well in this programme and it is just some invoices, some discrepancies with accounting”. Only a blind mind would do that.

Let us deal now with the criminality in the programme, Mr. Speaker, and, again, I shall read from the *Newsday*:

“A man identified as being among four”—persons—“targeted in a plot to be killed...was yesterday gunned down at his...Malibar home.”

What is important about this newspaper report, this newspaper has more information than the other one. It says:

Curtis Gibson, “named...as ‘Tall Man’, ...asleep with his common-law wife”—was killed—“at...1 pm when gunmen kicked”—down—“his door and fired relentlessly at him, hitting him about the body.

Gibson, 42, had been a marked man for the role he played in the Life Sport Programme and as a representative for a Muslim imam in Arima.

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His name was on a list along with the ministry's Deputy Director of...Life Sport..."—and the—"Permanent Secretary"—this is the Permanent Secretary you cannot find—as marked for death.

"The threat it is understood came from within the walls of the Ministry of Sport..."

Listen to this. This is what the *Newsday* is saying, you know. I have not heard any pre-action protocol being sent to the *Newsday* because of this. You know how they like to jump and send pre-action.

"The threat it is understood came from within the walls of the Ministry of Sport because key members in the"—LifeSport—"programme did not condone corrupt practices with respect to the distribution of monies to Life Sport members, and because top officials in the ministry wanted to use the programme for their personal financial gain..."

A source close to"—the—"Newsday stated Gibson was the man who would go to various communities to get young potential candidates for the Life Sport Programme."

He was the main man in the programme.

So this is the fellow who go outside there recruiting criminals; obviously something has gone wrong and I rather suspect that, Mr. Speaker, you know this Rajae Ali fellah, who asked the political leader for an apology because he said he had no association with any letter written from PS, Finance or any contract. He said: not him; not him and he called for an apology.

He was on a murder charge, Mr. Speaker, and let me deal with Mr.

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Rajae Ali once and for all because, you know, I saw this gentleman grinning on the TV. In my public life of 22 years, I have met many such people. Many members of the criminal element have come into my constituency office attempting to intimidate me, so I know the types very well. But this particular individual, he was on trial for murder. So let us go to the *Newsday*, July 2011.

“Seven years after Amadoo Huggins was shot dead on the Priority Bus Route...the trial of a man accused of his murder yesterday began before Justice Hayden Sinclair-Douglas.

Way back in...2004, following instructions from the Director Public Prosecutions, Rajae Ali, then 18, was charged with the murder of Huggins.

According to the State...Huggins was walking in the company of two other persons.

‘They...saw two men with guns approaching them. One of those men began shooting’...

One friend of Huggins, Bhola said”—this is the State prosecutor—“threw himself on the floor, pretending to be dead. Huggins fell beside him.

‘A gunman came over and shot the deceased twice. The gunman ran away and the police arrived.’”

It is Rajae Ali “dey” talking about, you know. And let us go to Mr.Rajae Ali now. July 2007, *Guardian*:

“Escapees still at large...

The three prisoners”—who—“escaped from Golden Grove prison in

Arouca, on Tuesday night remained at large up to late yesterday.”

Listen to this. Police say:

“The men...are considered to be ‘armed and very dangerous...’

The three—Saddiqui...Martin”—[*Interruption*]

No, we are coming to that. I will explain. I know they have problems with interpretation. I will interpret for you.

“The three—Saddiqui...Martin, Noel...Gilbert and Ragaee...Ali—were charged with murder and were awaiting trial in the High Court.”

What happened, Mr. Speaker, is that it is alleged they paid prison officials \$1,000 to sell them some hacksaw blades and they sawed their way out of prison and escaped. This is Rajae Ali and friends who were on trial for murder and they were considered armed and very, very dangerous. This what the police said: Rajae Ali and friends, armed and very dangerous. They escaped from prison, manhunt in 2007. The trial eventually took place as I told you, in 2011, but as often happens in these cases, the witnesses either recanted their story, disappeared or were killed.

You know, this is a traditional thing in Trinidad and Tobago now. When you charge a criminal for killing someone, inevitably either the witness recants his story or they cannot be found or they are killed. This is how Mr. Rajae Ali was not convicted of murder. That is how he came out of prison.

So Mr. Ali comes out of prison sometime after July 2011. If the Members opposite will wait and listen, I will tell them what is going on. So sometime after 2011, Mr. Rajae Ali, murder accused, whose case fell apart because witnesses either, as I said, recanted or died, got killed, he came out,

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but he has already escaped from prison once and been recaptured. This gentleman is now hired by the Ministry of Sport as a coordinator of the Carapo region in LifeSport.

Mr. Warner: Are you serious?

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, the same man; the same man who was charged for murder. The same man who escaped from prison by bribing a prison guard to give him a hacksaw blade. The same man that the police said in 2007 was armed and dangerous. The police sent out a bulletin: Look out for these men; they are armed and dangerous; they just escaped from prison. That same man is hired by the Ministry of Sport under the LifeSport Programme to run the Carapo arm of the LifeSport Programme.

That is the man that the Minister of National Security was talking about when he said that LifeSport was financing criminals. I need to read into the record now, with all due respect to the hon. Member for Chaguanas West. I have to read this, “doh” mind it in the papers.

“Life Sport financing criminals

Last week the Sunday Express reported on the growing force of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen in Carapo under Imam...Ali and his son, Rajae Ali...

...the Sunday Express focuses on the funding from Life Sport and relationship between the Carapo Muslims...crime, gangs and the Government.

Ali, the son of Jamaat-Al Muslimeen's Imam Hassan Ali, is coordinator of the Carapo arm of the Life Sport programme.

Minister...Griffith alleged that the younger Ali is using ghost names

in the programme.”

“Well, he coulda come by me, I woulda carry him by the two centres and show him where you have 90 ghosts out of 120.”

“There are supposed to be 60 participants in one area...overall, the programme operates in 33 areas. A stipend of \$1,500 is paid a month for every participant enrolled in the programme.

Griffith said in each area 30 of the 60 participants are ghosts.”

Well I am updating Minister Griffith’s records now. It is not 30 out of 60; it is 50 out of 60 in the areas that are ghosts.

“Ali, Griffith alleged, is pocketing the stipend being paid on over half the participants in the programme.

‘What they do is cut it by half—the other half are ghosts. Each person is supposed to be paid \$1,500 a month, so you’re looking at \$1,500 by 30 by 33. So Ali and company get \$1.5million in net profit per month, ’...’”

It is the Minister of National Security saying that.

Let me read another paper because, you know, they like to say he was misquoted. So that is the *Express*, where he was misquoted. He obviously misquoted the *Newsday*, too, because when you go to the *Newsday*, June 11, 2014, “Griffith targets criminals...in LifeSport” by Andre Badoo, famous reporter.

“Minister of National Security, Gary Griffith yesterday said”—I have not seen Griffith sue Andre Badoo for libelling him—“he will not be intimidated by criminal elements within the controversial Life Sport”—Programme—“elements which he said are of the view they

own the...programme.

In the wake of reports of high-ranking officials of the programme being subjected to death threats, Griffith said he would move to weed out rogue elements once and for all.

‘I intend to remove the 1,400 Caspers—the ghosts,’...—in the programme—“Griffith told reporters before”—entering—“yesterday’s sitting of the Senate.”

This is June 11, two weeks ago.

“Of the rogue elements, Griffith said, ‘They...cannot intimidate’—me; ‘they...cannot intimidate...the Defence Force. We intend to remove the rogue elements in the Life Sport programme...

...the State would not negotiate with criminals.

They are not Robin Hoods. They are criminal elements who have deprived citizens of their fundamental right to safety and security...”

2.30 p.m.

“...and if it is that I can do anything to cut their financial cord, make life difficult for them, then we will do that. It is going to make it easier for the law enforcement officers to confront this head on.’

‘With the...Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force in the Life Sport programme, you can rest assured that any aspect of criminal activity, any rogue element, any gang leader will no longer be in the Life Sport programme...”

But you have Ragaee Ali running it; Ragaee Ali running Carapo, Mr. Speaker. And, you see, out of the mouths of the same individual, the fella, hear what he is saying. The man is saying—listen to this; Ragaee Ali,

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Express:

“A member of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen named in the LifeSport funding scandal yesterday called for an apology from Opposition leader ...Rowley, who last Friday claimed to have documented evidence of Rajae Ali’s ‘racketeering’ in the programme.”

Well, I just read it into the record, the memo from the PS Finance and to the PS Sport:

“Ali, at a news conference...”

They are having news conference now. I tell you I have seen these types, over the last 22 years, just grinning and skinning for the camera. “They cyar watch yuh in de eye yuh know, they lil shifty, dey cyar watch yuh in de eye.” I have seen him, 22 years of these characters.

“Ali, at a news conference...said his name is being maligned and he has not collected public funds amounting to a \$1.5 million...”

So, the Minister of National Security lied, I guess, he lied. But they are building a huge infrastructure in Carapo, Mr. Speaker, on state land—
[Interruption]

Hon. Member: What?

Mr. C. Imbert:—and I would like the Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister to listen to me, this Carapo group is building huge infrastructure using funds from LifeSport on state land in Carapo, and until I have evidence to the contrary, I must conclude that the assembly of this militia—I am told it is an armed militia of 250 armed men. I am told that this armed militia is being financed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker. Where are they getting the money to build this

infrastructure in Carapo? These poor fellas that relying on them. Where are they getting the money from to do all of this infrastructure development on state land in Carapo? Why is the Minister in charge of state lands not dealing with this growing presence of this criminal enterprise in Carapo, Mr. Speaker?

You see, Mr. Speaker, we are making joke in this country, you know. We are making joke! I saw a statement from a US government official—listen to this, Mr. Speaker—a gentleman called Mr. Brownfield.

“Obama envoy: Dana’s hit ordered by foreign drug cartel

Special state prosecutor Dana Seetahal was murdered by a transnational drug organisation with operations in T&T, says the United States Assistant Secretary of State William Brownfield.”

Brownfield went on to say that Seetahal was killed by a transnational organization involved in drug trafficking that has a presence in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the US, the US Government is telling us that, Mr. Speaker, and you have the Minister of National Security—you see, the problem with the Minister of National Security is, “He cyar keep his mouth shut. He know wha going on, yuh know.” He know that this Ragaee Ali fellow is the prime suspect in Dana Seetahal’s murder. He knows that; this same Ragaee Ali fella. He knows that. He knows that they have a militia of 250 armed men growing in Carapo posing a threat to the security of Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister of National Security knows that. So, check him now, “he cyar help it, he does blurt out ting”.

“Griffith: Brownfield echoed my sentiments on Dana’s murder”

Mr. Deyalsingh: What!

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Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, that is what he said. National Security Minister concurred. He says:

“...US Assistant Secretary of State William Brownfield’s assessment that the murder of State prosecutor Dana Seetahal...was an organised hit was similar to his (Griffith’s) initial assessment of the homicide.”

“...based on what he has said, I think it is really no different to my initial comments, which stated how the actual murder took place...”

What did he has say, Mr. Speaker? What did Mr. Griffith say? Let us go to this: “LifeSport fund...criminals”, listen to Griffith. The *Sunday Express* on Sunday:

“...the National Security Council, were aware of this growing threat over the past two years.

Ragaee Ali”—nickname—“the Don’

Griffith identified Ali as the one who has been (allegedly named) in most of the murders in Arouca and Maloney, D’Abadie and O’Meara....

He has become the don, the godfather inside there...”

It is not me, it is not Imbert saying this, you know. This is the Minister of National Security saying this.

“In 2004, Ali was charged with the murder of Amadoo Huggins...”

Now, let us go on:

“Two weeks ago, following the murder of former independent senator...Dana Seetahal, Ali was arrested for gang related activities.”

So, this is a man on a murder charge— escaped from prison by bribing a prison guard—arrested for gang-related activities. He is running the

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LifeSport Programme in Carapo. Mr. Speaker, that is what I mean when I put into my Motion that the Minister is facilitating criminals and criminal enterprises.

Who in this House will have the audacity to tell me other than, perhaps, the Minister of Sport, that Ragaee Ali is not a criminal? Who is boldfaced enough inside of here to tell me he is not a criminal that he is a nice man, he is an innocent man, he is harmless? Who in here boldface enough to tell me that? “The Prime Minister eh go tell me that”, but Ragaee Ali has been in LifeSport, has been signing contracts in the Ministry of Sport; walking in and out of the Ministry of Sport as if he owns the place; collecting money under LifeSport for, at least, one year, and the Minister of National Security is telling us that this man, this Ali man, has been named in most of the murders in the Arouca, Maloney and D’Abadie/O’Meara and those areas. He is the Godfather, the criminal Godfather in that area. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, he should. I hope he has—as the Prime Minister has said, sotto voce—I hope that the Minister of National Security has fired this individual, removed him from the programme. [*Crosstalk*]

Prime Minister, I hope—through you, Mr. Speaker—since the Minister of National Security who, as I said, has all of the intelligence agencies of the State under his control—has all of the Special Branch, the SSU, whoever—“Well he eh have Jones yet, dey eh come yet”—but he has all kinds of ways of intercepting communications and so on—I hope he has removed this individual because he is saying this man is named in all the murders, and the man is a criminal, and the man is taking taxpayers’ money for ghosts. Let us see if he fired him at all, and then the Minister goes on to

say:

He...“explain just how profits”—were—“made through the LifeSport Programme...

‘The LifeSport Fund is one of the major things which has affected us,’ he said on the country’s security apparatus to control crime.

‘Most of the criminal activities, the gangs work on is the profit they get from these State contracts. So they use their profits. The funds they get, they use to pay their gang members, they pay police officers...’”.

This is the Minister of National Security talking. It is not Imbert talking here. He is saying that criminals who are running the LifeSport Programme, who just killed somebody yesterday, are taking the money they get from LifeSport, they are bribing police officers, Mr. Speaker. It is not me saying this, it is a senior official of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Check this out!

“Asked how aware and complicit the Cabinet was to the fund financing criminals, Griffith said: ‘In fairness to the government, they weren’t aware til I brought it to their attention based on the intelligence I had.’”

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is May 24; it is a month ago. The Minister of National Security said at least a month ago—I am sure it is long before that—be brought intelligence to the Government to let them know that LifeSport is financing criminals. It is not me saying this, Mr. Speaker. It is not me.

So, let us go on: so how did Ali became coordinator? Details were

discovered in a memo from the PS Finance. Well that is the same one that I wrote about where Mr. Ali signed as employer and employee, and then telling my leader that he must apologize; he must apologize.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the points that needs to be made is that this programme started off small, small, small, you know, \$6 million and now it is over \$100 million. In fact, in the last appropriation that we did, if we look at all the funding that has been allocated to the LifeSport Programme for fiscal 2014, \$237 million—from the start at \$6 million—\$237 million. I am telling you, based on a random spot check that I made in two centres, that 90 per cent of the alleged participants in this programme do not exist. They are not in the centres; they are not working. Their names are just on paper, Mr. Speaker. And, as I said, I would be happy to share whatever information that I have with the Government.

Mr. Speaker, look at where this country reach, “eh”! The Minister of National Security has pointed to this Ragaee Ali as the person who is involved in the murder of Dana Seetahal. Look at Dana Seetahal! It has gone all over the world, Mr. Speaker, I have checked. The murder of Dana Seetahal has gone all over the world. I pulled down an Internet site called “InSight Crime—Organized Crime in the Americas” and they quoted Mr. Brownfield, US Assistant Secretary of State saying that the murder of:

“...Dana Seetahal was a “well planned and orchestrated hit’ by an ‘International criminal organization’ with a presence in Trinidad and Tobago,

‘This was a carefully planned operation.’ said Brownfield, who is responsible for...Narcotics and Law Enforcement”...in the US

Department of State.”

He said:

“...there is only one...entity that does contract murders of this...degree”—drug traffickers, Mr. Speaker.

So, the United States—this is not no joker, you know. This is not a URP employee in the US Government, you know. This is the US Assistant Secretary of State responsible for narcotics and law enforcement. He is saying that Dana Seetahal was killed by an international drug trafficking organization that has a presence in Trinidad, and Griffith is saying that the Carapo fellas killed Dana Seetahal.

So, I mean, what is going on in this country, Mr. Speaker? What is going on in this country? What is the Prime Minister doing about this, Mr. Speaker? This has gone beyond politics; this has gone beyond politics, and I am not even aiming this thing at the Minister of Sport. I mean, he just happens to be there. [*Crosstalk*] He happens to be there. But I am not aiming this specifically at him. He has overseen this. He has seen his Permanent Secretary flee for his life. He has seen that. He knows! If he is truthful, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Sport will know that his Permanent Secretary and people in the Ministry are frightened for their lives. He has seen that. He must know there is racketeering in the LifeSport Programme.

Mr. Speaker, before I came to Parliament today, as I pulled in by the traffic light there, I heard a loud booming noise, and as I sat waiting to turn, I turned around and I saw a truck coming down the road—you know, one of the trucks like you have at Carnival time with amplifiers and speakers—and making one set of noise and I could not hear what they said until they pulled

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up right next to me. Do you know what it was? People on a microphone—I am sure without police permission, that is to tell you where this country reach; the lawlessness in this country—with a huge boom box shouting at me: “There is no fraud in LifeSport; there is no fraud in LifeSport.” I am a Member of Parliament on my way to Parliament, and I am by the traffic light and five feet away from me is a truck with a bunch of menacing looking men in it with a microphone, an amplifier and speakers saying: “There is no fraud in LifeSport; there is no fraud in LifeSport.” This is where this country has reached, Mr. Speaker, funded by the criminals in LifeSport, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: You better look out.

Mr. C. Imbert: That is what I am saying, I could become a statistic. I mean, they think it is a joke, but I could become a statistic.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know, listen to this documentary done by an organization called Vice News. “US-based Vice News explores ‘Corruption, Cocaine and Murder in Trinidad’”. As I said, in another debate, Mr. Speaker, I saw a documentary on the Internet which outraged me, because it portrayed a picture of Trinidad and Tobago that I found was disgusting, but listen to what Vice News said. Now, Vice News is an organization that goes all over the world looking at criminals and criminal conduct. US-based Vice News has produced a 23...documentary called ‘Corruption, Cocaine and Murder in Trinidad.’

This is June 25, 2014, Mr. Speaker. But what struck me about this, Vice News visited Port of Spain, spoke with police, activists, community leaders and gangsters to understand the country’s spike in killings.

“Many of the murders are attributed to ruthless and politically

connected street gangs”—this is 2014 they are talking about, you know—“who control territories that are sometimes no larger than a city block. The gangs fight over lucrative government contracts meant to provide social services and combat unemployment.

But gang violence is merely a symptom of a bigger problem. Trinidad has become an important stop for drugs headed to West Africa and the United States.”

2.45 p.m.

So, Vice News, I do not like them. I do not like the commentator. I do not like the picture it painted of Trinidad. He exaggerated. But they are spreading all over the Internet—the documentary generated 24,000 views in the first couple of hours, and they are portraying a picture of Trinidad and Tobago where politically connected street gangs are using the money they get from the Government to commit murder and to traffick in drugs. This is 2014, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I say, the Minister to me is accidental. He must take responsibility for this wanton criminality in the LifeSport Programme. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister could say what he want, he is fooling no one. He is fooling no one.

The LifeSport Programme is out—was—well it is no longer with him—out of control: rampant ghosts, corruption, contracts being given to bogus companies, people being threatened, people being killed. That is the reality of the LifeSport Programme. You could say what you want. You could try and gloss it over and say it is just a typographical error on an invoice. A bullet that killed Mr. Gibson it not a typographical error. The disappearance of the Minister of Sport is not a typographical error.

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Hon. Member: The PS.

Mr. C. Imbert: I am sorry. The Permanent Secretary, Mr. Creed, is not a typographical error. The engagement of someone who was accused of murder and was an escaped prisoner, and has been named by our Minister of National Security as being involved in a series of murders in eastern Trinidad, that is not a typographical error, Mr. Speaker. Those are facts.

As I said, the Minister is incidental. I mean, I call on this House to censure the Minister for facilitating criminals and criminal enterprises through LifeSport. The Minister could say what he wants, he cannot convince me and he cannot convince the 1.3 million people in Trinidad and Tobago that LifeSport has not been funding criminals and criminal enterprises over the last two years. He cannot convince me of that. But far apart from the Minister, he is incidental, I call on the Prime Minister and the Government to deal with this. Deal with this problem.

I came here today to raise a Motion and thugs are coming down Wrightson Road and standing up next to me and trying to intimidate me with a microphone. I mean, it is a good thing it is a public place otherwise I might have been a statistic like Dana Seetahal. Who knows, when I go home tonight as I enter my gate I would become a statistic because I have dared to expose the fact that an accused murderer was hired by the Ministry of Sport to run a programme. Who knows? But, Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in the security agencies in Trinidad and Tobago. I expect that they will take appropriate measures and that I will be protected after I have exposed this cancer, this evil in the LifeSport Programme. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move.

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

Question proposed.

The Minister of Sport (Hon. Anil Roberts): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to contribute on this very serious critical Motion brought by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Let me just deal with one or two issues, first of all brought out by the hon. Member about a funeral for \$180,000 from the Ministry of Sport. That came out in the Auditor General's Report 2012, and as everybody is aware, an Auditor General's Report, they question certain things and then give the accounting officers, the public servants who are in charge with accounting for the public money, the opportunity to answer those queries.

This \$180,000 for a funeral that the Member today said was related to the LifeSport Programme, and his Leader, the Member for Diego Martin West is on record as saying that the Ministry of Sport paid for the funeral of gangsters and stole money and so on; let me tell you that this funeral—
[Interruption]

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

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I sat silently—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: Point of order.

Mr. Speaker: What do you want?

Mr. Imbert: I never said that funeral was linked to LifeSport. I would like two minutes to clarify at the end of this contribution.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. Yeah. Please. Please. Please.

Dr. Moonilal: On what Standing Order?

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Mr. Imbert: Thirty-four.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, but that is not a point of order.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am being misquoted.

Mr. Speaker: You will have an opportunity and so on to reply.

Mr. Imbert: That is what I am saying, I want my two minutes.

Mr. Speaker: No, you will have an opportunity to reply. Remember you have a Motion.

Mr. Imbert: They will adjourn, you know.

Mr. Speaker: No. You will have an opportunity to reply. Continue, hon. Member, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I sat in absolute silence as the Member for Diego Martin North/East made his contribution. I would appreciate if they on that side will do the same thing.

As I was saying, the Member for Diego Martin West is on record, on a public platform, speaking about a funeral for gangsters that the Ministry of Sport paid for and money went to gangsters. Let me just clarify the record for the final time, hopefully, that this amount of money and the question for the funeral, \$180,000, the question was asked by the Auditor General and the query was not about the amount or the reason or the rationale, but about which vote it came from, from the Ministry, first and foremost.

Let me also state that the Minister does not approve funds or pay money but that the Ministry, under their discretion and following all rules as from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, approved that expenditure legitimately. The expenditure was not for a gangster funeral, it was for the funeral of Mr. David Cumberbatch, a member of the Coast Guard who has

accompanied national teams in every sport as a massage therapist for 20 years.

The funeral was to be held at the open court of the Jean Pierre Sports Complex and, at the last minute, when it was noticed that heads of the defence staff and heads of the police force, and presidents and secretaries of the national sporting bodies would be in attendance, the Permanent Secretary and the Ministry of Sport officials paid for a tent to cover the dignitaries heads from the sun and the rain; chairs, accessories for the hierarchy to attend the funeral of a patriot of Trinidad and Tobago, a member of the Coast Guard, a member who had served Trinidad and Tobago in the sporting field for the last 20 years. So it is not a gangster. If you all do not want or you all think that is too much, that is your opinion, you are welcome to your opinion, but that was what it was spent for by the Ministry.

Dr. Moonilal: They spent \$3 million to open the interchange.

Hon. A. Roberts: How much you spent to open an interchange? Hm! Anyway.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have sat here—*[Interruption]*

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

Mr. Imbert: I am not speaking.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, you are speaking. You are speaking and I am hearing your voice.

Mr. Imbert: I am just getting the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, but just allow the—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: I have it now.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. Could I seek your cooperation?

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Mr. Imbert: I just wanted the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but I do not want to hear that, and the House is hearing you. Let us be silent and allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Already disturbances. Two already.

Mr. Speaker: Do not worry, I am in charge. You continue, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Okay, Sir. Mr. Speaker, spending money for a person who gave their life for Trinidad and Tobago, if they find that was too much, they are entitled to that opinion, as I said, but you have to check it with the Permanent Secretary and the Ministry. The Government, the Ministers do not approve and spend money and write cheques, so let us be honest here.

Now, we sit here in this Parliament and we heard an attack on a Permanent Secretary throughout the presentation by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, and these are the same Members, the PNM, that spent \$16 million on a Cabinet retreat for the people—for the Ministers to—
[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 34(10). This Motion is not about us. It is about him. Standing Order 34(10), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I want to guide. This Motion, may I guide you, is not about any Member of this honourable House. You can make reference as how the hon. Member did make, en passant, but it cannot constitute any lengthy intervention. The Motion is directed at the Minister of Sport so do not bring other Members into this debate. Okay? Thank you.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was just, en passant, two

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seconds. I do not know, he is moving very fast. There is an attack on a permanent secretary, again, by Diego Martin North/East. This Permanent Secretary has gone to great pains over the last month, or six weeks, in the media to state through his attorney, Peter Taylor, who was a former PNM government Minister, that he was not under threat; that he was away before these issues were brought up in the media and he is out on family business. He has said that over and over.

Furthermore, he has worked for the last 12 years without taking leave. So he has accumulated over one year of leave inside, but you come here and you attack a permanent secretary without basis in order to promote or to institute fear in the country, and to try to move your political agenda. He is away on family business and he has stated that, categorically. You know, it is not good for parliamentarians to attack those public servants who are there to serve. [*Crosstalk*] You are still saying it even though the man said so, but I cannot help the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, his entire presentation was based—and it is a serious Motion—on criminality, on murder and on death threats. In fact, he brought in the murder of a citizen that occurred last evening, or evening before, and he said it was a LifeSport official, he worked with LifeSport, he was critical to LifeSport, he was one of the four officials in LifeSport, or in the Ministry, that were under threat and, unfortunately, he was gunned down.

Mr. Speaker, let me just read a press release sent out today by the PTSC. The PTSC says:

The Public Transport Service Corporation would like to offer its

condolences to the families and loved ones of Mr. Curtis Gibson. Mr. Gibson was employed with the corporation for 12 years as a CSR II, Facilities Administration. The corporation sympathizes with the families at the time of their grievance.

Mr. Curtis Gibson was employed at the PTSC. Let me now also read a press release sent out at 9.15 a.m., today, from the management and staff of the LifeSport Programme:

The management and administrators of the LifeSport Programme offer their sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Curtis Gibson on his passing. However, the public must be informed that Mr. Gibson is not and has never been employed, in any capacity whatsoever, by the LifeSport Programme, nor the Ministry of Sport, nor The Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago. News reports which referred to Mr. Gibson as a LifeSport employee are totally erroneous, inaccurate and absolutely misleading.

It is with great concern that this misinformation continues to be published in the media, even in the midst of an audit of the programme currently being undertaken by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. The team at LifeSport continues to work—

And they went on to talk about the programme.

3.00p.m.

Mr. Speaker, they sit here—and you can even hear snide remarks—abasing motions of a serious critical nature, a Motion that has international consequences for the reputation of Trinidad and Tobago. They come and they state and they make accusations that are totally false, and now they

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make snide remarks and they laugh? I am very sorry to be discussing Mr. Gibson now, and his family. I am very sorry, because it is a time of grief. I do not know the gentleman; it is a time of sadness. But when you have a Member coming in here to distort the truth, to say that a gentleman is involved with a programme—[*Interruption*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, 36(5). I mean, what is going on here? He is constantly abusing the Standing Orders. I am not imputing improper motives; I am not fabricating anything.

Hon. A. Roberts: You are.

Mr. Speaker: Please; no, you cannot accuse a Member, any Member. No Member could accuse another Member of either distorting the truth or speaking untruths. All Members are honourable Members, so I ask you not to go there. Okay?

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am guided. The Member for Diego Martin North/East in his contribution stated, on a number of occasions, that Mr. Curtis Gibson was a key member of the LifeSport Programme, that he was employed in LifeSport, that he was the key man in the LifeSport in Carapo, all over. He used to go out and get members for the programme and all of that.

I am stating here now that nothing that the Member for Diego Martin North/East said in his contribution is true. Mr. Curtis Gibson did not work for LifeSport in any form or fashion whatsoever, at any point in time, previously, now and definitely not in the future. He was not related or linked to the programme in any way whatsoever. So every comment made by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, to make a case of criminality

and murder, is absolutely untrue at this time. And I will give the Member, now that he has new information, if he would like, time to clarify or correct, because I would not want to ever suggest that he knew and he would mislead this House. He has just received new information.

Furthermore, the PTSC has sent out condolences. He has worked at PTSC for 12 years, hired under the PNM. Twelve years he has worked at PTSC. So unfortunately it is very sad that a gentleman has become another element in the crime situation, but to link it to LifeSport here today is unfortunate. There is no link whatsoever. *[Interruption]* He has not been—and I am hearing now—let me just say, Mr. Speaker, I am hearing crosstalk.

Mr. Speaker: Members, let us conduct this debate—if we want to discuss whilst a Member is on his legs, I will appeal to Members to do it in undertones. But I am hearing Members speaking, and you are not being respectful to the hon. Member who is on his legs. So I ask Members to speak in undertones. Okay? Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would definitely not in this debate. I heard some statements made in this Parliament here today that are absolutely astonishing and frightening. Coming from a family with a legal background, I cannot understand what took place here today, with statements about an ongoing investigation into one of the most heinous crimes ever perpetrated in Trinidad and Tobago, where a Member of Parliament made categorical statements here about who did it and who did not.

I do not know. All I know is that we on this side and me myself, on every murder that has occurred, especially those, that heinous one against a

serving former Independent Senator and one who has given her life to Trinidad and Tobago, that whoever did that heinous act pays the full price, and the full brunt of the law is brought against whomever it may be. But I can certainly say that today in this Parliament some dangerous words were said, and I will not repeat those dangerous words.

What I would say, as I move on, is that this Government is governed by this Constitution. I heard people here today giving stories about who was a criminal, who got locked up, who came out, who did not come out, and who was out. That is all very interesting, and that is for the judicial system to handle, but as far as legislators, as parliamentarians, as those who serve, if a human being is outside, is not locked up, is not charged, is the PNM saying that they are rewriting the Constitution and going to determine who is a criminal when they are outside under no charge?

I cannot understand, because I hear the Member for Port of Spain North going “uhhh”. Well if the PNM’s position is that you were charged of a crime, you paid your price, you came out and you are outside under no charge at this present time, that you are still considered a criminal and cannot work in Trinidad and Tobago, if that is the position of the PNM, it is one that says that they have to—ex-criminals—they are the ones to rewrite this Constitution. And if they are going to start to rewrite it, I want them to first start with former Minister Rennie Dumas, who was convicted of an assault with a gun on someone, and is working in the THA now for \$60,000 a month. *[Interruption]* But he was convicted—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: He is not here, a former Member.

Hon. A. Roberts:—a former Member, and a former Minister and a member

of the PNM, who was convicted of a heinous assault, but is working in the THA for \$60,000 a month.

I am calling upon the PNM and the leader, the Member for Diego Martin West, to fire him. “Because “ent” once yuh charge or yuh have a conviction or yuh serve yuh time, dey say dat the Constitution does not apply to you?” The hypocrisy of the PNM—the hypocrisy. If there are criminal elements, there are people whose job it is constitutionally and salary-wise, whose job position it is to lock up, to charge and to deal with that. But to say that someone outside, whomever it may be, that no charges have been laid and therefore you feel you know or you think you know or you have a crystal ball or a Peña, and say that person did that, if that is the way the PNM intends to run this country, well the people will judge.

But this side, we deal with the Constitution, with rule of law, with natural justice, and if justice has to come down hard, let it come down on whoever it has to come down on, in the correct manner, without prejudice, without pontification. [*Desk thumping*] Where have we gone that we are now sitting as lord and master, God Almighty, and not allowing the police to do their work; not allowing the commissioner to do his work; not allowing the DPP to do his work; not allowing the magistrates and the prosecutors to do their work and the judges to sentence?

All of a sudden now, the PNM is saying that they want to be Chief Justice, they want to be Chief Magistrate, they want to be magistrate, they want to be DPP, they want to be Commissioner of Police, they want to be police, they want to investigate and they want to convict and charge. That is not how our system works. Judge, prosecutor and jury, the PNM—that is

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not a democracy. We live in a democracy, so if a man “do” something wrong, let him pay the price the correct way. Do not come in this Parliament and just make up laws, make rules. We are governed by rules. *[Interruption]* So it is sad that we are governed by rules?—yes.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. Mr. Speaker, it is amazing. In the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, he said in a negative way that this programme had been audited three times. That is a positive thing. It was audited three times, because like any new programme, if there are issues, this Government wants to know about it. So the two audits that were done previously by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, were brought to the attention of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, who spoke to the Minister of Sport and said, “Listen, there are these questions,” and the Minister of Sport and the Minister of Finance and the Economy said audit, because you want to ensure that taxpayers’ money is spent well. So if there are issues that are brought about you, you want to make sure that they are fixed.

He did not tell you that when you quoted from an Auditor General’s Report of 2012, that the Permanent Secretary and the public officials at the Ministry responded and put different positions in place to improve. Is any programme perfect? No; the Auditor General’s Report of 2013, 2014 said that even the Ministry of Finance and the Economy that has existed since 1962 under our independence, had problems with their procedures. So the audit will determine, and we will continue to improve.

However, if there are problems in a programme, do you just throw it away? This programme, while the Member for Diego Martin North/East

went to great pains—I would say that he should not be a parliamentarian, he should go and be the Commissioner of Police, because he said here today—and I could not believe it, I had to keep my face straight and quiet—that he conducted an audit in 24 hours. “He went down by two centre and he only see 10 people and, therefore, 50 is ghost.”

Mr. Speaker, you were here just before you flew out on Wednesday, we were debating, and at certain points in this very Chamber there were only 11 people. So are you saying that the other 30 were ghosts? At that time, if somebody came to do a Member for Diego Martin North/East audit, they walked in this Parliament and saw nobody here, only 11, that Chaguanas West is a ghost because he went and come back or that they were not their seat in this Chamber? That is what the Member for Diego Martin North/East just said to this Parliament and the nation. “He went down, he went in Diego Martin by two sessions; he went and he saw 10 people and, therefore, that means the other 50 were ghosts. So if they did an audit of de Parliament on Wednesday night, dey would come here and say, ‘Well, at least, at certain times 20 was ghosts or 25 were ghosts’, not everyone here sat down in this chair for the full session from 1.30 to 6.38.” It is so ludicrous. The audit will determine ghosts or no ghosts.

But for the Member for Diego Martin North/East to put such a pedantic rationale and claim, that hundreds of millions of dollars are being stolen because he went down to two centres and saw ghosts. He actually said it; he saw ghosts. Well that is amazing.[*Laughter and crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, the audit will tell.

You see this, Prime Minister—[*Interruption*]

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Mr. Imbert: Killing people black and white.

Hon. A. Roberts SC: Mr. Speaker, please, please.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East—no, you cannot speak whilst you are in your seat. Listen, please, please, Members.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You cannot speak across the floor.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please.

Mr. Imbert: Prime Minister, you are disturbing me. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, would you stop engaging—listen, I sought to give you total protection whilst you were on your legs. You cannot sit there and be talking, whilst you have been given the right to speak already, and you have a right to respond. So I am appealing to you again, allow the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara and the Minister of Sport, to speak in silence. Please take notes, which you are good at doing—take notes. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So according to this Member, you go down one day and “yuh cyar be sick”, because if somebody does an audit, they would say that the Member for San Fernando East is a ghost, because I am not seeing him in here for quite a long time. It is quite a ridiculous position put forward. So the people who are doing their audit at the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, whatever officials, if they want to take two months, three months, however long they want to take, let them do the audit to the best of their ability, so that we can get the true facts—to borrow a phrase from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. This Government is never afraid to find out the truth.

So the Prime Minister heard or read or found out about some serious issues and allegations, she immediately acted, as usual. This Prime Minister does not hide. She does not duck and run, she deals with issues as they come. So she heard or read in the media, reports of impropriety in the LifeSport—very serious allegations. She called in the Minister, had a discussion. “Minister said he doh know about that, she said, ‘Listen, this is very serious. We have to one, start an audit immediately.’” She instructed the Minister of Finance and the Economy to begin an audit, then she said this programme will be moved, because of the seriousness of the allegations, to the Ministry of National Security, because they have the resources, they have bigger budgets, they have the intelligence, they have the strength and the power and the investigative capacity to manage the programme.

The programme is a fantastic programme, to give young, poor, black people an opportunity to survive, to come into the mainstream and to move forward. [*Interruption*] Yes, black people—Prime Minister, lend me this, please—[*Hon. Roberts displays document binder*—yes, black people. Do not be ashamed to say black. I am dougla, so it “ha’ no race ting with me.” I could say black, I could say Indian, because I am both, 50/50.

3.15p.m.

Yes. The Selwyn Ryan Report speaks to the “at risk black male”. It speaks to that, and it also speaks to sport being utilized to ensure that these young people are not thrown away, that they are not killed, that they are not murdered, that they are not discarded by society, that they are not thrown into boot camp because they misbehave on Mucurapo Road, and a “wanna be” Prime Minister describes young people as acting as “hyenas in an

African forest”. This Government does not believe that our children are hyenas in any African forest. We shall give them opportunity to thrive, to sieve, and they are not “duncey head” children. And when we have hampers, we want to give to poor people so that they could help themselves. This Government is about helping those most in need, not helping those most in Goodwood Park.

And the Ryan report “Findings” say:

“Research suggests that participation in structured recreation contributes to psycho-social development of young persons, teaching them basic values and life skills, including hard work, team work, discipline, fairness, and respect for others. Criminologists argue that social development programmes that offer”—the—“youth opportunities to interact positively with their peers and supportive adults, encourage the development of problem-solving skills and help to reduce the risk factors associated with crime.”

The Ryan Report, LifeSport, 2,097 young, black males of Trinidad and Tobago—not rubbish, not discards. If want to label human beings as criminals and therefore, they should not be given an opportunity, well so be it for PNM, but this Minister, this Member of Parliament, and this Government will continue to give each and every human being, no matter how many times you make a mistake, an opportunity to do it and get it right, and that is what LifeSport is about. [*Desk thumping*]

So the PNM come, they always—PNM policy is always premature to pre-empt truth, to possibly score petty political points from a prehistoric, pathetic political party. The audit is under way. The audit is under way.

The truth is coming. The audit will determine on key issues of fact. Media reports say that there are 1,000 to 1,400 ghosts. Member for Diego Martin North/East say, “it higher than that”. Okay. The audit will tell us, if the Member for Diego Martin North/East is correct, if the media is correct or whether those people “who frightening him downstairs—ghosts frighten him downstairs”. Imagine the Member for Diego Martin North/East in his car driving along with 50 other cars, but he alone felt threatened by young fellas downstairs, who were just saying, “we are not ghosts”. But the “ghosts” downstairs frightened the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Media reports say—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I spoke about a truck with a loudspeaker that pulled up next to me at the traffic light. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please. Please. Please. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: But seriously. You want me to write a letter to the Prime Minister. I think I will write a letter.

Mr. Speaker: You cannot speak while I am speaking, man.

Mr. Imbert: My life is being threatened and I cannot talk?

Mr. Speaker: No. When I am on my legs, you cannot speak.

Mr. Imbert: So, if a man pointing a gun at me, I cannot speak?

Mr. Speaker: Anyway, you leave this Chamber and come back at around five o'clock. Leave now, please. [*Crosstalk*] You leave now [*Crosstalk*] Member, take—[*Crosstalk*—yes, well, all right.

Mr. Imbert: It is obvious that you do not care about me.

Mr. Speaker: All right. We will deal with that.

Mr. Imbert: I was threatened today.

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Mr. Speaker: All right.

Mr. Imbert: You are in charge of this Parliament, and you obviously “doh” care. All right. I will leave; no problem. Everything is a damn joke inside of here. I was threatened by hooligans from LifeSport today. If you all think that is joke, go right ahead and think it is a joke—go ahead. If you want me to leave, I will leave; no problem. No problem at all. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Continue, hon. Member, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you see it is amazing. Mr. Speaker, he is laughing and he is making—you see it is a joke. This is a serious issue. There are serious allegations that an audit that has been issued on the instructions of the Prime Minister to find out the truth about serious allegations. And we have the Member for Diego Martin North/East “gallerying”. He has said in his own contribution that he was in the safety of his car, coming around and he heard—he heard—on a microphone or on speakers some young fellas saying, “no fraud, no fraud. LifeSport, no fraud.” And he comes here now and says, “his life was under threat and he was threatened”. They never spoke to him. He never said they spoke to him.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also know that when I came outside this Parliament, when there was a Motion on the Beetham Wastewater Plant, when I came and I showed that the Member for Diego Martin West was not factual in anything he had said, and I will show further since 1991 that has been the track record, I was accosted on tape on film—some of them across there say on “flimm” by PNM hooligans, and you have dealt with that situation, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(5). “PNM hooligans”—no way. We never established that. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Let us use more elegant language, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the audit, Mr. Speaker, will determine. The media has said, and the Member for Diego Martin North/East has said 1,000 to 1,400 “ghosts”. He said they have more “ghosts” than that. The audit will determine.

The media report said that there is one super coordinator. This one super coordinator from Carapo gets all the ghost money in his pocket—\$1.5 million a month. This is a very serious Motion. But he talks. He plays. You see, PNM comes to play for political points. We come for the truth, to understand that if there are any issues, we will deal with those issues. “But he come to gallery and run.”

Mr. Indarsingh: “Nobody eh threaten him like that.”

Hon. A. Roberts: Nobody wants to threaten the Member for Diego Martin North/East. The Member for Diego Martin North/East won his seat by “two maxi”. Nobody is threatened by the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Member: He is a threat to himself.

Hon. A. Roberts: But, Mr. Speaker, the audit will determine if there is one super coordinator or 40 coordinators. He came with a Motion and he does not even know there are 40 communities across Trinidad and Tobago that are getting valuable service from the LifeSport. Young fellas, if you want to describe them as criminals, well so be it. But understand this, that these criminals, before LifeSport they were on the street, robbing, shooting, hurting citizens, and since LifeSport many of them have come in, moved on

to training, moved into mainstream, formed companies and are becoming productive members of society; I will give you more of that after. So these “criminals”—as the PNM calls them—these “criminals” are being converted, brought into mainstream, and that is a powerful programme. If they have any issues of accountability, of invoicing, of whatever, that will be dealt with. This is the fourth audit, and we are proud of that. Why would you say, having an audit, is a bad thing? The Member for Diego Martin North/East said—they never audit anything over there.

Calder Hart run with \$10 billion, they never audit him. They “give” him an excuse to run. When there was an investigation into Calder Hart, the former Prime Minister “run to Calder Hart and tell him—aye, the AG investigating yuh, buss out”. And that occurred here. When we have questions, we investigate. So how can the PNM say, that because of a fourth audit, one by the Auditor General, two by finance, and this third one by finance, that that is a bad thing? That is a good thing. And if they have to audit five more times, or once a year or twice a year, or 12 times a year, I say audit because LifeSport is a necessary initiative to ensure safety and security for our citizens. So, we await the audit. Is there one super coordinator or are there 40 coordinators? Is Angus Eve a coordinator, Anthony Roget? Are these fellas? Wesley Webb—are they coordinators? Are they putting their expertise, as former national football captains, into young people and inspiring them? We shall see. The audit will show that. Media reports say that one man getting \$1.5 million a month. That is a serious thing. That is a very serious thing. The audit will show whether one man “getting \$1.5 million” a month or not; so wait. Do not rush, PNM. Let the people do their

job. He is complaining that they are taking too long. I have never heard such arrant nonsense. Let them do their job, and if they have to do it in detail, we await the report.

The programme director said—oh, sorry—media director said, “\$1.5 million to terrorists”. Well if the programme director said that was not so, well we will see. Media reports say that on one family day “\$8million taxpayers’ dollars was spent”—\$8 million dollars on one family day for LifeSport. That is the report. The audit has to say whether that was so or whether it was \$493,000; the audit will say. So, we wait for the audit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will just skip ahead a bit because I saw when I was talking about the LifeSport successes that some people were interested, and they wanted to know what this LifeSport thing is about. Well let me just tell “yuh”. Okay. Because LifeSport, if you listen to the Member for Diego Martin West, LifeSport was some political ploy to win election, and then LifeSport was created for “criminal to kill people” and so on—that is what they say. LifeSport—and somebody else say “I boast” about it being my brainchild. Well, if you have to boast about something, but the genesis of LifeSport came about because we live in Trinidad and Tobago and we are on the ground, and there are many young people who are not caught up in the systems or the opportunities that are available. There are many opportunities, but some of them just do not fit in. It does not appeal—for different reasons—everybody is an individual. They are not academic, so they do not fall into the primary school education, the early childhood and the secondary of the Ministry of Education. They do not fall into the programmes, the URP and the CEPEP. They do not want or they do not

like, or they are not motivated by the hard work, the hot sun and so on of those programmes.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, please—the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, I mean she is not going to be here much longer, but I am trying to deal with a serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, and there are some of those young ones out there, for whatever reason, they are not gravitating to the existing programmes, whether Ytepp, CCC, MILAT, MYPART and so on. And it was noted when I was walking around in 2007 as a radio talk show host and a television host, I went into Sea Lots at 10.35 a.m. Walking in the back there by the National Fisheries, where the smell is quite pungent, and I saw some “youth men” about six or seven of them “taking a sweat” and playing football—average age between eight and 12. Remember what I said, 10.35, 10.38 a.m.—school time. So, I went there. I was “bun from de hot sun” and I sat down in the little pavilion there to watch “them sweat”; they had some “good skill”.

While I was sitting down there, two of the young men came up to me and said—one was about eight years old, and one was about ten years old. And they said, “good morning Sir”, very politely, not rude like the Member for Diego Martin North/East to carry on with that language in the Parliament—all right—using foul language in the Parliament, on *Hansard*, but anyway, so be it. And they came up and they said, “good morning Sir”. I said, “good morning”. They said, “Sir, can we talk to you”? I said, “of course, sit down, rap to meh, tell meh”. The little one, the eight-year-old looked at me and said, “Sir, what a celebrity like you doing in Sea Lots”?

Now, understand that. Understand an eight-year-old having a philosophy on life already, and my children were nine and 10 at that time, and they had no philosophy on life, other than if you want something from daddy, do good in test, do good in your tennis or your football, do something good and then you come and say, “daddy look ah get ah A. Ah could get ah shoes? Ah could get ah slippers”. That was my children’s philosophy. But here it was an eight-year-old had a philosophy on life that somehow, because where he came from, that he was somehow inferior to other people. So that in a bit—how can an eight-year-old come to that conclusion?

3.30 p.m.

How can an eight-year-old come to that conclusion? What does it mean? It means that from the time in the womb when the ears start to develop after 18/19 weeks, and they start to be sensitive, that these young children, all they hear in their mother’s womb, when they come out, when they come home, whole day, whole night, they had to be hearing the same message. How many times have we as parents told our children, do the right thing, brush your teeth, reach on time, and you have to tell them thousands of times before they even understand that they have to do it on their own. So, imagine how many times a young child has to hear that they are no good, that we are different, we do not belong, we are not of that, that is a separate country, we are in a different realm, we are here, we are different, they are there, life is good for them and life is bad for us; for an eight-year-old to have a philosophy and an understanding of that.

That was the genesis of the LifeSport Programme. Because, here it is real football skills going on, not in school, and a philosophy that we could never be part and parcel of the mainstream. Now it appears from the Members for Diego Martin North/East and Diego Martin West, that they agree with that philosophy. They want to call people and children and those who have made mistakes, criminals, and once they come out even if they serve their time or they did not serve their time, whatever, they want to give them no job, no opportunity; criminals they are calling them here today. This is serious. And that is where the LifeSport Programme came from.

So, what we understood, was that these young ones, they do not like school so much, they are not motivated by other programmes. But, you know what they love? They love sport. They love to play sport. They love to discuss sport. They love to analyze sport. So, okay, we will get the best coaches in the country. We will get national heroes, we will get people like—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Minister of Sport, Member of Parliament for D'Abadie/O'Meara, has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, that was the genesis.

You encourage them, they are excited by sport. Okay. We use sport to get them off the streets and into the centres. [*Interruption*]

Yes, the Selwyn Ryan report said it quite clearly and all of you should read this document. Never mind that Selwyn Ryan has—now with an election coming, Selwyn Ryan has put on his PNM boots and is becoming judge, jury and executioner, because in his articles he has already condemned the programme, a programme that, basically comes from his evidence and his research. But he has condemned it just like the PNM, before the audit.

He condemned them, he condemned the Minister. I know you do not read Selwyn Ryan, but you should, or are you wondering whether he is a PNM. He is a PNM, I have known him since I was a baby, but anyway, we would go ahead and move forward, because the LifeSport Programme would encourage them to come off the streets, put down the gun, put down the “wutlessness” and come into the centres where they would be qualified coaches waiting; guidance counsellors, life skills trainers and then, eventually, they would be literacy and numeracy—not the type that you get in the school and the classroom, but a different one that is made for those who are not academically inclined or academically motivated. Then you would enhance them, create a social conscience, they become a team. Instead of the gang, you have your life-skills centres and when you are done you would do community projects.

Across 40 communities, community projects have begun. The boys themselves come up with projects, whether it is a family day, sports day. Recently, there was a lady who help young men in the very same Carapo area that they are saying, blow it up, lock up everybody, shoot down everybody, mash it up. These human beings do not exist. That is what PNM said. In the very Carapo area, 60 of the participants came together, saved a lil piece of their stipend and went and purchased a foreign used, small vehicle—1300 cc—for a life-skills tutor who had worked with them over the last two years, because she used to have to travel, come off the bus route down in Arima, then travel up O'Meara Road, straight across the race track and so on.

These fellas who were on the street, robbing and pillaging, looking for banditry, they came together, and that is inspiring—Member for Arouca/Maloney, if you do not want to hear, I did not disturb you all, because the country wants to hear what LifeSport is. Because they are hearing about this LifeSport, how it is terrible, how they kill people, how a man in the LifeSport dead. But the man not even in LifeSport, and to the media I hope tomorrow you all will give the same prominence to the truth as you did to the mistake. I know it was not intentional, but I am sure tomorrow the correction will get the same front page that the gentleman, unfortunately was working at PTSC. “It eh ha nothing to do with LifeSport.”

Hon. Member: “Hm-mm”.

Hon. A. Roberts: “You are saying, hm-mm, it is like lil children, Mr. Speaker.”

But, Mr. Speaker, you get them in and then you get them involved in sport, and here, you must also understand that when you come and make brave danjé and talk corruption and so on, you must be able to find out how it was done. For example, with the Brian Lara Stadium, the enquiry showed that one man, executive chairman, Calder Hart, he influenced the tenders committee, that he told the board to include his family whose company did not qualify, he included them and so on and so forth, I am not going into all the details, but there was a process, investigation, showed fact and showed how money was squandered. The PNM comes, looking for headlines and just says—now follow this, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East went somewhere and see ghosts, so therefore, money is being stolen. This money is somehow miraculously falling into the pocket of one human being. Now, let us soak that in for a “lil bit”, think about the mechanisms that must take place for that one human being to collect money from 1,400 or 1,500 ghosts over the following communities: Angostura there in Laventille, Bagatelle, Barataria, Basilon; all of these are areas that have LifeSport centres.

Basilon Street, Beetham, Belmont, Carapo, Carenage, Cocorite,

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Covigne, Enterprise, Fullarton, Fyzabad, John John, La Brea, La Horquetta, La Romaine, Malabar, Malabar Train Line I, Malabar Train Line II, Maloney, Marabella, Maraval, Mayaro, Morne Diablo, Morvant, Mount D'or, Penal, Pinto, Pleasantville, Point Fortin, Samaroo Village, Sangre Grande, Santa Flora, Siparia, St. Joseph, St. Paul Street, Tabaquite and Valencia, and we say, we are doing nothing. The PNM says, we do nothing in their areas, but out of these 40, about 32 are from their areas. So if they are saying that \$200 million spent, well it is investment in PNM areas by the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, clearly, from the attack, without basis, like the PNM does not like the whole of Trinidad and Tobago. They do not like people. Mr. Speaker, let me give you a little—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They said they do not want it.

Hon. A. Roberts: They do not want it, well, no problem. We understand that, Prime Minister. That is exactly what we are saying, the PNM does not want it, the PNM has ruled this country for 38 out of 52 years of Independence, and when we see and we look at the constituencies that have never voted for anybody else but PNM, they are most at high risk, they are the ones who need the LifeSport, and a PNM Member of Parliament here today is saying, “we doh want it, take it” yes, so let poor people suffer, let crime go rampant, leave them out in the streets, do not help people, we must—as PNM—only help those up in tall buildings.

They did not want Christmas hamper. The Government say, “look take some hamper for poor people”. The Member for Diego Martin West say, “keep your hamper, we doh want”. When we were giving laptops, the same Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West say, “do not give children”. They “duncey” head, says the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I never said that.

Hon. A. Roberts: The Member for Diego Martin West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Standing Order 36(5).

Hon. A. Roberts: You are not the Member for Diego Martin West. The Member for Diego Martin West, pay attention school teacher. [*Laughter*] The Member for Diego Martin West said, “they are duncey-head children, doh give poor people laptops”. But you know what? The Member for Diego Martin West and Rahael, and those in Renaissance Towers, “dem ha laptops, but when the Government say, give poor black children, little black boys”, as the Member for Mayaro sang about. When we say give little black boys laptops, the PNM say, no, do not give them. The PNM seems to not like people. “People Never Matter”, PNM, “People Never Matter.” [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister, I know I am going a little—I does get passionate about people so I apologize.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is okay.

Hon. A. Roberts: But I had to sit down quiet and listen to the most nauseous, ridiculous comments from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. I mean, it is so ridiculous and it is such a serious issue, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Mc Donald: You have no response for it.

Mr. Speaker: Please!

Hon. A. Roberts: “A, a, now the Member for Port of Spain South join in that too”. Poor thing, anyway, I have respect for the Member for Port of Spain South; she made a little mistake there.

Now, when we are talking about LifeSport, some people have said, you have heard it here even today and you have heard comments from the Member for Diego Martin West—[*Interruption*—Member for Port of Spain South, please!

Miss Mc Donald: Is the Prime Minister engaging me, you know.

Mr. Speaker: All right, you do not have to engage her. [*Laughter*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, when you hear from the Member for Diego Martin West on the platform and you hear from the Member for Port of Spain North today, they do not want LifeSport, throw away LifeSport. LifeSport is terrible, okay.

Mr. Speaker, let me mention some of the things: they described the participants as criminals. They described them nearly as if they are below human. In this Government we are here so serve each and every citizen,

and especially those most in need. [*Desk thumping*] Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, these LifeSport criminals, these young black boys that came off the streets, 2,097 of them, let me tell you what, some of them put down the gun; 20 participants in the last 21 months have come out of the programme and started their own small business. “All yuh could pound the table.” [*Desk thumping*]

One hundred and forty criminals, according to the PNM, those who should be discarded and thrown in the dustbin, 140 are now gainfully employed in the public and private sector [*Desk thumping*] off the street into sustainable jobs; 110 criminals—[*Interruption*]—you did not answer, there is an audit. You see, Mr. Speaker, when they do not listen, these issues are before an audit. Discipline will say that the Minister must be silent, the committee must be silent while investigators do their jobs so as to not influence or try to influence in any form or fashion. PNM do not understand how the systems—proper professional governance systems work, an audit has been called. When an audit is called, you do not go talking left, right and center. You let the people investigate. Let them come to their conclusions and then you will talk whichever way it comes out. One hundred and ten are now enrolled in educational and skills advancement, like the MIC with Minister Fazal Karim, becoming welders and so on.

Hon. Members: Criminals, according to the PNM.

Hon. A. Roberts: Criminals—they are in the NFC and the MIC, and now 25 have been accepted into the drilling academy. [*Desk thumping*] “From gun to oil, big money salary, but they doh want it, throw it off.” Anything for poor black people, PNM doh want, but this Government say, we will help them, we will not discard you, we will give you an opportunity to earn and take care of yourselves. Drilling academy, by the time them done their salary will be bigger than Members of Parliament. [*Interruption*]

Twenty-five are on scholarship, they did not have passport. “You all have to understand when we find these young people, you doh even know that they born in Trinidad and Tobago, because dey ha’ no birth paper, dey ha’ no ID, dey ha’ no passport, dey ha’ no driver’s licene, dey ha’ nothing. Dey on the streets doing crime when we find them.” So, sometime—you heard the Member for Diego Martin North/East, in an Auditor General’s report of 2012 saying that six participants’ stipend went into one account.

3.45 p.m.

Yes, because the six fellas did not have any account. To have an account, you have to have ID—two forms of ID, “and go into ah bank”. These boys—you have to understand what we are dealing with. So after that, when they are in the programme; part of the programme is to fill out their forms, get their birth paper, get their ID and put them into mainstream. That is what the programme is. People talk about a programme and have no

clue what it is about. Twenty-five are on scholarship—to the Christian Victory Academy in New York.

So, not only did they get ID and passport, they get visa to go outside to the Christian Academy on scholarship to make something of themselves, but the PNM say leave them in the street, let them shoot out each other. All right, that is your policy, that is not this Government's policy. Twelve are actively engaged in the music industry. Some of you may have heard on the radio a song, "Gunman slow yuh role", a nice smooth song. "Dai LifeSport; young boy taken out of Carenage, Diego Martin West Constituency."

The Member for Diego Martin West say he applied for \$40,000 for a football tournament and did not get it. The Member for Diego Martin West has never written to the Minister of Sport to request anything for people in his constituency in four years, Mr. Speaker, and let me put that on the *Hansard*.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: No, I did not get the impression that he is attributing any negative towards the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received request for sporting equipment from many MPs, and they know themselves. And as much as we have tried to help all of them, but I have never received a letter from the hon. Member for Diego Martin West requesting football boots, jockey shorts, uniform, competition, trophies, medals, nothing, but Carenage does have a LifeSport centre, with Mr. Angus Eve.

Is Angus Eve a criminal? Should we throw away Angus Eve? Angus Eve is down there with 60, not no ghost—go and check him out. Sixty

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young black men in Carenage operating the LifeSport Programme. They have done community projects, they are all moving on. Eight of them have moved on into football to make money in the semi-pro super league. Eight fellas that we found with guns and on the streets are now plying their trade in football, playing in the super league and the pro league. This is what LifeSport is.

Fourteen criminals according to the PNM are now certified coaches, and as a coach I am very proud of that, that men who were there doing wrong things are now giving back, coaching and they are certified. That is LifeSport. So if there are any issues, the audit will say—and this is the fourth audit, and whatever they say will be dealt with, and systems will be there and improved, to ensure that moneys are better spent, better value for money.

So the Minister of Sport, the Prime Minister and the Government are not afraid of any audit, audit is good. According to the PNM, audit is bad, because if they had audit the blimp, they would have realized money had disappeared. If they audit the *Su* that could not sail, that could not sink, they would have realized that money was wasted, \$73 million. If they had audit the Brian Lara Stadium, \$1.2 billion—you know how much young lives we could have saved with LifeSport if they had audit that, we would not have lost that money.

So audit to the PNM is a bad word, like what the Member for Diego Martin North/East used when he was running out of here smiling. But audit for this Government is very good. The Prime Minister is here to serve and she will ensure whenever and wherever information comes, she will get the

truth of the matter, and that is why we await the audit for all the answers that you want.

The LifeSport Programme contributes to local, sustainable and economically viable communities through opportunities for local entrepreneurship, income generation and employment creation, catering, janitorial. When they are talking about, you know, 2012, Mr. Speaker, and this is why sometimes parliamentarians must not be disingenuous. When you read from a 2012 report, did you read that when an Auditor General makes a report, the Permanent Secretary is given an opportunity to reply to considerations? Did he read from the memo from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy in June 2013 that stated that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy was pleased with the response of the Ministry of Sport to all questions in the 2012 report? They pretend like they do not know that, Mr. Speaker. That is the system.

Mr. Speaker: You have 10 more minutes.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Repeat that list.

Hon. A. Roberts: Let me repeat for my colleague, the Member for Caroni East, LifeSport successes thus far. Let me also say, that this group of young men, 2,097 young black fellas between 16 and 25 who never made it through school, they are what you will call, probably the most indisciplined in the society. Do you know that in the second audit by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy—and when logs are kept carefully, because you have to take register and so on, there was an attendance rate—at that time there were 33 centres, there was an average attendance rate of 88per cent.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: So where is the ghost?

Hon. A. Roberts: The audit will see if it have ghost. But there was an attendance of 88 per cent. And let me tell you what, these people, these young men, they still attended the programme, and I want you all to hear this, even my colleagues, because my colleagues may not know, that during the programme; the programme started, and they keep saying the programme was small, \$6million and it just ballooned. Six million was the initial draft estimate to begin the programme that came from an idea into a structure. That is like if you have a project to do, you get \$1 million on the line item and you deal with it. So after that, it blossomed, it was ready to go, there was an organizational structure with a programme director, Deputy Director move down, coaches, trainers, life skill and so on, and therefore it was ready to move out into the communities. So the increase in expenditure was simply because the programme moved from design into implementation. “They start to say that it going so fast.”

Dr. Gopeesingh: It mushroomed into success.

Hon. A. Roberts: It mushroomed into success, 2,097 young black men getting a helping hand, not being disregarded. So let me just repeat for the Member for Caroni East, 20 participants in the last 21 months, and these participants moved on. You are not supposed to stay in LifeSport, like the PNM URP and the PNM CEPEP, “yuh there 10 years and yuh say, I am there 10 years in CEPEP”. The idea of CEPEP and URP is to hold you, put food on the table and then move you on. This is the same concept with LifeSport. You are not supposed to stay in LifeSport for more than two years. These people, 20 of them have established their own small business,

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so they are off the street, into LifeSport, into business, out of LifeSport. One hundred and forty are now gainfully employed in public and private sector, off the street, into LifeSport, out to make money. [*Desk thumping*]

One hundred and ten enrolled in educational NESC, MIC, YTEPP, CCC, all of these programmes. Twenty-five are on scholarship, off the street, into LifeSport, into an academy in the US—25 in a Christian Academy outside. Twelve actively engaged in the music industry. You are seeing Bunji, Machel, big money industry, will end up making more money than all of us in here put together, but they come off the street, into LifeSport, into family security and a sustainable future. This is LifeSport, so stop “bad talking” LifeSport, stop spreading untruths about LifeSport, like the Member for Diego Martin North/East today. Fourteen turned certified coaches to earn a salary to coach people children, off the street into coaching. [*Desk thumping*] Eight are now playing organized football, earning a salary to play football—all of us would love to do that who have a little talent.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say, I have a lot more to say, a lot more to say, especially about the Member for Diego Martin West, but I will leave that. The words of Chaguanas West, not this afternoon, but I have a time for the Member for Diego Martin West, and I have it right here, I will save it.

Mr. Speaker: You have six more minutes.

Hon. A. Roberts: Six minutes and Doug E Fresh, that is enough time for me, Sir. Mr. Speaker, we have a letter here, and I have about 20 of them, I will not bore you with all, but I will tell you that young men have written testimonials across this country. One time we had an award session for the

art competition, whether in basketball, windball cricket and football, and we had a little function for them at the Crowne Plaza. Now, you must understand, the mere fact that they dress up to come in the Crowne Plaza—while it may seem nothing to you and to me, it was a huge event for them. They were so happy and proud to be in a venue with nice carpet and chandelier, and pretty trophies and so on, the mere fact that they were there uplifted their spirit and their self-esteem. [*Desk thumping*] That is what LifeSport is. And when I was giving my speech to them, I told them—I do not want to say that I am no Peña, you know, I told them listen, this programme will come under threat from all over, I do not even know from where, from inside, outside, around, all over, because the powers that be, the gatekeepers do not want young people like yourself who have nothing to come up into society, because then there will be less for those who want to be in Renaissance Towers and those who want to be in Government and those on that side who already started to divvy up contracts, there will be less for them if more are involved. The pie will have to go around. I said, so be careful, you will have to give me ammunition to fight for you and that ammunition is success, give me achievements. Show me that you are coming to the programme, show me that you put down the crime, that you stop, that you are moving into training and so on. “A young man from La Brea, after ah talk—and ah could talk, so ah get ah lil round of applause and thing—ah young boy from La Brea run and grab the mike”.

Dr. Moonilal: Who, Jeffrey?

Hon. A. Roberts: “Nah”, it was not Jeffrey. [*Laughter*] One of his constituents, “ah young boy, ah young boy”.

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Dr. Rambachan: “He have a LifeSport Programme? And dey against it?”

Hon. A. Roberts: They are against it, well no problem, but we are not against it and we are the Government for the whole country including PNM constituencies, so whether they want it or not, we will poor black people get up and get off the streets into a sustainable future, [*Desk thumping*] and the fella said, he grab the mike, he said, “boss man I cyah talk like you”, you know, but you thank everybody, you thank this one, that one. I want to thank you, boss. “I want to thank you, because all of dem men know I was of this. [*Display gun signal with forefinger*] I was of this and I put man down already, but this [*Display gun signal with forefinger*] I rest down that and I not going back to that and you better ensure mister man—talking to me, that this programme stay because we need it, meh children need it, meh children tell meh, daddy we happy that you come off, we could see yuh, yuh could play football with us”. That is the testimonial of 2,097 young black boys and men across Trinidad and Tobago.

You have the La Horquetta Sporting Academy. Listen to the La Horquetta Sporting Academy saying, commendation for the sports programme. Our area has been branded as a hotspot and was said to be full of gangs, drugs and outright criminals. All of this changed because of the LifeSport Programme. It offered us an opportunity for young men who joined the La Horquetta Sporting Academy, they found an avenue to channel and develop their skills. La Horquetta ended up in football from these fellas who come off the streets, runner-up of the Eastern Football Association, President’s Cup winner, League cup winner, runners-up in FA cup, eastern regional football league winner, President’s Cup, all from off the streets into

success. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up, let me say, and to the members of the population, this is a very serious situation. Accusations have been made that have repercussions for Trinidad and Tobago, internationally, local and for our future. The audit is a critical audit that has been demanded by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. We await the audit, we invite the audit and we accept any and all results of the audit in Trinidad and Tobago for the truth to come out. But let me tell you, members of the media, please, let us take our time to get the truth, because as you can see the Member for Diego Martin North/East here in the Parliament, they do not take time to investigate, they do not ask questions, they just speak and it sticks on the front page. Mr. Gibson, who was unfortunately murdered yesterday was not, ever associated with LifeSport in any form or fashion whatsoever. He is a member for 12 years of the PTSC. So, may God rest his soul.

Please tell the truth, do not start to accuse and create a furore. We shall wait—and they say the Minister has been quiet, yes, because I respect the audit, I respect natural justice, I respect the authorities that are investigating and let them investigate and let the truth be told, that LifeSport will help young black men across Trinidad and Tobago to put down the gun and come and pick up the football, the windball and the basketball.

Mr. Speaker, long live LifeSport and long live the young men out there who are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and not criminals to be discarded by the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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4.00p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday July 04, 2014, at 10.00a.m. and to serve notice that the Government will debate, at 10.00 a.m., Bill No. 7 on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: Before putting the question for the adjournment, there is a matter in the name of the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central. [*Desk thumping*]

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Dr. Amery Browne (*Diego Martin Central*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems we have an unusually early adjournment this evening. We normally adjourn at 4.30, but maybe it is for a good cause because I have matter on the adjournment this afternoon that is the matter of grave concern to myself and my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, this Government pays extensive lip service on the issue of caring for children and on a desire to develop family life and nurture parenting in Trinidad and Tobago, but I am saddened to report that some of our families have been—the quality of their lives has been decimated by a combination of serious natural disaster, the forces of nature, and a Government this seems to be deaf and uncaring toward their plight. I want to bring, once again to the attention of this House, the plight of the Peter family from Waterhole in Cocorite. This family should be familiar with

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every single Member of Parliament because their plight has been raised on a number of occasions prior, and the Member for Tobago East is very familiar with this family, having interacted with them extensively over the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, in August 2012 I wrote to the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management—wrote to the Chief Executive Officer as Member of Parliament—asking for urgent attention to problems affecting the Peters family, of Light Pole No. 14, Waterhole, Cocorite, and the issues related to a large tree that was threatening their household and flooding that was damaging—causing a landslide, damaging their property.

Unfortunately, in August of 2012 a landslide occurred that damaged the property extensively. Now, this is not a family that has spent their time begging for houses from the Government. They have their own home. It was extensively damaged by landslides. In January 2013—January 10th to be specific—I had cause to write to the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Minister Roodal Moonilal, on the matter of the Peters family and I outlined the plight that they have been facing. I wrote again to the Minister on January 22, 2013, again chronicling their plight. Subsequent to that, in the budget debate on September 18, 2013, I came to this House—leaving a flooding situation in Diego Martin, came to this House—and shared the following; and I am going to quote from the *Hansard* record. These were my words. This is last year.

“There are other houses in Cocorite and elsewhere which have been declared unsafe and we are not getting the kind of empathy from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development in treating with these

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and the other Ministers who promised to intervene and are supposed to be interlocutors in these matters. They come in after disasters;”—get—“media coverage, photo ops; they get people to say all sorts of things when they get a TT Card in their hands...but there needs to be follow-up and that is where you rely on the caring and you rely on the staff to follow up in these cases.”

Mr. Speaker, I indicated the plight then, of Mr. Dave Peters and I mentioned the Member for Tobago East. I read out a report from a social worker indicating that the family has been fractured by the disaster that affected their home. The two sons of Mr. Peters and his wife were residing with other family members. Their school performance was being affected by the damage caused by these landslides.

I indicated that he was having extensive difficulties relating to several Government ministries, including the HDC. I indicated that he was travelling to Port of Spain on frequent occasions for meetings with the Member for Tobago East, other Government officials, some Mr. Reece in the HDC who eventually became quite hostile to the family, accusing them of having his name mentioned in Parliament, as if that is some sort of crime on their part—became extremely hostile to the family, and I have testimony from them in this regard. I spelt out in great detail, speaking specifically to the Member for Oropouche East, on the plight of this family. I mentioned his name and I spelt out exactly what took place. I indicated that the CEO of the HDC was involved, and the family was referred back and forth.

There were large cracks in the household. Children were displaced. This is since last year, Mr. Speaker. This is a family that had provided a

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home for their children and are doing a good job in trying keep them together. Mr. Speaker, I have some photographic evidence which you have kindly given me permission to display because sometimes we speak, and we speak here, and a clear impression is not given as to exactly what families are enduring in this country. For the past two years this family has had to live in a household where this is one of the bedrooms [*Displays photograph*] two years ago, and can any Member of Parliament imagine the kinds of—and the rain has started now—trauma this family has been experiencing?

Mr. Speaker, this is the living room. [*Displays photograph*] Two years now! I did not go and make these cracks. I am not making this up. This is not photo-shopped, and I know this Government is not easily persuaded by video or photographic evidence, but I can attest to the veracity of these photographs because they were taken just a few days ago. Mr. Speaker, these are other cracks in the living room. [*Displays photograph*]

Hon. Member: Wow!

Dr. A. Browne: And this is a family I had cause to visit prior, and they had a lovely home. They provided a lovely home for their children. Due to no fault of their own these landslides occurred over two years ago, and I hope the Minister of Housing and Urban Development would not express any surprise at this because this Government has been well-informed. I brought this matter during a budget debate, referring to their name, address, et cetera. At that stage, he was nodding and appearing very sympathetic.

I have been continuing to converse with the Member for Tobago East who has basically been championing their cause within the Government. Recently, they even had cause to write to the hon. Prime Minister on their

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plight, and this is the last card that is being played. I do not know if they are expected to come outside of the Parliament and protest. Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: You have until 4.16.

Dr. A. Browne: Okay, excellent. I do not know if they are expected to come outside of the Parliament and protest, but they do not have the resources to hire any music truck or to produce placards and so on, and this Member of Parliament is not in the business of assisting in those ventures. What I am in the business of doing is trying to assist my constituents. It has come to this now, after correspondence—and I just gave a few examples. There has been extensive correspondence with the HDC, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and other Government officials. The Prime Minister has now been written on this matter.

You have a family that is in extensive chronic distress. You have children whose grades are falling. The older son—Mr. Peters confided in me. He is very worried about him because he does not even want to visit the house as frequently as before. And what happens to a young man in those circumstances? They find themselves more on the block because you might be more comfortable there than in a living room like this. At present, there is muddy water flowing through the house when rain falls. There are scorpions and other vermin that are affecting the comfort and safety of this particular family.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in learning a number of things from the Member for Oropouche East today. I would like him—because there is a wider issue out there, of demand, that he is very familiar with—

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demand for housing assistance—and members of the public who come to parliamentarians are still very much concerned about transparency and accountability with regard to the allocation of houses.

In addition to providing clarity on the process currently being utilized, we require additional clarity on what transpires when there is a natural disaster. What considerations are at play within the HDC, and why this particular family who—it is not that they had an apartment; they had their own three-bedroom house—are faced with these circumstances, still find themselves in distress and pleading for assistance?

So while addressing the plight of this particular family, I am inviting and requesting that the Minister gives some further clarity to families out there—and there are others—who have been affected by natural disasters and who still find themselves struggling; acknowledging the great demand out there, acknowledging the long waiting list of individuals who would like to receive housing assistance. But one would think that when disaster is visited on a family, they would be treated with some degree of urgency. So I am very, very interested in the answer on this.

So back to the beginning. Mr. Speaker, it is easy to pay service to the issue of caring for children and trying to support and defend family life and the quality of life of our citizens, but when you have graphic examples like this [*Displays photograph*] and you have citizens living for years in these circumstances, one would really want to ask where is the caring and where is the concern, particularly when they themselves bring to our attention, as parliamentarians, other examples in the media where—I do not want to call any geographic area—when an incident would occur in some parts of the

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country, almost the next day they see cheques being handed over and relief being provided. And the question is: why would a family like this have to wait so long for relief?

So, Mr. Speaker, we know the Member for Oropouche East is skilled in repartee and wisecracks and so on, and I would hope he would not use this opportunity to deliver any of those because this family—*[Interruption]*—and he is giving an example right now. But this family is not interested in wisecracks because they are dealing with cracks in their lives. They are dealing with fractures in their lives and huge cracks in their room and I am hoping they would find some comfort in the words of the Member for Oropouche East today.

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

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Oropouche East, Minister of Housing and Urban Development.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for raising really what is essentially a very important Motion. I do not know if to thank him for flattering me or not, but I take the compliment that he has sent to me.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion before us is a Motion that is somewhat wide and states: “The importance of timely housing assistance to citizens subsequent to natural disasters”—the Motion that was filed, for which I am prepared to answer.

The Member for Diego Martin Central took the opportunity—which is fine—to raise the concerns of one particular family in that Motion. The

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family named was not mentioned in the Motion, so regrettably, I could not bring to the Parliament with me any statement, or information, or facts about this one family that you raised. And you brought pictures and so on. I appreciate that and I want to assure the Member that I see pictures like this every single day of my life.

4.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, today when I addressed a luncheon of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, among several things I told members of staff, the top level of staff, when I thanked them for their service, I told them that we are in an emotional Ministry. We manage an emotional Ministry where people who come to us, come with emotion and distress. Very few people will come to us because they are happy. They come to us because they are distressed, they are sad. When people come to me particularly in my Tuesday office in south Trinidad, I see these pictures every single week. I go home with them in my files. Certainly, I could bring an album and show you of people's houses, their concerns, their distress and so on. So I understand that, I empathize with that, and to be in this business of housing you must have that capacity to empathize and to understand people's concern.

I do not have the facts surrounding the particular case. I have asked for it almost immediately while the Member was talking, Mr. Speaker. I have also asked for the HDC to indicate to me some statement on their concern and their crisis. So I will get to that in a minute. But, Mr. Speaker, let me state—because the Member also took the opportunity to ask us for some information. I know the time is limited for this response, so I will

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have to skip through some of the information that I brought concerning national disasters and our response to those situations.

Mr. Speaker, the HDC which was established in 2005, is responsible as we all know for construction, management in some cases, land acquisition, land development and property management in Trinidad and Tobago. There is a clear selection criteria for persons to be afforded public housing. The Member for Diego Martin Central spent, I believe, three years, three and a half years in the Cabinet.

Dr. Browne: Two and a half years.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Two half and a half years, sorry. It was a mid-term collapse that led you there. So the Member understands, I think, the selection criteria. He should understand it because he would know that he was also a part of a Cabinet decision, I believe in 2006, that—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: No, I was not.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You were not there in 2006?

Dr. Browne: No.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, in 2006 before you arrived on the compound, the Cabinet did take a decision on selection criteria, which is a decision that suggested to us and guided us that someone must be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, be 21 years and over, not be an owner or part owner of property and have a monthly combined income of the applicant of \$25,000.

So, Mr. Speaker, allocation of houses pursuant to that Cabinet decision, is based on a 60 per cent modified random selection process, a 25 per cent recommendation from the Minister with responsibility for housing, 10 per cent for the protected services and 5 per cent for senior citizens and

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physically challenged persons. Mr. Speaker, therefore, I say that to tell you that those persons who the Member for Diego Martin Central is today advocating for, persons like that, would fall clearly in the recommendations of a Minister because the other parts of the selection criteria may not be useful.

Mr. Speaker, the HDC has responded to several incidents of landslide, flooding, fire. When someone is a victim of these things, they produce national identification card, birth certificate, utility bill, rent receipts, pay slips, et cetera, documents from Government assistance whether it is a pension and so on, and they undertake a social assessment by the HDC.

Mr. Speaker, we also request for persons needing emergency housing assistance an assessment and report from the State's first responders, particularly fire service in the case of fire; an assessment and verification by the HDC Health Safety and Environment Social and Community Service Department. We also look at availability of housing units. If someone is suffering from a disaster or something like that, you have to look at availability as well, whether something is available for those persons and, of course, we have to confirm that displacement was not due to any criminal actions of their own which the homeowner may be involved in.

I tell you this, Mr. Speaker, and add to it that since 2010—because the Member made another statement which he had to. He had to fall into his default mode which is to say, the Government is uncaring and the Government lacks sympathy and so on. That is his default mode. But he fell into his second default mode which is to suggest that the Government helps quickly persons in certain areas as opposed to others. Let us read that

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properly. What he is saying really is, “de Government does help people in UNC area and they doh help people in PNM area”.

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

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is my interpretation of what you said.

Dr. Browne:—36(5). He is imputing improper—I never said anything about that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So I am wrong to have an interpretation?

Dr. Browne: That is not true.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay, so I am wrong to interpret.

Mr. Speaker: All right. He said there is a wrong interpretation, please, and do not go there.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay. I will keep my interpretation to myself. Mr. Speaker, in May 2010—*[Crosstalk]* You see, I want to Diego Martin one time because the Member is really being disingenuous here. On August 11, 2012, 23 families who were left homeless following heavy floods—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). He is imputing improper motives.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that so I could move on without the interruption. August 11, 2012, 23 families who were left homeless following heavy floods in west Trinidad, in Diego Martin, were reallocated to three-bedroom apartments in Oropune Housing Development on August 11, 2012—23 families—and given three months rent-free emergency. This is a Government that is doing nothing.

Dr. Browne: What about the Peters family?

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Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, we have the Peters family, but we have the other family, the Williams' family, we have the Smith family, we have the Bridgelal family, you know, we have the Ali family. So yes, I understand your concern with this one family and you are right to come to Parliament and raise the one family, but you are wrong to come to Parliament to suggest that this is our modus operandi. Twenty-three families.

Mr. Speaker, in August 2012, again—now that is three-bedroom apartments that went, that we have said that was for an emergency. So anybody who is lined up and waiting, waiting 20 years for a home, has the money and resources, that is not for you. It is for an emergency for people who are deserving. Mr. Speaker, in August 2012, 120 homes within the Diego Martin, Petit Valley, Glencoe, Carenage area that suffered from floods were assisted to restore their properties through the clean-up support labour provided by HDC. We went in there to help 120 homes at our cost.

Mr. Speaker, you should also note in February 2011—I want to remind the Member because he will forget—20 families, approximately 100 people were affected by a fire. Do you know where these families were living? They were gutted from an HDC apartment in a place call Balisier Avenue. The name of the place is Balisier Avenue. We went in overnight in Pleasantville, and three months rent-free emergency apartments were provided for all. It is not Diego Martin, but my brother it is not Cuchawan Trace. It is not.

So when you come to the Parliament and say, you know, we helping somewhere and not somewhere, it is 20 families from Balisier Avenue, and we moved in. You all remember the 20 families who became homeless after

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an arson attack, a building in HDC, Pashey Street, upper Trou Macaque, Laventille? Laventille—you were there with us in the morning. In the sun, in the morning, he was with me, Mr. Speaker, and the 20 families were relocated to Oropune. An apartment building burned down at two/three in the morning, you know those persons never spent one night without a roof over their head. Not one night. [*Desk thumping*] They moved the same day.

Dr. Browne: I am grateful.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And I am happy. The Member says he is grateful. This Member is, maybe, unparalleled with others.

Hon. Member: A different breed.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: A different breed maybe. He said he is grateful. But, Mr. Speaker, we moved in Trou Macaque, we moved in Balisier Avenue, we moved in Diego Martin and other areas—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: What about La Brea?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and there are a lot of examples. I have booklet here with eight pages of examples of emergency shelter.

If I know the Member for La Brea was going to talk too, I bring La Brea too. You see, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Member and tell him something here. I have been elected for 13 years. He has been elected I think for six or so and have spent two and a half years, half term in Government.

Mr. Cadiz: Soon not to be.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I am not going to get into that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell him that there are families in need in this

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country and the HDC is one place you go for some need. You also have the National Commission for Self Help, you also have the Ministry of the People and Social Development, you have several state agencies—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: I went through all of those.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—but, Mr. Speaker, you also have yourself. Did the Member come to the Parliament and did I miss when he told us what he was doing personally to assist those people; what he was trying to do to get a galvanize, or get a nail, or fix the roof, some basic material? There is a grant that you can give. Is there anything you can do to help by yourself, apart from holding up the album in the Parliament? Is that the extent of your work that you hold up the album in the Parliament? What I am saying is that you hear all the time of Members—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Member, would you give way?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, I am not. You hear of Members of Parliament on several sides of the House, when we have to help people, Mr. Speaker, we do not wait all the time on Government agencies. The Member for Naparima. I remember Minister Baksh in Opposition and in Government, writes hardware, writes someone for a donation of sand and gravel, a little cement, 10 galvanize and help people. So when you are helping, tell us that you have tried your best before you bring the album and hook up on the wall in the Parliament. I will bring more pictures to show you.

Dr. Browne: Say something to give this family some comfort.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: My comfort to them is that you are trying to politicize them. You are politicizing one family and that is—[*Interruption*]

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Mr. Speaker: Member.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—my message to them.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, just one second. Withdraw that remark, please. Member for Diego Martin Central, you just said something across the floor. You know what you said. Withdraw!

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I said nothing insulting to the Member.

Mr. Speaker: You said something a short while ago that he was talking stupid—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: I said, say something to give the family comfort.

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat! No, take your seat. You said that he was talking stupidity.

Dr. Browne: No.

Mr. Speaker: You said that and I am asking you to withdraw those remarks.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw if I said anything about talking stupidity.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Continue, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, in the two minutes at the end here, I want to indicate that we are very clear on our policy, but the truth is—and the Member knows. He sat in the Cabinet. It is not every single family in Trinidad and Tobago that the HDC can assist by alternative housing, whether they are the subject of a fire, they are a landslide victim, they are a natural disaster victim. We help as much as we could and I have the examples. I have showed you where we have helped. But he has brought a one-case scenario to the Parliament and say, “this family here, I bring their

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name to the Parliament and you must help them now”. And when you finish with this one family, he brings the next set for me. We will try.

I have asked for a report on this matter from the HDC, and if it is within the purview of the HDC that assistance can be rendered, we are prepared to render it, but you cannot be politicizing the matter in this way.

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

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.29 p.m.