

Leave of Absence

Friday, March 20, 2015

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 20, 2015

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members: the hon. Patrick Manning, Member of Parliament for San Fernando East and Miss Donna Cox, Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant who have asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statement of the Tobago House of Assembly for the year ended September 30, 2006. [*The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh)*]
2. Audited Financial Statements of the Water and Sewerage Authority for the financial year ended September 30, 2010. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]
Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
3. Annual Report of the Police Complaints Authority for the period October 01, 2013 to September 30, 2014. [*The Minister of Legal Affairs and Justice (Hon. Prakash Ramadhar)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, today the Government is in a position to answer questions 63, 81, 83, 84, 85—in fact, those are four questions by the Member for La Brea that are pending—like himself. [*Laughter*] Questions 99, 100 and 101, we are in a position to answer those questions and the relevant Ministers are present.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, he is on his way and he has requested that his question, question 63, be deferred a little later, towards the end of question time, please, if time permits.

Mr. Speaker: No problem.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Question 63?

Miss Mc Donald: Thank you. Question 63.

**Community Centres
(Commencement of)**

81. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development:

- A. Having noted the Minister's response to question 23 on March 1, 2013 that in 2008 Cabinet granted approval for the construction of the Rancho Quemado Community Centre, when will construction work commence?
- B. When will construction commence for the Salazar Trace Community Centre?
- C. Having noted the Minister's response to question no. 91 on April 11, 2014 in the House of Representatives, could the Minister provide an update on when construction will commence on the following community centres:
 - i. Santa Flora;
 - ii. Aripéro;
 - iii. Cochrane; and
 - iv. Parrylands?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Winston Peters): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in connection to question No. 81, we are in the process of re-evaluating all the community centres in Trinidad given the circumstances that exist right now, and as soon as the re-evaluation is finished, the Member would be notified.

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental. Hon. Minister, the Rancho Quemado Community Centre—[*Interruption*]

Hon. W. Peters: Yes.

Mr. Jeffrey:—was supposed to be built since 2008. When you all came in, in 2010—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Are you making a statement or asking a question?

Mr. Jeffrey: I am asking him a question.

Mr. Speaker: Well, ask a question. You are making a statement.

Mr. Jeffrey: Right. Why is it that we still have this delay with this community centre?

Hon. W. Peters: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the reason why the centre was not built when it was supposed to be in 2008 is because of bad representation by the Member for La Brea, and since we came in 2010, we have had to rebuild and build a lot of community centres and pay attention to them. So right now, as I said before, we are re-evaluating all the centres in Trinidad and Tobago—in Trinidad, sorry—that have to be built. So the reason why it was not built is because you did not build it when “all yuh was dey for two years” pal. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Further supplemental. Hon. Minister—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Member. Member for Mayaro, do not refer to the Member in the way that you have. He is the hon. Member for La Brea and I would like you to refer to him in that way. Continue, Member for La Brea, please.

Mr. Jeffrey: Hon. Minister, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, we have had the same response.

Hon. Member: Question, what is the question?

Mr. Jeffrey: We would like to find out why.

Hon. W. Peters: 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960—2010, the centres were not built and we were trying to build them, but there are so many to be built; that is why it was not built. And it is going to be built as soon as we are finished.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It was neglected by them. It was neglected by them.

Hon. W. Peters: Of course.

Industrial Accidents

(Details of)

83. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development:

How many persons lost their lives because of industrial accidents in Trinidad and Tobago in each of the fiscal years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014?

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod): Mr. Speaker, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Chap. 88:08, section 46 requires employers or occupiers of industrial establishments to inform the chief inspector where an accident which causes death or critical injury occurs in the establishment or in the course of employment within 24 hours of learning of such accident or incident.

The OSH Authority has indicated in accordance with what I have just mentioned, that the following fatal accidents reported via this mechanism are as follows: 2010, there was seven fatalities; 2011, six; 2012, 20; 2013, 11 and 2014, 14.

**Agricultural Project in Guyana
(Money invested)**

84. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Production:

Could the Minister state:

- a) The amount of money invested by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in the Agricultural project in Guyana for the fiscal 2012, 2013 and 2014;
- b) What crops were cultivated?
- c) How much of each crop was produced; and
- d) What was done with the crops produced?

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The. Hon. Devant Maharaj):
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question asked: could the Minister state the amount of money invested by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in the agricultural project in Guyana for the fiscal 2012, 2013 and 2014 period. The amount of money invested is zero. The crops cultivated so far, zero. The amount of crops produced, zero. The amount—what was done for the crops produced, zero so far, and I will give you the background to this.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in its budget presentation of 2012, indicated it is revitalizing the Jadgeo Initiative which was tabled so many years ago before Caricom and nobody saw it fit, at that point in time, to take it forward. We entered into an agreement here at the Parliament, at Government level, to initiate this Jadgeo Initiative through a bilateral agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana.

Subsequently, the months that followed, we developed a memorandum of understanding between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Republic of Guyana to establish the areas and so on that are going to be allocated for this particular project, the type of crops to be grown and so on. Following that, we had a site visit led by myself among our technocrats from the Ministry of Food Production, and following that initial visit of that high level team, we had the technocrats exchanging soil analysis data, water studies and so on.

Eventually, the Ministry of Food Production placed a request for an expression of interest followed by RFQ. It was evaluated by both the Ministry of Food Production here in Trinidad and our Guyanese counterpart. Following the successful submissions by the various agro investors here in Trinidad, a delegation led by myself again, with those successful agro-investors, went to Guyana to pay an actual site visit on the land late last year and we are in the process now of carrying the process further to develop that investment. But the process is one which the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the people, and by extension, taxpayers, do not directly invest in Guyana, but will come about through private investment on their own initiative, and the Government is acting as a facilitating agency for our agro-investors here with the wide land mass in Guyana, so to facilitate mechanized farming which our restrictive space here does not really lend to easily.

Apprenticeship Programme (Details of)

85. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training:

Could the Minister state how many YTEPP, OJT, MUST, NESC and HYPE trainees were recorded for 2012 and 2013 as being employed in Trinidad and Tobago?

The Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the basis of information supplied by the respective institutions, agencies and programmes for the periods 2011—2012 and 2012—2013, the number of trainees who were employed in Trinidad and Tobago is as follows:

For the National Energy Skill Centre, the NESC, in 2011—2012, 535 trainees graduated of which an estimated 455 were employed, representing approximately 85 per cent. For the NESC in 2012—2013, 580 trainees graduated of which an estimated 494 were employed, representing 85 per cent.

For the Helping You Prepare for Employment, the HYPE Programme, in 2011—2012, 604 trainees graduated of which an estimated 326 were employed, representing 54 per cent. For the HYPE Programme in 2012—2013, 725 trainees graduated, of which an estimated 362 were employed, representing 50 per cent.

For the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme, the MUST Programme, in 2011—2012, 2,153 trainees graduated, of which an estimated 1,507 persons gained employment, representing 70 per cent. For the MUST programme in

2012—2013, 1,250 trainees graduated, of which an estimated 875 trainees were employed, representing the figure of 70 per cent.

For the On the Job Training Programme, in 2011—2012, 6,595 trainees were employed on the programme. Note I said, employed on the programme. For the OJT programme in 2012—2013, 6,087 trainees were employed on the programme.

For the Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme Limited, YTEPP, that aspect of youth training, in 2011—2012, 4,238 trainees were enrolled of which an estimated 2,203 were employed, representing 52 per cent. For the YTEPP Programme in 2012—2013, 3,174 trainees were enrolled, of which an estimated 1,650 were employed, representing 52 per cent.

For the YTEPP Programme, the retraining programme particularly, in 2011—2012, 542 trainees were enrolled, of which an estimated 390 were employed representing 72 per cent. For the YTEPP retraining programme in 2012—2013, 773 trainees were enrolled, of which an estimated 556 were employed, representing a figure of 72 per cent.

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

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question No. 99 to the Minister of Health, and you know the correction that justification replaces jurisdiction. Yes?

Point Fortin Hospital (Details of)

99. Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

- a) Will the new Point Fortin Hospital be a secondary or tertiary health care institution?
- b) Given the answer to part (a), what is the jurisdiction for same?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Dr. Fuad Khan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have always said, Mr. Speaker, the new Point Fortin Hospital is going to be a secondary and a tertiary health care institution to deliver the basic set of clinical services. It will have 116 inpatient, outpatient and observation beds for paediatric, adolescent, and adult patient with a wide range of clinical conditions; internal medicine; general surgery; high dependency unit; intensive care unit; gynaecology; obstetrics, both antenatal and postnatal with a nursery; paediatric and adolescent ; psychiatry.

1.45 p.m.

The diagnostics and treatment services will be the A&E Department including six observation beds, surgical services, and obstetric services. The outpatient services will be paediatric, adolescent, adult, women's health, gynaecology and obstetrics, day surgery including 10 outpatient beds, functional diagnostics in the outpatient department and a pharmaceutical delivery. The diagnostic services will be general X-ray, fluoroscopy, CT scan, general ultrasound, mammography, lab services and endoscopy, and I plan also to put in an MRI and a c lab as I have done in Tobago.

The support services will be an inpatient pharmacy, the sterilization unit, a laundry, a kitchen, maintenance and housekeeping, clinical engineering facility, morgue facility, dietician services, archiving facilities, administration services, doctors-on-call facilities, security facilities, incinerators facilities. The basic set of services to support education and human resources—as it is going to be another teaching hospital—will be a conference room, multipurpose training centre, a health sciences library, a dining hall, there will be staff lounges, a staff wellness and clinic, a gymnasium and a day care facility which will be one of the first of its kind for staff members who would like to keep their children at work with them.

We are also going to have a basic set of services for the actual community as well as the staff. Most important will be what they call a breastfeeding room as we have a nursery and a day care facility, a cafeteria, a religious and faith area and a tuck shop. There will also be a family room and a customer relations office.

Now, given the answer to part (a), I thought it was the jurisdiction. So I said the estimate will be from Point Fortin and surroundings, but now you have asked for the justification of what I have just read out. I will indicate that the justification to provide the secondary and tertiary health care services is that Point Fortin is a large area and what has happened, a lot of the patients go from Point Fortin and surroundings to San Fernando, and we are decentralizing health care to secondary and tertiary health care services. The people of Point Fortin, I must say, have been denied that type of service for so long and we hope to be able to give them the level that they deserve, which is the secondary and tertiary health care services. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Member and, Mr. Speaker. Given that it is an industrial town and I know that there will be no burns unit—you did not list it—will the emergency department be equipped for urgent care with the scope for advanced medical investigation and diagnosis and treatment? I am speaking to

life-saving care for the treatment of critical patients. I mean, will there be proper observation units—you listed, but I am talking about proper ones with continuous patient monitoring, capable of attending to people requiring urgent critical care?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I would just like to recommend that the person who is asking those questions should understand exactly what I just read out. There will be an Accident and Emergency Department for exactly critical care. That is the function of an Accident and Emergency Department for critical care and there are six observation beds. So we will have that there. So whoever is giving you those questions to ask, it is exactly that—all accidents and emergency and all hospitals have that facility. As far as a burns unit, a burns unit only occurs in specialized areas. General surgical and medical departments look after burns units and after intensive care. So I have an intensive care unit, a high dependency care unit, an accident and emergency unit, a critical area and so, so all that is outlined.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I mean, Minister, you know that no amount of advanced investigation takes place in the Point Fortin Hospital, but let me ask you the supplemental I wish to ask you now. Again, in view of Point Fortin being an industrial area and La Brea as well, will there be a helipad to provide for airlifting in extreme urgent situations? And I say so too, given the distance of Cedros from San Fernando and given that critical care in particular areas will still not be provided, will a helipad be in Cedros or in Point Fortin?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad the Member has said that because she is quite aware that the People's Partnership is giving the people of Point Fortin quite a lot, and if they want a helipad the People's Partnership will give them a helipad. [*Desk thumping*].

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Supplemental.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Health care professionals are indeed a problem now. Will there be an increase in health care professionals at an adequate ratio to suit the increase in the number of beds? I mean, for instance, in OB/GYN, will you have perhaps three or four OB/GYN specialists now that we have a wider catchment area who would be served from the Point Fortin Hospital?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad the Member asked that. You can tell Dr. Sylvain Pierre he will get more staff, which would be about four, five of them, as well as a lot more staff will be there.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Final.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Final. Just a final. So will there be any cardiac care, cardiac surgeries, care for any strokes and concussions and so on? Will there be cancer management services, et cetera?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East was once the Minister of Health. I think, sometimes you should pass the questions through him. When you have the internal medicine, it takes care of strokes, cardiovascular problems, et cetera. When I indicated that you have an MRI and a cath lab, a cath lab is a catheterization lab for cardiac services. You could tell her that, Member for Diego Martin North/East, next time. So we have all that. There is nothing that is left out, absolutely nothing, except the helipad, and since you want the helipad—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Do you have a cardiologist there?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: But if you have a cath lab, you will obviously have a cardiologist.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Well say so. That is all. Say so.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Whoever is advising you on those questions, Member—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for Point Fortin.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I am not a joke. I am just telling you.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: This is serious—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, the Member for Diego Martin North/East was the Minister of Health, he could advise you.

Mr. Speaker: I think you have answered the question. Let us go to the next question.

Point Fortin Highway Project (Financial Arrangements)

100. Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon asked the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

Could the Minister state through what financial arrangements does the Government propose to complete the Point Fortin highway project that is to satisfy the 57 per cent of work still required to be done?

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Point Fortin, the hon.

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Member, wants to find out whether I could state what financial arrangements are being made by the Government to complete the Point Fortin highway project and, that is, to satisfy the 57 per cent of work still required to be done. I am very happy that the Member acknowledges that 43 per cent of the work has already been completed. [*Desk thumping*] I want her to know that between the time this question was filed and the time it is being answered, it is now closer to 50 per cent of the work that has been completed. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Point Fortin was also a member of the Government, I believe, when the cost estimates for this project were done, and she should have been fully aware that the total price of the project was \$7.5 billion, not for the construction of the highway. The construction of the highway's cost is \$5.2 billion. Thus far, the contractor has been paid \$2,464,735,507 and the project still has to receive \$2.4 billion. Overall, \$5.1 billion has been received and the difference between the amount that has been paid out on the project and the amount received is due to moneys paid for the advanced payment, construction oversight, acquisitions, community outreach, management fees, construction contingencies and finance charges.

The dollar value of the amounts still to be provided to NIDCO for completion is \$2.4 billion, which is to be funded by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy on an annual basis as required. Let me just say of the total funds received, \$1.1 billion is still being held by NIDCO for meeting project expenses during the remainder of the financial year. So there are no problems with the financing of the highway as far as the Government is concerned. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I wanted to get a little more clarity from you. You said the Ministry of Finance and the Economy will be financing 57 per cent of the work which is still required to be done, you said 50 per cent now, but given the fact that our revenues are down and perhaps half, the question is: can the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, in fact, finance this from the recurrent expenditure?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, you recall the Prime Minister, when she addressed the question of the fall in oil prices and gas prices, made the statement that projects which the Government has started, the Government will be committed, and that new projects would be deferred—not shut down, deferred—until the finances are available.

A project like this, which is the extension to the Solomon Hochoy Highway going to Point Fortin, is a very important project in the Government's overall scheme to develop that region, and in terms of that Point Fortin/La Brea area being a growth pole, as such, the Government will ensure that the budget is so constructed that this project will not suffer in terms of its completion. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

**San Fernando to Mayaro Highway
(Status of)**

101.Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon asked the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

Could the Minister state:

- a) How will the San Fernando to Mayaro highway be financed?
- b) What is the project cost?
- c) What is the proposed start-up date?

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member was in Government in 2008, I believe, and she would recall Cabinet Minute No. 2254 dated August 14, 2008, which approved funding for the project through loan financing to be raised on both the local and international market, and that exercise in terms of the Cabinet agreement would be pursued by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Speaker, at present, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure is reviewing the existing design and coming up with a more realistic cost associated with the construction of the highway, but, in particular, the segment from San Fernando to Princes Town, and within a couple of days the estimated project cost will be completed and the review will be completed. And as soon as the review is completed, the start-up date will be determined and I expect that start-up date to be within the next two months.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: In other words, you neither have the project cost or the final details of this project. It will not be built any time soon. Is that right?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: This is totally inaccurate. Mr. Speaker, the documentation is there, designs were done, but over time you have to review your designs. There is new technology, there are new things that arise, and therefore, that is being done currently by NIDCO and the consultants. It is almost complete, but the highway to Point Fortin will start and tractors will run. You can be assured that will happen.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, the hon. Member.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So are you saying that the Government presently has funds to complete the highway to Point Fortin which requires a further \$2.4 billion, and also do the San Fernando to Mayaro highway?

Mr. Speaker: No, do not confuse the issues. We have dealt with the Point Fortin highway. We are now dealing with a specific matter, the Mayaro. So deal with Mayaro. You cannot deal with Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am saying that in addition to the Point Fortin highway—just in addition—that the Government also has the funds that are necessary to complete this other highway as well?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, this is a Government that has engaged in prudent fiscal discipline. [*Desk thumping*] This is a Government that is very careful what it does. This is a Government that has demonstrated that it can get value for money. This is a Government that showed that we had a surplus in terms of our budgetary arrangement of \$328 million. In matters like these, therefore, the Government will find the ways without imposing an inordinate burden of borrowing upon the country in order to do this, and it will be done by this Government which has been a very successful Government in terms of how we have developed this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Further supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, in response to the answer, are you saying that that highway as it stands now, there is no financing mechanism in place?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: That is not correct. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: We are in the process of putting in place the financing by speaking and organizing both the local and international financial organizations in order to make that a reality, and it will happen. It does not mean

to say that in the meantime for the start-up that other financing cannot be achieved to start the project, not all the money for a project like this is needed at the front. In other words, that is why you have a bridge loan.

2.00 p.m.

If you are building a house, Member for St. Joseph, and you have to borrow \$300,000, you would not borrow \$300,000 on a bridge loan at the beginning; you will borrow probably 20 then another 30 and then another 50, so you reduce your interest costs. This is the kind of fiscal-discipline organization we have on this side of the House.

Hon. Member: Further supplemental.

Mr. Speaker: Supplementals are over. I now recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Heritage and Stabilisation Fund Act
(Loss of Oil Revenue)**

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

- A. What percentage of Government's total petroleum revenues, as defined by the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund Act, is earned from oil?
- B. How much revenue does the Government lose when the average price of oil drops by US\$1.00 over the fiscal year?
- C. In light of the recent precipitous decrease in the price of oil, what is the Government's estimated loss of revenue for fiscal 2015?

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, in response to Part A of the question, Mr. Speaker, using 2014 as a benchmark, the percentage of Government's total petroleum revenue as defined by the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund Act earned from its oil is 60 per cent. Note that petroleum revenues as defined by the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund Act is the aggregate of a supplementary petroleum tax, the petroleum profit tax and royalties, but does not include the unemployment levy and signature bonuses and so on.

With respect to Part B of the question, when the price of oil is above \$50, which is the benchmark for the SPT to be applied, the loss of petroleum revenues,

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defined by the HSF Act when the average price of oil drops by US \$1 over the fiscal year, is approximately \$64.2 million.

With respect to Part C of the question, Mr. Speaker, due to the decrease in the price of oil, the Government's estimated loss of revenue from oil and gas for fiscal 2015 is TT \$7.1 billion. This is based on an oil price assumption of US \$45 per barrel of oil and a gas price of US \$2.25 MMBtu.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Minister could just clarify if he, in fact, said that the percentage of revenue earned from oil is 60 per cent, and secondly with respect to Part B, did you do a calculation on revenue loss when the price drops below \$50? You spoke about the price above \$50.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the clarification sought, yes, I did say 60 per cent. With respect to the question of, did we do a calculation of under—or when the price drops below US \$50—yes, Mr. Speaker, I did indicate that, and I will repeat for the benefit of the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Due to the decrease in the price of oil, the Government's estimated loss of revenue for oil and gas for fiscal 2015 is TT \$7.1 billion. This was based on an oil price of assumption of US \$45 per barrel of oil and a gas price of US \$2.25 per MMBtu.

Mr. Imbert: I think the Minister may have misunderstood my question. I am talking about Part B of my question. When the price of oil is below US \$50, what is the loss in revenue for every \$1 in decrease below US \$50 because you spoke about above US \$50?

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East is someone who reads into a lot of things and comes to his own conclusion, and so on—and the wrong conclusions. You could find that at the EBC and I think when he saw somebody moving with “ah truck” of money somewhere in the north-western peninsula.

So, as I said, I have indicated when the calculation was done at US \$45 and if he wants it incrementally, he could file a new question and certainly, the officials at the Ministry of Finance and the Economy will be willing to comply.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister has misinterpreted my question twice now. I will ask it one last time. Supplemental question: how much revenue does the Government lose when the average price of oil drops by \$1 over the fiscal year when the price is below \$50 per barrel?

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Mr. Speaker, I did indicate that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Above that.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: You indicated, or you were seeking the response on when it goes below \$50—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Per \$1 drop.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—per \$1 drop, and I did indicate that the loss of petroleum revenue as defined by—when the average price drops by US \$1, over the fiscal year, was approximately TT \$64.2 million. [*Crosstalk*] I understand what you are perfectly requesting, Mr. Speaker, and if the Member for Diego Martin North/East—[*Crosstalk*] Your arrogance will not get you anywhere in terms of what you are trying to—all right? And I am telling you that if you need additional information, file the appropriate question and we will comply.

BAIL (AMDT.) BILL, 2015

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [March 13, 2015]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: On the last occasion, the hon. Attorney General was on his legs and has 20 minutes of original speaking time remaining. The hon. Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Mr. Speaker, on the last occasion, I was speaking to the fact that steps had been taken—significant steps had been taken by this Government to fight the crime scourge and that the Bill before us was one aspect in our broad-stream approach.

Mr. Speaker, the policies that we have adopted have indeed yielded success because violent crime has been significantly reduced. As I said last week, the murder rate continues to fall and I wish to point out that under the PNM administration, where the murder rate crossed the 500 mark twice in consecutive years, we have not had that kind of rate under this Government. And to bring us up to date, to date, in 2015, there were 76 murders compared with 103 of the same period last year, which brings us to a point of a 35 per cent decrease year on year, comparing this year to last year.

To date, there has been a list of impressive legislative anti-crime measures, and I wish to point out that the Miscellaneous Provisions (Remand) Act, 2010; the (Kidnapping and Bail) Act, 2011; the FIU and Anti-Terrorism Act, 2012; the

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Administration of Justice Act 2014; the Anti-Gang Act, 2011; the Indictable Proceedings Act, 2011; the DNA Act, 2012; the Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011, are just some of those anti-crime legislative measures.

In addition, awaiting proclamation, there is the Bacteriological, (Biological) and Toxin Weapons (No. 2) Act, 2011; the Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Act, 2012; the Indictable Offences (Committal Proceedings) Act, 2014; and the Miscellaneous Provisions (Prisons) Act, 2014. Further to that, before the Parliament, is the Precursor Chemicals (No. 2) Bill, 2014; the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2015 which we are debating; and the parole Bill of 2015.

There are those who would suggest that this Government is not dealing with the problems faced in the criminal justice system in a holistic manner, and I wish Members to note the following. This Government is working towards the eventual abolition of preliminary enquiries within the Magistrates' Court. This will have the welcomed effect of streamlining and fast-tracking criminal proceedings while still preserving due process for accused persons.

Government is also working on improving the facilities and capabilities of the Forensic Science Centre. This will lead to a more efficient and thorough provision of forensic support to our police officers in their attempts to combat crime. It should also be noted that in the interim, we are quite prepared as a Government to outsource some of these services to speed up matters before the court.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, I wish to bring to the attention of this honourable House, the expansion of the Family Court in San Fernando. This, of course, will help the criminal justice system in our south lands to be more efficient as it will streamline all family matters from the regular courts in San Fernando, thereby lessening the workload and allowing more resources to be placed on other matters such as criminal matters.

We are currently exploring the possibility of removing all domestic-type matters such as protection orders and domestic violence matters from the Magistrates' Court and placing these matters before the Family Court. A measure such as this would also have the effect of reducing the workload experienced by our magistrates thereby increasing the resources which can be directed towards criminal matters that come before our courts.

Even within the Judiciary, there are many measures which have been undertaken to improve the criminal justice system such as the drug treatment court pilot project, the court annex mediation, and the judicial settlement pilot project and the Family Court of Trinidad and Tobago, which are all developments that would help in the administration of justice in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just refer to the issue of overcrowded prisons which was raised by the absent Member for Diego Martin North/East. The fact remains that the jails have been overcrowded for a very long time. Very little was done to alleviate this problem. In fact, in 2002, a Task Force on Prison Reform and Transformation Report was totally disregarded by the PNM opposite. There was the expressed need to amend the archaic Prison Rules and regulations by which the service was operating. I am informed that the Member for Diego Martin North/East was actually a member of this task force and even though, they did nothing with the report. This Government, however, Mr. Speaker, has drafted new Prison Rules which have been approved by Cabinet, and we await the proclamation of the Prisons Act, No. 13 of 2014, before we introduce it into Parliament.

We are also considering the use of technologies such as electronic monitoring. Electronic monitoring represents one of the major initiatives to be implemented with a view of transforming and modernizing the criminal justice landscape in Trinidad and Tobago. It is envisaged that electronic monitoring will address challenges currently plaguing the criminal justice system and, in particular our penal system. Some of the major challenges in need of urgent redress include overcrowding of prisons, high rates of recidivism and the potential harmful effects of incarceration in respect of certain categories of offenders, in particular first-time offenders.

2.15 p.m.

The Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Act, No. 11 of 2012, was assented to on July 03, 2012. The Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) (Approved Devices) Order, 2013, which sets out the specifications for the devices, was published as Legal Notice No. 1 of 2014, on January 02, 2014.

Pursuant to the approval of Cabinet, the National Information and Communications Technology Company Limited, iGovTT, has been engaged to procure the requisite devices and service provider. The requisite electronic monitoring devices and a service provider are to be procured.

Mr. Speaker, being a constitutional Republican democracy, the Constitution itself provides for the fundamental rights in sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution, that we can draft and pass laws that are inconsistent with those rights because those rights are not absolute, as mentioned by my respected colleague, the Minister of Legal Affairs and Justice.

We have already had, as I indicated, in this country, restrictions on the grant of bail through the two strikes and “one strike and you are out” principle. In a

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judgment delivered by the Court of Appeal, in the case of *Ishmael v the Attorney General* CV2007-01296 on July 27, 2012, the Court of Appeal in its judgment confirmed this principle. The hon. Justice of Appeal Nolan Beraux stated:

“It is now trite that most fundamental rights and freedoms are qualified and not absolute rights and are subject to legislative regulation and control. Such control will not run afoul of the fundamental rights and freedoms set out in sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution if the legislative provisions are proportionate to the legitimate aims and objectives of the legislation.”

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East has sought to remind us that these people are not guilty. I have to question the genuine concern of the Member, as it is this same Member who had no difficulty in supporting the amendment to the Bail Act brought by the PNM, which totally deprived people of bail. They had no difficulty in restricting that right to bail back then.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to remind the hon. Member for Diego North/East what he said in the House of Representatives on March 16, 2007, and I do so because he was not here last week when I was reminding him, and I quote:

“...we are passing this Bill today, on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure the safety and security of the good people of this country. Whether we are on this side or that side, the serious, decent, committed Members of Parliament will be passing this Bill today, so that persons who have been convicted twice of a heinous crime and are charged for a third time, will be denied bail, and incarcerated and prevented from wreaking havoc on the innocent people of this country.”

Mr. Speaker, comparison was also made with Canada, the UK, the United States of America and Australia. Those comparisons have been noted. But we must understand, if someone, in any one of those countries, is caught with chemical weapons or biological weapons, they are treated as terrorists and in some of those jurisdictions, they can be locked away, sometimes for years, without even having access to legal representation.

I make this point because in those jurisdictions, chemical weapons are a great threat of mass destruction to human life. In those countries those weapons are deemed weapons of mass destruction. In fact, an entire country was invaded and the leader slaughtered because of a perceived threat of weapons of mass destruction. In this part of the world, small arms are our weapons of mass destruction.

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Let me quote from Kofi Annan in 2002, in a report of the Secretary General to the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations on March 27, where he said:

“Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development.”

He also stated:

“The death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as ‘weapons of mass destruction’.”

Mr. Speaker, in countries like Canada, Britain, France, US, Sweden and others, which pride themselves on democracy and the rule of law and which have signed on to the international laws against weapons of mass destruction, it is business as usual with the licensed production of small arms because they are sold overseas and, therefore, we can understand why their approach would be different from our approach. It is very important that when we legislate—yes, we take guidance from other countries around the Commonwealth; others that might have done things differently; they may be more advanced in certain areas—we must also ensure that our legislation passed in this House is for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is where we are legislating for.

Mr. Speaker, it is suggested that this amendment diminishes judicial discretion and that only judges and magistrates should have the right to determine whether or not a person who is accused of committing a crime should be granted bail. I do not believe that this is a fair or an accurate criticism to make against this Bill. I say that it is neither fair nor accurate since the criticism seems to be made without regard to the laws which currently exist on the statute books in Trinidad and Tobago. The simple fact, Mr. Speaker, is that judicial discretion with regard to bail only exists within the parameters and confines of the law as established by the Parliament.

As it now stands, in Trinidad and Tobago under the current law, magistrates and judges have no discretion to grant bail in circumstances where a person is charged for the offences of murder, treason, piracy or hijacking. That is the law. Who determines that law? It was the Parliament which, in its collective wisdom, decided that these particular offences were such that once you were charged, you will not be entitled to bail at all. In other words, if you are charged and your matter takes 10 years to go to trial, for that 10-year period, you will be completely denied bail.

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Further, as I had earlier indicated under the Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2014, there are further restrictions which were placed on the availability of bail in certain circumstances. This is the law as it now stands. It is the law that was made in accordance with the requirements established in the Constitution and it remains valid and subsisting law.

I would like to remind the Members opposite that we are not proposing to completely remove access to bail for accused persons. We are not attempting to totally deny a person's right to bail, in respect of certain specified offences. Bail will only be restricted for 120 days. This is an existing formula which we have had with us for some time, first by virtue of the Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2011 and then in a larger and expanded role by virtue of the Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2014.

It should be remembered that the Government is only building on and improving existing laws that were already created by previous administrations. It was the PNM Government who, in 1994, were the first ones to create restrictions on bail by introducing the concept of three convictions in 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, there is the whole issue of persons who are arrested for the offence of possession of a firearm being allowed back on the street. I just wanted to make a quick mention of some matters that have been reported in the newspapers.

On February 19, 2015:

“Murder mars las lap on the Avenue”

On Carnival Tuesday night, state witness Nicholas Joseph, 21, was killed near his St. James home around 10.30 p.m. Joseph was the main witness in the killing of Marlon Harewood. Again, February 03, 2014, reported in the *Trinidad Express*:

“Woman witness shot dead”

Stacy Roopan, “who was a state witness in a court case was shot and killed on the street yesterday, weeks after she received death threats not to testify.”

Mr. Speaker, I make these points to show the damning picture of the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago. It is proof enough that we need to take a tougher stance in order to rid ourselves of the crime malaise that currently plagues our land.

The Bail (Amdt.) proposed here today will certainly augment our multi-tiered approach to crime, as it is just one aspect of our legislative package that seeks to protect our citizens. I do hope that the Members of the Opposition do recognize the dire importance of this proposal by voting in support of this Bail (Amdt.) Bill.

Mr. Speaker, there is one point that I would like to make—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Attorney General has expired. Would you like an extension, hon. Attorney General?

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Just two minutes please, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Attorney General be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the extension. I really just wanted to wind up this debate by addressing one issue that was raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, in his opening remarks in response to the piloting of this Bill, made a very important point. He said that under the Constitution, anybody could be Attorney General, and, you know, it is absolutely correct. Under the Constitution, anybody could be Attorney General. But since I became Attorney General, there have been stories in the newspaper that suggested, for some reason or not, that I was not qualified to be the Attorney General. Let me just say that this Attorney General has been a barrister-at-law for 14 years.

Hon. Member: What does that have to do with the Bill?

Sen. The Hon. G. Nicholas: I am responding to your own Member of Parliament. This Attorney General has been an attorney-at-law in Trinidad and Tobago for 13 years. This Attorney General received a full practising certificate to practise in the United Kingdom in 2008, seven years ago. This Attorney General is one of the few people in Trinidad and Tobago who actually has a practising certificate for the United Kingdom. This Attorney General is also one of the few citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who has a door tenancy in chambers in the United Kingdom. This Attorney General has actually practised in the Magistrates' Court, in the Family Court, in the High Court and in all areas of practice—from criminal, family, civil, commercial and property law.

2.30 p.m.

So that when there is a suggestion otherwise, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make the case very clear but, on the other hand, even though the Constitution allows for anyone to be speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East has been a Member of this House for 24 years—almost quarter of a century—and I cannot recall one moment when the Member for Diego Martin North/East actually even acted as Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago.

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With these few words, I beg to move, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Mr. Chairman: Are you ready here, Leader of the House? Are we ready? This Bill has five clauses and one preamble. We will take it clause by clause. Let us go.

Clauses 1 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble approved.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Question put: That the Bill be now read a third time.

Mr. Speaker: This Bill requires a special majority. Clerk. A division is therefore needed.

The House voted: Ayes 36

AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Hon. K.

Mc Leod, Hon. E.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

Ramadhar, Hon. P.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Seemungal, Hon. J.

Khan, Mrs. N.

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De Coteau, Hon. C.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

Khan, Hon. Dr. F.

Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.

Samuel, Hon. R.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Roopnarine, Hon. S.

Ramdial, Hon. R.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Partap, C.

Sharma, C.

Ramadharsingh, Dr. G.

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Hypolite, N.

Mc Intosh, Mrs. P.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Deyalsingh, T.

Browne, Dr. A.

Thomas, Mrs. J.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

TRADE MARKS BILL, 2014

[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [February 20, 2015]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: On the last occasion, the Minister of Legal Affairs and Justice was on his legs, and he has 15 minutes of original speaking time remaining.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were two speakers on the other side who had spoken on this matter, and I had dealt in some way or form to the contribution of the Member for Point Fortin, and I shall not trouble us today further with that contribution, but just to be reminded, the speaker, the Member for St. Joseph, had raised several issues and I shall very quickly enumerate and deal with them.

He had complained that the Minister of Legal Affairs and Justice had not explained the deficiencies in the present legislation, and the new legislation, why it was brought to remedy anything. Clearly because of his lack of situational awareness, not being informed of what was happening before him, these are the things that happened in this space and at that time.

When I said while we feel satisfied that the present system in place at the IP office has been and continues to function efficiently, we are also satisfied of the need to bring about enhancements that will make the system even better and more relevant to today's users. So, it was obvious then that what we wanted to do was to improve upon, not necessarily a bad system, but to make it even better and to be ahead of the game. My friend then went on to suggest that practitioners had not yet seen this Bill, but my instructions are and, indeed, from the Intellectual Property Office, that there was much consultation and, in fact, the Bill was emailed to practitioners who are well known to that office, and they were also advised that it was listed on the Parliament's website.

The Member for St. Joseph also indicated, at that time, there were only four practitioners in the area of intellectual property, dating his information to a 2005 *Newsday* article, which I found to be a little bit sketchy to say the least to have come to that conclusion, and that he had spoken to 50 per cent of that four, meaning two. But I am advised that there are at least 20 firms or practitioners who regularly practise within the realm of intellectual property, and that those practitioners, all of them, had been consulted.

2.45 p.m.

He raised issues from the two he may have spoken with about possible defects, or concerns of great magnitude, to the accession to the Madrid Protocol. From our work it was quite obvious. Indeed, I had received a letter from one of those firms that indicated, at the end of which, there were four concerns; three of them all related to the loss of income to these attorneys, and the fourth issue was really about the flood of applications that will come into the IPO. He also complained that they had not seen—the firms that he had spoken with had not yet seen the trade marks regulations, and it is trite before us now, and for all time, that regulations are not normally brought with the Bill. But we are moving at speed, and I am instructed that the trade mark regulations are fully near completion and will be brought very, very soon.

He had used words of the complaints that he had learnt of, that practitioners, the two of the four that he had known of, that were aghast at clause 5(4), but what all this simply does is really provide a time frame within which the application is made and payments are to follow. Because in the past we were informed that many will file the applications and not make payments and, at a later date, extend the date after the application, then withdraw the application, having received the protection without having paid. So that was something we thought was really wrong and needed to be plugged and dealt with. There, of course, remains still the complete discretion of the Controller of Intellectual Property to extend the period of payment. It was really about whether you pay at four o'clock when the office closes, like in every course of business.

The learned Member from St. Joseph also made comment, giving a totally false impression that by accession to the Madrid Protocol, that we would be abdicating all of the benefits of the Paris Convention, and spoke—*[Interruption]* The clearest impression was given before this House, and I am clearing it now if he did not intend it, it may have slipped unwittingly from his lips—yes—that 176 nations subscribe and benefit from the Paris Convention. We will continue to have all the benefits of Paris, but will now put another layer of modern law to that, and so, therefore, we would have improved, substantially, on what we are able to deliver.

What troubled me most, Mr. Speaker, from my friend's contribution was this: he made six references that the Minister, in piloting this Bill, referred to not a single clause in the Bill. Nothing could be further from the truth. For all those who were intellectually present, and for all those who saw and heard what happened here, I made several references. It would be almost *infra dig* to go

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[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

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through them, but, I think, it is necessary for the Member for St. Joseph to be reminded that I did speak to the definition of trade marks at clause 3, as one example; that in relation to electronic filing of applications, clause 5; the protection of collective marks, clause 64; infringement and offences at 28 and 29, and clauses 49 and 56, and I could go on. But for him to have said six times, it was not picong, it was not the slip of the tongue; it was deliberate to have suggested because it is the mind-set and the trademark, if I may call it, of the PNM, on that side, whenever they debate Bills, to distract, to misrepresent, and to discredit. Those are fundamentals in everything we have heard in this Parliament, and to have said that the Minister did not refer to a single clause—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Refa”?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Refer. Yes. Or whatever you want: speak to, address, deal with, and all of those words.

I wonder why such a thing could have occurred before us. Then he regaled us with a ton load, to put it in simple language, of irrelevant comments and statements about the G-Pan, because it is not relevant to this debate. We had taken time to explain the difference between patents, copyrights, and so, but he found himself adrift, confused as he was, speaking of *A Whiter Shade of Pale* that deals with copyrights, the G-Pan, of course, with patents, and then a curious intervention about children having more than three parents. I really do not know what bastardization of our debates we have here, but to have three parents, and so, maybe at some other informal level we will get an understanding as to what he really intended on this matter.

He spoke about the big question: did we look at the experiences of Antigua and Barbuda in deciding to accede to the Madrid Protocol? Once again, this big mysterious question, “Did you look? Did you look?” Of course we did. We, in fact—when I say “we”, the Intellectual Property Office, and I shall repeat, is the most respected Intellectual Property Office in the entire region, and I dare say, in this hemisphere. As a result of which, over the years of development and expertise, we did not do like others to have acceded and then prepared. We prepared and then brought the law. So that what we have, we have learned from the errors of others, we have adjusted, we have made improvements, and we understand all the failings or shortcomings, and have made adjustments for that. We did the very intelligent thing and not jump in and then figure it out. We figured it out and then we are going in.

Mr. Speaker, a blatant statement was made, I do not know from what source whatsoever, sometimes on the fertile imagination of others, they come up with

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truths that are known only to them, but inconsequential to the reality. Mr. Speaker, the Intellectual Property Office has prepared itself indeed. I had taken a note to the Cabinet and with the consent of Cabinet, we were given the resources to have created the Madrid Protocol Processing Unit which is fully staffed by six of the best and brightest. I do not have the time here to go through all of the training and component developments, and the electronic facilities that we have put in place to ensure that once this Bill becomes law, that we will be able to benefit from this Madrid Protocol.

So, Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I believe that the country will be far better off. Our ability to engage the minds of our brightest for them to participate in creating new and innovative developments, inventions, and so, will be much improved as we proceed to bring this into law. So, with these words, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House

House in committee.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, hon. Members, this Bill contains 141 clauses, 14 parts, and a preamble. In an effort to address efficiency, we will deal with the Bill in parts. Do I have the agreement of the House?

Assent indicated.

Mr. Chairman: We shall proceed in accordance with the agreement of the House.

Parts 1 to XIV, clauses 1 to 141 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

3.00 p.m.

Preamble approved.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Question put: That the Bill be read a third time.

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Mr. Speaker: This Bill requires a special majority. A division is therefore required.

<i>The House divided:</i>	Ayes	26	Noes	10
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AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Hon. K.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

Mc Leod, Hon. E.

Ramadhar, Hon. P.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Seemungal, Hon. J.

Khan, Mrs. N.

De Couteau, Hon. C.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

Khan, Hon. Dr. F.

Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.

Samuel, Hon. R.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Roopnarine, Hon. S.

Ramdial, Hon. R.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Partap, C.

Sharma, C.

Ramadharsingh, Dr. G.

NOES

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Trade Marks Bill, 2015

Friday, March 20, 2015

Hypolite, N.

McIntosh, Mrs. P.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Deyalsingh, T.

Browne, Dr. A.

Thomas, Mrs. J.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC BILL, 2014

[Fourth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [January 30, 2015]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on the last occasion the hon. Minister of Transport was on his legs and has 13 minutes of original speaking time remaining. The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Mr. Speaker, when we adjourned in the start of my wrap up, I spoke about the issue of the drunk driving legislation and the increased fines, et cetera, as one of the main parts of this new Bill.

The Member for Chaguanas West had a number of concerns, and even though I do not believe that like many of the Members on the opposite side, many of them have really and truly not read the Bill properly, because a lot of the concerns that they came with were really and truly all part of the Bill anyhow. So we will just do a little ABC, a little 101 of the motor vehicles Act, for the Members opposite.

The Member for Chaguanas West spoke about, for instance, in clause 10(2) (c) about “a person representing the public interest” and what is that and whose interest and whatsoever, and he went on a whole tangent about this public interest.

Motor Vehicles Bill, 2014
[HON. S. CADIZ]

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Mr. Speaker, this is a standard clause in several other pieces of legislation, and at the relevant time, a determination would be reached as to who would be deemed a fit and proper person to be representing the public interest. Of course, they have a number of persons, whether they are members of NGOs, for instance, Arrive Alive—Arrive Alive has been a key part in the issue of drunk driving, et cetera, in Trinidad and Tobago. So there are a number of NGOs, a number of agencies where the good people of Trinidad and Tobago will not mind at all in having one of their representatives on the board.

Clause 24 spoke to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles and, yes, we agree with the Member for Chaguanas West and therefore, we will be including in the amendments a Deputy Registrar.

Clause 29 of the Bill speaks to the powers of the Motor Vehicles Enforcement Officers and, again, the Member for Chaguanas West went on this tangent about removing the powers of what is now known as the “licensing officers”, but to remove the powers of the Motor Vehicles Enforcement Officers—of course, if he read the Bill properly, and in particular clause 29(1), he would see that nothing has changed. We have retained the powers of the Motor Vehicles Enforcement Officers and, therefore, they do in fact have the power to make arrests when performing their duties under this Bill, and that is how we cater for it.

In clause 224(18), it speaks to the approval by a Minister for various testing devices. Again, clearly, the Member, notwithstanding him previously being a Minister himself for Works and Transport, was never acquainted with the existing Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chap. 48:50 at section 70C(13) reads:

“The Minister may, by Order, approve the device to be used for the quantitative measuring of the proportion of alcohol in a person’s breath.”

So it already exists, it is already there. If he had taken the time, instead of talking about who “playing mas” in Chaguanas and what have you, he should have taken the time to understand this Bill, read the Bill, so when he came to his own contribution, it would have made a lot of sense, rather than just rambling on.

3.15 p.m.

Clause 226(1) speaks to the taking of a blood sample and the refusal by a person to do so. The Member for Diego Martin North/East, I believe, the Member for St. Joseph and definitely the Member for Chaguanas West, again, going on and on about this taking of a blood sample. I find it strange that the other side,

again—and that is a whole family on that side eh, Mr. Speaker. There is a whole family section on that side now that all in the family did not read the Bill properly. Therefore, if they looked at it, the clause 226(1), that provision already is in the existing legislation under the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act at section 70E(1). But again, all of a sudden this becomes a constitutional issue. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have from the Ministry of Health whereby they have indicated who is authorized to take blood samples, and that is what we will see when we go to the committee stage.

Clause 228(1) speaks to the court ordering the defendant to participate in an alcohol or drug rehab programme. Again, the Member goes on—the Member for Chaguanas West goes on and on and on about instead of these heavy fines that we have proposed or, in fact, right now is in the law, that we should have a rehab programme, and the Bill does speak to that, of where a chronic violator coming before the courts for drunk driving, that the judge will insist, will make sure that they do in fact go for rehab. So it is there. Again, if you read the Bill you will understand.

Clause 260 speaks of giving false information. Again, the fact that the Member raised this issue once again makes it obvious that the Member had not read the Bill.

The Member for Chaguanas West also talks about that the Bill is silent on the free passageway of roads, and raised the issue of persons blocking roads with sand and gravel and all of that. What does that have to do with the Motor Vehicles Authority Bill? That is an issue for local government. That is an issue for the regional corporations, for the city corporations. That is an issue for somebody else. So, he is saying that any little piece of wood, piece of galvanize, blocking the road that we should have that in the Bill. Again, as a Member of Parliament, if he knew—maybe he does not even know what the law is when it comes to persons blocking the road because he is not representing his constituents properly, and does not even know where to go.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill before us, they all went to town on this People's Partnership Government about borrowing, and that the Bill was from the previous administration and it was the Member for Diego Martin North/East that was really and truly the person behind the Bill, and that the Member for Chaguanas West when he came in 2010 that he was the one behind the Bill. The fact of the matter is, the Bill is here in the House today, Mr. Speaker. That is the fact. This is an excellent Bill. This Bill has been reviewed by many different people, not only legislators, people from all different NGOs, from persons with disabilities, from

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Arrive Alive, from the police, from the Judiciary, you name it, endless people, and all organizations have been able to look at the draft legislation, as they would have been able to look at the draft legislation. What did they come up with? They said this is very good legislation. This is a good Bill. This is a landmark piece of legislation and we need to have this Bill passed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to, in closing, really and truly thank the team at the Ministry of Transport that put this thing together, and I also want to make very special mention of the recently retired Transport Commissioner, Mr. Rueben Cato, who put in a lot of time and effort into making this thing happen. [*Desk thumping*]

Therefore, where it is many times we feel that there are persons in the public service that do not assist or they are not willing to help, I must say this Bill we got an awful lot of help from all parties. Many different Ministries were part and parcel of this, and I really and truly want to thank all those people that came together.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things you are going to see in the amendment—and yes, the Member for Chaguanas West did make mention of it—the issue of 65 years. Of where on reaching 65 years of age, you would then have to go for a medical. When we looked at it, we said why 65? I am sure there are Members in this House who are 65 years old—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: He was seeking his self-interest.

Hon. S. Cadiz:—and who are very able—okay—who were in excellent health, and really and truly when we looked at other jurisdictions, other jurisdictions do from 70 years to 75 years. There is one jurisdiction that actually does it up to 80 years before you have to go for a medical. Therefore, in the amendment we are proposing, in fact, that we move the age limit from 65 years to 70 years where you would then be required to do a medical.

So there are some changes that we have made, and good changes. So, Mr. Speaker, again, landmark legislation by the People's Partnership Government. Once again, bringing the right legislation to this Parliament to make the lives of every single person living in this country, make their lives better, better quality of life for each and every one. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, you are disturbing the proceedings.

Question put and agreed to.

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Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Mr. Chairman: All right, hon. Members, there are some amendments. I am talking to the Members of the Opposition, as well as Government. There are amendments to clauses 4, 21, 49, 53, 55 and 56. There are copies—these here? We also have—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, have these amendments been circulated?

Miss Mc Donald: No. They have not.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, have these amendments been circulated?

Mr. Chairman: No. I understand that they are being copied.

Mr. Imbert: Therefore, I cannot participate in this travesty. Contempt and disrespect. *[Crosstalk]*

Miss Mc Donald: They expect us to read the amendments and study the amendments. We cannot do this. *[Crosstalk]* *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Deyalsingh: This is landmark legislation.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Hon. Members, I understand that not having had this before you, you need some time to look at these amendments. In those circumstances, we will adjourn this matter. We will adjourn the proceedings of this particular matter, and we will go on, according to the Leader's advice, to the EBC's report, that Motion, and subsequent to completing that debate, we shall revert to the Motor Vehicles Authority. That will give Members sufficient time to look at these amendments during that particular period. Okay? So could we agree with that?

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that the progress of the Bill be reported to the House at this time.

Question put and agreed to.

House resumed.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Bill was considered in committee. However, the committee was unable to complete its work. I beg to move that the Bill be considered later in the proceedings.

Question put and agreed to.

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3.30 p.m.

DRAFT ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION ORDER, 2015

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas it is provided by subsection (3) of section 72 of the Constitution that as soon as may be after the Commission has submitted a report under paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of the said section 72, the Minister, designated by the Prime Minister for this purpose, shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval the Draft Order by the President for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report;

And whereas the Commission has submitted a report to the Prime Minister and the Speaker in accordance with the provisions in subsection (1) of section 72;

And whereas the draft of an Order entitled the “Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 2015” giving effect to the accommodations of the Commission was laid before the House of Representatives on the 6th day of March, 2015;

Be it resolved that the Draft Order entitled “The Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 2015” be approved.

Hon. Speaker, the EBC submitted its 2014 report of the review of the number and boundaries of constituencies into which Trinidad and Tobago is divided pursuant to section 72 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and this actual EBC report, you may recall, [*Holds up report*] has been circulated when we laid it in the Parliament on March 06, 2015.

Subsection 72(1) of the Constitution requires the commission to review the number and the boundaries of constituencies periodically and to submit the same to the Speaker of the House and the Prime Minister for presentation in accordance with the protocol and procedures for the House of Representatives.

Now, this report shows the constituencies into which it is recommended that Trinidad and Tobago should be divided in order to give effect to the rules set out in the Second Schedule or stating that in the opinion of the commission, no alteration is required to the existing number of boundaries to constituencies in order to give effect to the said rules in Trinidad and Tobago respectively, the electorate of any constituency shall not be more than 110 per cent nor be less than

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90 per cent of the total electorate of the island divided by the number of constituencies in that island.

The relevant parameter showed in the table carried out in the report and contained in the report would determine, using the figures for the total electorate in T&T respectively, 1,040,462 in Trinidad and 47,319 persons for Tobago. Given the provisions of the Constitution, the band parameters for electors for Trinidad and Tobago—Trinidad first: permissible upper limit of 29,347 persons, an average of 26,679 persons, permissible lower limit, 24,011; for Tobago: permissible upper limit, 26,026, average for Tobago, 23,660 persons, permissible lower limit for Tobago, 21,294 persons.

The report recommends that Trinidad and Tobago be divided into 39 constituencies and Tobago in two constituencies. So, we remain with the 41 constituencies. No changes have been made to the following 29 constituencies in Trinidad: Arima, Arouca/Maloney, Barataria/San Juan, Caroni Central, Caroni East, Chaguanas East, Chaguanas West, Cumuto/Manzanilla, D’Abadie/O’Meara, Fyzabad, La Brea, La Horquetta/Talparo, Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West, Lopinot/Bon Air West, Mayaro, Moruga/Tableland, Naparima, Oropouche West, Pointe-a-Pierre, Point Fortin, Princes Town, Siparia, St. Ann’s East, St. Augustine, St. Joseph, Tabaquite, Toco/Sangre Grande and Tunapuna.

So, these 29 constituencies remain with the same polling divisions and the same boundaries within that constituency. No change is to be made in the configuration of the two constituencies in Tobago, so 29 plus two—31 constituencies. Tobago East and West, no change.

Alterations of the boundaries of 10 constituencies in the electoral area of Trinidad as follows: Couva North, Couva South, Diego Martin West, Diego Martin Central, Diego Martin North/East, Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, Port of Spain South, San Fernando East, San Fernando West and Oropouche East. So, these 10 constituencies in Trinidad will have boundary changes, should the report of the EBC be adopted.

Some details of these changes are as follows: for Couva North, transfer polling division 3115 from Couva North to Couva South; polling division 3115 in Couva North which has an electorate now of 526 persons to be transferred to Couva South, thereby reducing the Couva North electorate to 28,829 and the number of polling divisions to 39. Collaterally, the electorate of Couva South to be increased to 28,069, which is below the permissible upper limit; correspondingly its number of polling divisions was increased by one, to 37. That is with respect to Couva South.

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With Diego Martin West, the transfer of polling division 0066 from Diego Martin West to Diego Martin Central, and also the transfer of polling division 0125 from Diego Martin North/East to Diego Martin West. The transfer from Diego Martin West of polling division 0125 to the Diego Martin West constituency, and polling divisions 0190 and 0195 to Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. Further, polling division 0125 in Diego Martin North/East, having an electorate of 583 is added to Diego Martin West, thus increasing the electorate of Diego Martin West to 30,017 and the number of its polling divisions to 49.

Next, polling division number 0066, having an electorate of 773 persons, is removed from Diego Martin West and added to Diego Martin Central, having an electorate of 28,555 persons and 41 polling divisions, thereby resulting overall in a net electorate of 29,244 and a reduction of polling divisions to 48 in Diego Martin West, and an increase in the electorate of Diego Martin Central to 29,328 and in the number of its polling divisions by one, to 42 polling divisions.

As a consequence of the removal of polling division 0125 from Diego Martin North/East, this constituency's electorate of 29,114 and 45 polling divisions will be reduced to 28,531 electors and 44 polling divisions. However, the EBC notes it became necessary to transfer two polling divisions, namely: polling division 0190 and 0195, with a combined total of 838 electors from Diego Martin North/East to that of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West in the process of adjusting the boundaries of the latter, its electorate of 23,364 being below the minimum permissible limit. So, this would take the electorate of Diego Martin North/East to be reduced to 27,693 persons and polling divisions of 42.

With respect to Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, transfer to Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West of polling division 0190 and 0195 from Diego Martin North/East, and in addition, transfer from Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West of polling division 0680 to Port of Spain South. Further, we recommend polling divisions 0190 and 0195 with electorates of 715 and 123 respectively to be transferred from Diego Martin North/East to Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. Accordingly, the electorate in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West to be increased to 24,472 and the number of polling divisions to 60.

Further, polling division 0680, with an electorate of 212 in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, transferred to Port of Spain South, reducing the electorate of the former to 24,260 electors and the number of polling divisions to 59. Consequently, the report states that Port of Spain South's electorate of 22,989 and 63 polling divisions are increased respectively to 24,201 electors and 64 polling divisions.

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San Fernando West: transfer of polling divisions 4055 and 4060 to San Fernando West, and transfer of polling divisions 3860 and 3872 and 3905 from Oropouche East to polling divisions 4055 and 4060, with 514 and 227 electors respectively to be transferred from San Fernando East, having an electorate of 23,501 persons and 44 polling divisions to San Fernando West. This results in a revised electorate for the latter constituency and 55 polling divisions, electors being 24,587. For the former electorate, it was 22,760 and 42 polling divisions.

Next, three polling divisions, namely: 3860, 3872 and 3905, with 1,255, 63 and 619 equal to a total of 1,907 electors to be transferred from the constituency of Oropouche East, which has an electorate of 28,702 persons and 23 polling divisions. These now to go to San Fernando East. This results in an increase of San Fernando East's electorate to 24,667 electors and the number of its polling divisions to 45. Similarly, the electorate of Oropouche East is reduced to 26,795 and the polling divisions reduced by three to 20 polling divisions in Oropouche East.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is the 2014 report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission which was laid in Parliament and which we now seek to have approved by this honourable House. As questions arise in the debate, I will welcome those questions and we can deal with them during the course of the debate. It has been the practice, and unless there is absolutely very commanding reasons for non-acceptance or alteration of the report, it has been the practice in the Parliament for the reports of the EBC to be accepted by the House. However, as I say, we remain open to suggestions from this House as to whether there should be any alterations to the report. Should there be none, we beg to move that the report be adopted as set out in the Motion.

I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all the Prime Minister has done is read a document submitted by the Elections and Boundaries Commission. All of us have received this document and the Prime Minister could have therefore spared us from a recycle of what is already in black and white.

In the Prime Minister's so-called presentation of this report, which is simply a regurgitation, word for word, of what is written by the EBC, without any explanation whatsoever, the Prime Minister has not told us anything about the reasons behind the changes that have been made. [*Interruption*]

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Now, Mr. Speaker, the usual grumbling has begun. I ask for your protection.

Mr. Speaker: You have my full protection. Continue.

Mr. C. Imbert: Well, I hope so.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, just allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, please. [*Interruption*] Please!

3.45 p.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: I think there is some important information that the public needs to understand. Firstly, this report has been in the possession of the Government since April 28, 2014. Now, this fact became known to the Opposition some time ago. We had a press conference and we called upon the Government to table this report without delay because the Government has kept this report for itself. It has been aware of its provisions, because the way the system operates, the report is submitted to the Prime Minister by the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

So, the Prime Minister received this information on April 28, 2014, 11 months ago, Mr. Speaker, almost one year. And when the Minister of Housing and Urban Development laid this report and gave what I think would be euphemistically called an “explanation”, of course he used the opportunity to make all sorts of outrageous remarks rather than just dealing with the issue of the report itself.

When the report was laid in the Parliament by the Minister of Housing and Urban Development a week or two ago, there was no explanation given for the Government keeping this report for almost one year. And it is time that this provision of the Constitution be amended. The way the Constitution is worded with respect to reports of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, some very nebulous words are inserted into the Constitution. And it says, “as soon as may be”, after the report is received by the Prime Minister it is laid in the House and debated and so on, Mr. Speaker.

These words, “as soon as may be” are interpreted by Governments to mean, whenever you feel like. It cannot be right that a Government will receive a report that makes significant changes to at least one constituency in Trinidad and Tobago and keeps that information to itself and then decides on the eve of an election—

Mr. Speaker, this Parliament will be dissolved on or around June 16 or 17, unless the Prime Minister dissolves it before that. That is because the life of a Parliament runs for five years from the date of the first sitting of the House of

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Representatives after a general election. It is not generally known that this is so. Some people believe that the five years runs from Election Day, but it does not. It runs from the date of the first sitting of the House of Representatives after a general election. And the first sitting of the House was around June 17, 2010 as far as I am aware, give or take a day. So as a result, automatically this Parliament will dissolve on or around June 16 or 17, 2015.

Today, I believe, is March 20—is that today?

Hon. Members: Yes, it is.

Mr. C. Imbert: So we have April, May, June. This House will automatically dissolve within a three-month period. It cannot be right for the Government to have this information for a year and keep it to themselves and not inform the national population, not inform the persons who reside in the polling divisions that are now being transferred from one constituency to another; not inform the Parliament, not inform the Opposition, not inform the political parties that are registered with the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

I am giving an undertaking now on behalf of the People's National Movement Government which will occur, [*Laughter and desk thumping*] which will occur in 2015—the next people's national government which will occur in 2015—I am giving an undertaking that one of the first things that we will do, Mr. Speaker, is to amend that part of the Constitution to put a specific time frame for the laying of these boundaries reports [*Desk thumping*] within 30 days, within 60 days.

I do not see why it cannot be laid within 30 days because there is no rocket science in all of this. The report comes to the Parliament without amendment. I am not aware—there may have been some change many, many years ago that I am not aware of, but I am not aware of in the last 25 years, where any Government or Parliament has made any changes to the recommendations made by the Elections and Boundaries Commission. And therefore, there is absolutely no reason for a Government to hold on to it for a year, none.

Therefore, on behalf of the People's National Movement, I am pledging that we will amend the Constitution so that the next boundaries report which is due in 2020 or some time before that, because the way it goes, the Elections and Boundaries Commission is mandated to submit a report—[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, could you—what is the matter with you? Be quiet.

Mr. Speaker, the Elections and Boundaries Commission is mandated to submit these reports not less than two years and not more than five years after their last

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report, and the last report would have been in May, I believe, or April 2009. I think it was April 30, 2009, thereabouts, and therefore this report was constitutionally due by the end of April 2014. And if the Constitution had been amended to indicate that this thing must be laid within 30 days, in May of 2014, this Parliament would have had sight. The national community would have had sight of this report and this recommendation. So we are going to amend the Constitution to make it mandatory that these reports be laid within 30 days so that no Government could hold on to them for a year, two years, as long as they feel like, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I think we need to look at the information in the report very closely. When we had this press conference a little while ago and we pointed out the Government had kept this report for a year, and we indicated that, because of the fact that three large polling divisions are being moved from the constituency of Oropouche East. Now, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the electoral map of Trinidad and Tobago, the map of electoral districts and boundaries in Trinidad and Tobago that is attached to the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, when you look at the report you see another fact that very few people know, that one of the smallest constituencies in terms of its footprint, not in terms of its population, is the constituency of San Fernando East.

In fact, it is almost impossible with the small print on this to determine exactly where San Fernando East is. It is very small. In fact, I remember some years ago driving around the constituency of San Fernando East and the exercise was completed within two hours. That is impossible in other constituencies like Mayaro, Moruga/Tableland, Toco/Sangre Grande—even my own constituency, Mr. Speaker, it will take you many hours to drive through all the polling divisions in the constituency.

But San Fernando East is flat, more or less, it is compact, it is very small, and it is surrounded by the constituencies of Naparima, Oropouche East and Pointé-a-Pierre. It is surrounded by those constituencies. And therefore, when you are transferring polling divisions in or out of San Fernando East there are only a few constituencies that these polling divisions can go in or out from. And that I repeat, those would be Naparima, Oropouche East, Pointe-a-Pierre and San Fernando West, Mr. Speaker.

So that, in making its changes to the constituency of San Fernando East, the Elections and Boundaries Commission had to pick from these other constituencies,—Naparima, Oropouche East, Pointé-a-Pierre and San Fernando West. It had to make a decision as to where these polling divisions would come

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from, and it selected Oropouche East. But one of the problems with these EBC reports, they never tell us why. They could have taken polling divisions from Naparima. They could have taken polling divisions from Pointé-a-Pierre, but they never tell us why. They decide to take from one and put into another. They never tell us why.

And you know, I would ask the EBC through this forum, on another occasion, the next time they are submitting a report, let us know, because you see, I want to state at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that the Chairman of the Elections and Boundaries Commission is an honourable man, a man of integrity, and I believe that the EBC itself, as an institution, the commissioners are men of integrity. [*Desk thumping*] I just want to say that at the outset.

So I do not believe—[*Crosstalk*] I am talking about the current ones—I do not believe that there is anything sinister in these moves, Mr. Speaker, although there are many people in the wider population who may believe so. And the reason why people believe so is because of lack of information. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, could you—Mr. Speaker, come on, come on. Mr. Speaker, could you get them to stop please.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please. Continue. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: What is wrong with them? They just talk. You know, they cannot let people speak.

Mr. Speaker: I am listening to you. Please, please, I am listening.

Mr. C. Imbert: It is so ridiculous, but as I said, when we get these reports out of the EBC, they do not give us any information. They say that San Fernando East is below the average, because if you go to the report itself, if you go to page IX of the report, it tells us that the average size of a constituency in Trinidad is 26,679, and the permissible—the average is 26,679. The permissible upper limit for a constituency in Trinidad, 29,347, and the permissible lower limit is 24,011. The way they do this, they get the average, the average is 26,679 and constituencies are allowed to be 10 per cent more or 10 per cent less than the average, Mr. Speaker. So the average is 26,000 plus. You are allowed to have as many as 29,000 and as little as 24,000.

But when one looks at the constituencies of San Fernando West and San Fernando East, one sees that they fell below the permissible limits. Looking at the report itself, on page 3 of the report, Appendix C, one sees that the electorate in San Fernando West, before the adjustments were made, was 23,846. San

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Fernando East was 23,501. So both San Fernando East and San Fernando West, before the adjustments are proposed, are below the permissible limit of 24,011 voters. So in order to adjust it, so that neither San Fernando East nor San Fernando West are below the minimum amount, you have to put polling divisions into these two constituencies and you have to take them from somewhere.

In the case of San Fernando West, they have taken two polling divisions from San Fernando East and put them into San Fernando West—[*Interruption*] yes, I think you know where they are. And what that did, San Fernando East was already below the minimum and you took out polling divisions from San Fernando East and put them into San Fernando West in order to top up San Fernando West. So this just left San Fernando East with a fairly large deficit. And the way the EBC made up that deficit was to take these fairly large polling divisions from Oropouche East and put them into San Fernando West.

When one analyses, Mr. Speaker, what the effect of this would be, one looks at the voting patterns, one looks at the results of the 2010 election and before, in these polling divisions that have been taken from Oropouche East and put into San Fernando East, and the polling divisions are: polling divisions 3860, 3872 and 3905, and they had a total of 1,907 electors. So almost 2,000 electors, voters from Oropouche East, have been transferred into San Fernando East.

4.00 p.m.

Hon. Member: PNM dead.

Mr. C. Imbert: You see, Mr. Speaker, you hear how they talking? They say because 2,000 voters have been transferred from Oropouche East into San Fernando East, PNM dead. You hear them? And you see, it is that kind of old talk that causes suspicion among the population. It is that kind of old talk. [*Interruption*] Yeah, yeah! Sure.

So let us take a look at polling division 3860. I have in my possession the Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the parliamentary election held on Monday, May 24, 2010, and when you combine polling divisions 3860-1 and 3860-2, you get a total of 690 votes for the UNC and a total of 183 votes for the PNM. So that reduces the PNM majority. Just that polling division alone adds a net amount. Five hundred UNC votes are added to San Fernando East, thereby reducing the PNM's majority in San Fernando East by 500 votes. When you look at polling division 3872 it is a small polling division, 49 UNC, two PNM, so that adds another 47 UNC votes to the constituency of San Fernando East. And then if you look at 3905, 378—you see, the Member knows, you know—votes for the UNC, 82 votes for the PNM. That is another 300-odd votes.

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So 500 plus 300 plus 50, 850 UNC votes in terms of actual votes cast. I am not talking about electors now. Actual votes cast. It reduces the PNM's majority in San Fernando East by 850. Then the other thing the EBC did was to remove two polling divisions from San Fernando East and put them into San Fernando West. So, those are polling division 4055 and polling division 4060, and I will not bother to go into the details because I am aware of the numbers. That results in a net loss of PNM votes of about 150. So when you take the 850 UNC coming in and you take the 150 PNM votes that are going out and going over to San Fernando West, the PNM has lost in terms of its margin 1,000 votes. Now the PNM's margin in 2010, in this seat, was in excess of 3,600, San Fernando East.

In 2007, it was almost 6,000, and if you go back into history, if you look at 2002, 2001, 2000, 1995 and so on, Mr. Speaker, what you are going to see, the average margin in San Fernando East is somewhere in the vicinity of about 5,000. So that the current MP has won that seat by margins in the average of 5,000. I will not argue with Members opposite. In 2010, it was reduced to 3,600. If the results of the 2010 election were used today, the margin in San Fernando East will be 2,600.

Now, one has to look very closely at the location of Oropouche East and the location of that border with San Fernando East, and look at what the demographics of that area are. Look very closely at that area. Now, my understanding is these polling divisions that are being moved out of Oropouche East into San Fernando East are more or less in the Corinth area. If one looks at the number of HDC housing units in that boundary between Oropouche—you see “he laughing”—East and San Fernando East, there are a large number of HDC housing units which have been constructed in these polling divisions, in polling divisions 3860, 3872 and 3905. So, in addition, Mr. Speaker, to the reduction in the PNM majority of 1,000 votes, you also have the potential of UNC voters being placed into HDC housing units in this borderline between Oropouche East and San Fernando East. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the problem is. The manner in which the UNC has distributed housing in the last five years, they have very tightly controlled the distribution of houses. The Minister recently announced that he is giving out 100 houses a week, 400 houses a month. I do not need anybody to try to convince me that the persons who will be placed into those HDC housing units, in polling divisions 3860, 3872 and 3905, would be very carefully screened and the Government will ensure that these people have sympathies towards the UNC. I have no doubt of that. But I want to put the UNC on notice—and you see, this is

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why I tie back to the tabling of this report. You see, they have had this information. They have known that the EBC recommended the movement of 2,000 voters from Oropouche East into San Fernando East. They have known that for one year, and in that one-year period, you only have to be resident in the area for three months before the registration date. So that—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Like you did in Tobago.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with them?

Mr. Speaker: Member! Members, please! Allow the Member to speak in silence, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: You know, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, please!

Mr. C. Imbert:—these are the things we need to discuss in this Parliament. We do not need people to come into this Parliament and regurgitate the dry data from the EBC. As I said, I could have read this myself.

What we need to discuss are the implications of what is happening, and the point I am making is that the UNC has had 11 months to populate polling divisions 3860, 3872 and 3905—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: And their housing policy.

Mr. C. Imbert:—and using their housing policy, and they are coming now, three months before the House is to be dissolved—and they were forced to do it, eh. They would not have done it if we had not let the national community know that they had an EBC report in their pocket for the last year. They are coming now three months before election, and now the residents in that area are aware of these changes.

I want to put the UNC on notice. You could put as many UNC voters as you want into those housing units, you could populate empty lots, you could populate street lights, and you could populate houses. As all of this is contained in this document I have here, the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the functioning of the Elections and Boundaries Commission of Trinidad and Tobago, as I say, the UNC could populate empty lots, they could populate lamp poles, they could put 56 people in a house, and it does not matter. I am putting the UNC on notice. We have people out in the field as we speak doing a voter verification exercise [*Desk thumping*] and we will identify and we will discover every single bogus voter that they attempt to put into the constituency of San Fernando East and any other constituency in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: You remember you said Death Valley, “yuh was walking”.

Mr. C. Imbert: We will speak about that in a short while.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, that now that this has become public, I call upon all right-thinking citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who live in the Corinth area and who live in the vicinity of polling divisions 3860, 3872 and 3905, to act as the eyes and ears of the Elections and Boundaries Commission and the People’s National Movement and inform the EBC and the PNM and the general population about any attempts to engage in illicit activities such as house padding and voter padding along this boundary between Oropouche East and San Fernando East.

With respect to the other changes, the other key changes are not consequential. The changes have been made. I mean, the changes have been made to the constituency of Couva North, but that has really been an exchange of voters with the constituency of Couva South. It is quite inconsequential. A change has been made in my own constituency. In the northern part of my constituency, one of polling divisions in the Bagatelle area has been transferred out of Diego Martin North/East into Diego Martin West. So again, it is not a material change in terms of voting patterns. In the southern part of my constituency, in the Boissiere area, two polling divisions have been transferred out of the constituency of Diego Martin North/East into the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West. Again, not a significant change.

The only significant change in this report is the addition of those pro-UNC polling divisions from Oropouche to San Fernando East, bringing in a net 1,000 UNC voters into San Fernando East. “Same licks dey go get, Mr. Speaker. Same licks dey go get.” But I really am asking the EBC—because, you see, the Board of the EBC can only depend on the staff at the EBC, and there is a very interesting description of the EBC in the Commission of Enquiry report, the report dated—this is 2002—May 2002. I go to page 84 of that report and it speaks about the then Chief Election Officer, not the current one:

“288. The Chief Election Officer was the principal witness for the EBC. He spent 12 days in the witness box outlining and explaining the procedures and practices that guided the EBC...we were able to discern a ‘mind-set’ governing the operations of the EBC.

289. The EBC we found, sees itself as an autonomous body circumscribed by an Act and Rules...thereto. It is not prepared to venture outside the Act...except where it is absolutely necessary...It does not see itself as a pro-active Institution. It sees itself more as a Government Department rather than an Institution which is the Guardian of the Electoral Process...”

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That was the situation in 2002. That was the situation in 2002, and one of the things that occurred at that time was a house-to-house survey that had taken place between the 2000 election and the 2001 general election. Do you know what happened at that time? Because of the controversy surrounding the functioning of the Elections and Boundaries Commission in the 2000 and 2001 general elections, these were the findings of the Commission of Enquiry, and I go to page 82 of that report.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East has expired. You would like an extension, hon. Member?

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Diego Martin North/East be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

4.15 p.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you. This was the statement made by—these were the findings of the Commission:

“We have already found that the 2001 List was flawed. The Revised List reflected a decrease of 113,973 Electors, from 958,227”—voters—“on the Annual List to 844,254”—voters—“on the Revised List resulting mainly from the House to House Survey.”

Do you hear those numbers I quoted, Mr. Speaker? The list of electors in 2001 had 958,000 voters on it, whereas in 2000, there were 844,000, a disparity of 113,000. Actually, it is the other way around. It was 958,000 in 2000, 844,000 in 2001. And over 100,000 voters were taken off the list because the EBC cleaned the list by doing a house-to-house survey.

Now, there has been a lot of discussion about the population of Trinidad and Tobago and the electoral list, and I would refer you now to the census, the 2011 census done by the persons opposite, and the findings of the 2011 census tell us that there are, as of 2011, 1,328,000 persons in Trinidad and Tobago of which about 50,000 are foreigners. So we are looking at just under 1.3 million persons in Trinidad and Tobago. And the population of Trinidad and Tobago has remained, more or less, constant at 1.3 million persons for many, many years and there is a reason for that.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we have about 11,000 deaths per year more or less and we have about 16,000 births—[*Crosstalk*] 17,000. It fluctuates between

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18,000 and 16,000. Let us use the figures from the Member for Caroni East because I know he keeps a tab on these things, on births and I knew that I could ask—get the information from the Member for Caroni East because he has it at his fingertips. So we have about 17,000 births in Trinidad and Tobago and we have about 11,000 deaths. So all things being equal, the population of Trinidad and Tobago should increase by about 6,000 persons every year. But it does not, because we have continuous outward migration. [*Crosstalk*] No, we are talking about the net figures. As many of our citizens, for all sorts of reasons, they want to further themselves, they have family abroad, they migrate to the United States, they migrate to Canada, and they migrate to the United Kingdom.

So, because of this large migration, the estimates of Trinidadians living abroad is in the hundreds of thousands. There are hundreds of thousands of Trinidadians living abroad. So that the population, more or less, is stagnant at about 1.3 million and has been so for many, many years. So if you have a population of 1.3 million, it is easy to establish how many voters you should have. All you have to do is subtract everybody under the age of 18. And if you go to the census and I took the figures down, the population in 2011, between the ages of 0 and 4 is 94,000; between the ages of 5 and 9, 91,000; between the ages of 10 and 14, 87,000; and between the ages of 15 and 19, 98,000. What we have to look at are the persons 15, 16 and 17, and if you do a straight line analysis, you get approximately 58,000 persons between the ages of 15 and 17. So if you add 94,000, 0 to 4; 91,000, 5 to 9; 87,000, 10 to 14; and 58,000, 15 to 17, you get 331,000 persons who are below the age of 18.

If you subtract 331,000 from 1.3 million—remember the population is 1,328,000 but not everybody is entitled to vote, because they count foreigners residing in Trinidad and Tobago in guesthouses and all sorts of things in that 1,328,000. So you are looking at, take away 331,000 from 1.3 million, you get somewhere in the vicinity of 970,000 and that is what our electoral list should be. The number of electors in Trinidad and Tobago should be in the vicinity of 970,000. But if you do the maths and you look at this report, it is 1,070,000—you add Trinidad and Tobago you get 1,070,000. If you look at Trinidad, if you go to the numbers, you will see 1,040,000 and 47,000 in Tobago. So you get 1,089,000, actually, in Trinidad and Tobago, but the voters' list should be about 970,000, 980,000. So once again, we have found ourselves using pure statistical data in a situation where there are approximately 100,000 names on this list that should not be on the list.

One of the problems is, we have not had a national house-to-house survey in Trinidad and Tobago for a long time. My understanding is that no national house-

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to-house survey has been done before this election that we are having. Therefore, it is incumbent on all political parties—I am speaking now not just for the PNM. It is incumbent on all political parties participating in this process to do their own field verification exercises. As parliamentarians, as persons participating in the electoral process, it is incumbent on all of us to examine the voters' list and to assist the Elections and Boundaries Commission in identifying persons who may have migrated or, for one reason or another, are no longer at the addresses that they are on. I can tell you, the PNM is in the process of doing this at a national level and we will be communicating our findings to the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

It may be a bit late but I am calling on the Government to give the EBC the necessary funding so at least in the marginal constituencies, because if you look at this EBC Report, you will see the house-to-house survey was concentrated on the marginal seats, the seats where the margin is 1,000 votes or less. So I am calling on the Government to give the EBC the necessary funds, at least between now and the Election Day, to do some sort of house-to-house survey in the marginal constituencies in Trinidad and Tobago, so that we can be assured that we are going into the election with the best list possible.

Let me just conclude by saying once again, that as far as I am concerned, speaking for myself and speaking on behalf of the People's National Movement, we consider the Chairman and the Commissioners of the Elections and Boundaries Commission to be honourable men, and we do not ascribe any sinister motives to them. I cannot speak for everybody that is employed in that institution. I cannot speak for the employees that are all down at every level, the supervisors, the numerators—I cannot speak for them. But I am speaking to the Commission and an independently appointed commission—I heard the Member for Oropouche East throwing out words for me saying that I am speaking about friends. No, no, no, I am speaking about our friends, the commissioners of the Elections and Boundaries Commission who are appointed by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and who are all honest, upright men. We ascribe no ulterior motives to them but—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramadhar: “Yuh sure?”

Mr. C. Imbert: None whatsoever.

Mr. Ramadhar: “Yuh sure the ink good this time?” [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert: No, no. Mr. Speaker, I am asking for a house-to-house survey to be done in the marginal constituencies. I am calling on the Government to provide the Elections and Boundaries with the necessary resources so that we go

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into this election with as little confusion as possible. We support this report and the PNM will vote in support of this report. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Before suspending for tea, I have been advised by the Leader of the House that we are going to revert to the motor vehicles matter when we come back from tea and then, of course, suspending this particular matter, adjourning it and dealing with it sometime later on this evening. So I am putting Members on notice, when we return, we go back into committee on the Motor Vehicles Authority Bill.

This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.25 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 50(3), I beg to move that the debate on the Motion to approve the Draft Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 2015, be adjourned to later in the proceedings.

Agreed to.

MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC BILL, 2014

Committee resumed.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are going to resume our committee stage of the Motor Vehicles Authority Bill. As I said earlier, we have 272 clauses, 22 Parts, 11 Schedules and a Preamble. So with your leave, I am suggesting, consistent with the amendments that have been circulated, we deal with the Bill in parts and whenever we have amendments, we shall pause, take those amendments and then proceed. Do I have the agreement of the House? Okay.

5.05 p.m.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

Question proposed: That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 4 be amended as circulated:

A. In the definition of “antique vehicle”, delete the word “fifty” and substitute the words “twenty-five”.

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B. Insert after the definition of “maxi-taxi,” the following definition:

“medical practitioner” means a doctor or phlebotomist qualified from an accredited university;

C. Delete the definition of “vehicle” and substitute the following definition:

“Vehicle” includes any motor vehicle, trailer or construction equipment.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 5 to 48 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 49.

Question proposed: That clause 49 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 49 be amended as circulated:

A. In subclause (1), delete paragraph (b) and renumber paragraphs (c), (d) and (e) as paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) respectively.

B. In subclause (3), delete the word “two” and substitute the word “one”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 49, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 50 to 52 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 53.

Question proposed: That clause 53 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 53 be amended as circulated:

In clause 53(3), delete the words “sixty-five years” and substitute the words “seventy years”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 53, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 54 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 55.

Question proposed: That clause 55 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 55 be amended as circulated:

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In clause 55(5) delete the words “sixty-five years” wherever they occur and substitute in each case the words “seventy years”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 55, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 56.

Question proposed: That clause 56 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 56 be amended as circulated:

A. Renumber subsection (2) as subsection (3).

B. Insert after subclause (1), the following sub clause:

“(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Authority may receive an application for renewal of a driver’s licence or a learner drivers licence within six months from the date of expiration of the licence where the applicant has proven to the satisfaction of the Authority that he would be out of the country at the time of expiration of the licence.”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 56, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 57 to 85 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 86.

Question proposed: That clause 86 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 86 be amended as circulated:

Delete the words “differently-abled” and “differently-abled person” wherever they occur and substitute in each case the words “disabled” and “person with a disability” respectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 86, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 87 to 93 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 94.

Question proposed: That clause 94 stand part of the Bill.

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Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 94 be amended as circulated:

- A. Renumber subclauses (7) and (8) as subclauses (9) and (10) respectively.
- B. Insert after subclause (6), the following subclauses:

“(7) A Motor Vehicles Enforcement Officer shall not issue an inspection certificate under subsection (4) if the commercial vehicle, agricultural or industrial tractor is defective or does not meet the requirements of the Act.

(8) A Motor Vehicles Enforcement Officer who contravenes sub regulation (7) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of five thousand dollars.”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 94, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 95 to 104 ordered the stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 105 to 111.

Question proposed: That clauses 105 to 111 stand part of the Bill.

Part VIII	Delete the words “differently abled person” and “differently abled parking permit” wherever they occur and substitute in each the words “persons with disabilities” and “persons with disability parking permit” respectively.
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Mr. Chairman: I think you will have to explain. We just cannot take everything. Just explain to the House what you have in your amendment so that the House would understand what you are seeking to achieve.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, Part VIII to the Bill refers to “differently-abled person parking permit” and throughout Part VIII there is that reference to differently-abled person. We have been informed, however, that the term “differently abled person” is not the term to be used and the correct term is “persons with disabilities”. The international standard now for that reference would be “persons with disabilities”.

Mr. Chairman: And what you are seeking to do is to make those changes to this.

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Mr. Cadiz: Wherever it is stated “differently-abled persons”, that now changes to “persons with disabilities”.

Mr. Chairman: Throughout Part VIII.

Mr. Cadiz: Yes.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clauses 105 to 111 be amended as circulated.

Question put and agreed to.

Clauses 105 to 111, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 112 to 117 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

5.20 p.m.

Clause 118.

Question proposed: That clause 118 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 118(2) be amended as circulated:

Delete the words “or regulations made thereunder” and substitute the words “, regulations made thereunder or any other written law”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 118, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 119.

Question proposed: That clause 119 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 119(1) be amended as circulated:

Insert after the words “requirements of this Act” the words “or any other written law”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 119, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 120.

Question proposed: That clause 120 stand part of the Bill.

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Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 120 be amended as circulated:

Insert after subclause (2), the following subclauses:

“(3) A Vehicle Trader Registration Certificate issued under subsection (1) shall contain such terms and conditions by which a vehicle trader shall be required to comply with in conducting his business of trading in vehicles.

(4) A vehicle trader who contravenes any term or condition as provided for under subsection (3) shall be liable to have his Vehicle Trader Registration Certificate suspended or revoked by the Authority.”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 120, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 121 to 201 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 202.

Question proposed: That clause 202 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 202(5) be amended as circulated:

Delete the words “five thousand” and substitute the words “six thousand”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 202, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 203 to 220 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 221.

Question proposed: That clause 221 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 221(1) be amended as circulated:

Delete the words “eight thousand” and “fifteen thousand” and substitute the words “twelve thousand” and “twenty-two thousand, five hundred” respectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 221, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill

Clause 222.

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Question proposed: That clause 222 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 222(2) be amended as circulated:

Delete the words “eight thousand” and “fifteen thousand” and substitute the words “twelve thousand” and “twenty-two thousand, five hundred” respectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 222, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 223.

Question proposed: That clause 223 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 223(5) be amended as circulated:

Delete the words “eight thousand” and substitute the words “twelve thousand”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 223, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 224.

Question proposed: That clause 224 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 224(6) be amended as circulated:

In subclause (6), delete the words “eight thousand” and “fifteen thousand” and substitute the words “twelve thousand” and “twenty-two thousand, five hundred” respectively.

A. In subclause (11), delete the words “eight thousand” and “fifteen thousand” and substitute the words “twelve thousand” and “twenty-two thousand, five hundred” respectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 224, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 225 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 226.

Question proposed: That clause 226 stand part of the Bill.

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Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 226(1) be amended as circulated:

Delete the words “eight thousand” and “fifteen thousand” and substitute the words “twelve thousand” and “twenty-two thousand, five hundred” respectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 226, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 227 and 228 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 229.

Question proposed: That clause 229 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 229 be amended as circulated:

A. Renumber subclause (4) as sub clause (6).

B. Insert after subclause (3) the following subclauses:

“(4) A person shall not drive or operate a public service vehicle if his—

(a) breath alcohol concentration exceeds zero micrograms of alcohol in one hundred millilitres of breath; or

(b) blood alcohol concentration exceeds zero milligrams of alcohol in one hundred millilitres of blood, or such other proportion as may be prescribed.

(5) Subsection (3) shall not apply to a hired vehicle that is chartered for a specific social activity or event.”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 229, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill

Clauses 230 to 232 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 233.

Question proposed: That clause 233 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 233(2) be amended as circulated:

Insert after the words “been committed” the words “or to the Clerk in any other district”.

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Question put and agreed to.

Clause 233, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 234 to 272 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: We could now go to new clauses.

New clause 178A.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I propose a new clause 178A which reads as follows:

“Insert after clause 178, the following clauses:

<p>Suspension or revocation of Private School Bus Ownership Permit</p>	<p>178A. (1) Subject to section 178B where the Authority is of the view that a Private School Bus Ownership Permit, issued under section 178(3) should be suspended or revoked as a result of the failure of the holder to comply with this Act, the Authority shall, suspend or revoke as it sees fit the Private School Bus Ownership Permit.</p>
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(2) Where a Private School Bus Ownership Permit has been suspended or revoked under this section the holder shall cease to operate his Private School Bus.

(3) A person who contravenes subsection (2) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of fifteen thousand dollars.”

New clause 178A read the first time.

Question proposed: That the new clause 178A be read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed: That the new clause be added to the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause 178A added to the Bill.

New clause 178B.

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Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I propose a new clause 178A which reads as follows:

“Notice of intention to suspend or revoke Private School Bus Ownership Permit 178B. (1) The Authority shall prior to suspending or revoking a Private School Bus Ownership Permit, give the holder of the Private School Bus Ownership Permit written notice of its intention to suspend or revoke the Private School Bus Ownership Permit and shall in giving the holder of the Permit notice, specify a date of not less than fourteen days after the date of issue of the Notice, upon which such suspension or revocation shall take effect and shall require the person to give reasons why the Private School Bus Ownership Permit should not be suspended or revoked as the case may be.

(2) Where under subsection (1) a person fails to give reasons or where the reasons given were not satisfactory, the Authority after taking into consideration any fact in mitigation, decides to suspend or revoke the Private School Bus Ownership Permit of the person pursuant to section 178A, the Authority shall forthwith, in writing, notify the person of the suspension or revocation.

(3) An order of suspension or revocation made under section 178A shall not take effect until the expiration of fourteen days after the Authority has informed the person against whom the order was made under subsection (2)

(4) A person who is a Private School Bus Ownership Permit has been suspended or revoked by the Authority under section 178A may, within fourteen days of the receipt of the notice referred to in subsection (3), appeal to the Appeal Committee.”

New clause 178B read the first time.

Question proposed: That the new clause 178B be read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed: That the new clause be added to the Bill.

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Question put and agreed to.

New clause 178B added to the Bill.

First to Fourth Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Fifth Schedule.

Question proposed: That the Fifth Schedule stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that the Fifth Schedule be amended as circulated.

Delete the words “differently abled person” and “differently abled parking permit” wherever they occur and substitute in each the words “persons with disabilities” and “persons with disability parking permit” respectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Fifth Schedule, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Sixth Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Seventh Schedule.

Question proposed: That the Seventh Schedule stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that the Seventh Schedule be amended as circulated.

A. In paragraph 1, delete the words “Part I” and “that Part” and substitute the words “Parts I and IA” and “the respective Part” respectively.

B. Insert after paragraph 8, the following paragraphs:

“No
motor
vehicle
tax on
electric-
powered
vehicles

8A.(1) Notwithstanding the requirements under this Schedule—

(a) a new electric vehicle, with an engine size not exceeding 179 kilowatts; or

(b) a used electric vehicle, with an engine size not exceeding 179 kilowatts, and which is not older than four years from the year of manufacture,

which is imported for private or commercial use on or after 1st January, 2015 and before 1st January, 2020, shall be free from motor vehicles tax.

(2) For the purposes of this paragraph, “electric vehicle” means a vehicle that is propelled by an electric motor powered by a rechargeable battery pack.

8B.(1) Notwithstanding the requirements under this Schedule—

No
motor
vehicle
tax on
hybrid
vehicles

(a) a new hybrid vehicle, with an engine size not exceeding 1799 cc; or

(b) a used hybrid vehicle, with an engine size not exceeding 1799 cc, and which is not older than four years from the year of manufacture.

which is imported for private or commercial use on or after 1st January, 2015 and before 1st January, 2020, shall be free from motor vehicles tax.

(2) For the purposes of this paragraph, “hybrid vehicle” means a vehicle that is capable of being propelled by a combination of an internal combustion engine and an on-board rechargeable energy system.”; and

C. Insert after Part I the following Part:

Part IA

PARTICULARS OF TAX FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES

<i>Class of Description of Vehicles</i>	<i>Vehicle Tax</i>
	\$
(1) Private cars or rented cars, station wagons or estate wagons:	
(a) Engine size not exceeding 159 kilowatts.....	5.00 per kilowatt
(b) Engine size exceeding 159 kilowatts but not exceeding 179 kilowatts.....	
(c) Engine size exceeding 179 kilowatts but not exceeding 199 kilowatts.....	8.00 per kilowatt

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(d) Engine size exceeding 199 kilowatts but not exceeding 249 kilowatts.....	15.00 per kilowatt 25.00 per kilowatt
(e) Engine size exceeding 249 kilowatts but not exceeding 299 kilowatts.....	
(f) Engine size exceeding 299 kilowatts but not exceeding 349 kilowatts.....	30.00 per kilowatt
(g) Engine size exceeding 349 kilowatts.....	35.00 per kilowatt 50.00 per kilowatt

(2) Taxis:

(a) Engine size not exceeding 159 kilowatts.....	1.50 per kilowatt
(b) Engine size exceeding 159 kilowatts but not exceeding 179 kilowatts.....	3.00 per kilowatt
(c) Engine size exceeding 179 kilowatts but not exceeding 199 kilowatts.....	6.00 per kilowatt
(d) Engine size exceeding 199 kilowatts but not exceeding 249 kilowatts.....	
(e) Engine size exceeding 249 kilowatts but not exceeding 299 kilowatts.....	15.75 per kilowatt
(f) Engine size exceeding 299 kilowatts but not exceeding 349 kilowatts.....	18.75 per kilowatt
(g) Engine size exceeding 349 kilowatts.....	22.50 per kilowatt 33.75 per kilowatt

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(3) Maxi-Taxis:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| (a) Engine size not exceeding 249 kilowatts..... | 6.00 per kilowatt |
| (b) Engine size exceeding 249 kilowatts..... | 8.00 per kilowatt |

(4) Goods Vehicles 2.50 per kilowatt

(5) Tractors:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| (a) Agricultural tractors..... | 1.00 per kilowatt |
| (b) Industrial tractors..... | 1.00 per kilowatt |

(6) Private School Bus:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| (a) Engine size not exceeding 249 kilowatts..... | 6.00 per kilowatt |
| (b) Engine size exceeding 249 kilowatts..... | 8.00 per kilowatt |

(7) Omni Bus:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| (a) Engine size not exceeding 249 kilowatts..... | 6.00 per kilowatt |
| (b) Engine size exceeding 249 kilowatts..... | 8.00 per kilowatt |

Question put and agreed to.

Seventh Schedule, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Eighth to Eleventh Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble approved.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill, as amended, be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, with amendment.

Motor Vehicles Bill, 2014

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Question put: That the Bill be now read a third time.

Mr. Speaker: This Bill requires a special majority, a division is therefore required.

The House divided: Ayes 26 Noes 10
AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Hon. K.

Mc Leod, Hon. E.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

Ramadhar, Hon. P.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Seemungal, Hon. J.

Khan, Mrs. N.

De Coteau, Hon. C.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

Khan, Hon. Dr. F.

Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.

Samuel, Hon. R.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Roopnarine, Hon. S.

Ramdial, Hon. R.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Partap, C.

Motor Vehicles Bill, 2014

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Sharma, C.

Ramadharsingh, Dr. G.

NOES

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Hypolite, N.

Mc Intosh, Mrs. P.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Deyalsingh, T.

Browne, Dr. A.

Thomas, Mrs. J.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

DRAFT ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION ORDER, 2015

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the debate on the Motion to approve the Draft Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 2015, will now be resumed. Who is next? The hon. Member for Tabaquite, [*Desk thumping*] the Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join this debate on the 2014 Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, on the review of constituency boundaries, pursuant to section 72 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the contribution by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who is already ready to take over the position of Leader of the Opposition, has in fact migrated to that position already, knowing that he will have the support of all those on the other side who have been removed from the list and who are now going to go to the President to sign a new petition for a new Leader of the Opposition, so he is positioning himself for that position.

Mr. Speaker, I was very alarmed at the statements being made by the Member for Diego Martin North/East in that he appeared to be creating a certain kind of mischief in the minds of the population, and, in my view, he covertly questioned the integrity of the members of the EBC, and—[*Interruption*]

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Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order, imputing improper motives. That is not true, 48(6). I said the opposite. Mr. Speaker, ask him to withdraw and apologize. This is a very serious matter, very serious matter, a very serious matter.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Hon. Member for Tabaquite—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: At the beginning and at the end of my contribution.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. I think that the hon. Member did in fact put on record his confidence in the integrity of those members, the members of the Commission, so I would ask you not to go further than what he has said in this debate so far. Thank you.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had not finished my line, and my last line to that was that at the end of it, after having done all the perceived mischief, he said that he supported—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, 48(6), that is not true, I said it at the beginning and at the end that I support the Commission. Ask him to withdraw and apologize, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

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

Miss Mc Donald: “Tabaquite is being mischievous.”

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, you want me to speak? [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, hon. Member, I ruled earlier on that the Member did in fact put on record his confidence in the commissioners who now constitute the EBC, and I would like that to be maintained, and let us not impute any other motive in the circumstances. Okay?

5.50 p.m.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am so guided. Thank you very much.

In his commentary and in his contribution, he did appear to be implying some sinister motive on the part of the Government, indicating that the Government had this report for a period of time and did not bring the report before the Parliament. But I would like to take the hon. Member’s mind back to 2009, and the 2009 Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the Review of the Constituency Boundaries, which was dated April 30, 2009, and to remind him that it was laid in the House on January 20, 2010, [*Crosstalk*] that was nine months after they received it, and it was debated on February 05 but unfortunately, three months after there was an election on May 24, so that between the time of the

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debate and the time of the election was a period of three months, an election which they called and also lost.

Mr. Speaker, if you go also to 2008—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—the Ninth Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission dated December 22, 2008, it was debated on June 12, 2009. So I do not see what is so unusual in the claims of the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, and our hon. Prime Minister, who has a track record for holding elections as they are constitutionally due, [*Desk thumping*] and you cannot take that away. This Government, through the actions of the Prime Minister, has always respected the Constitution and the rule of law in this country.

Sometimes when they talk of governance, they should look at that—governance in the context of respect for the Constitution and for the rule of law, and we stand head and shoulders above what the Opposition did, when, for so many times, they postponed local government elections in this country and refused to have it. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, 2003 to 2010, they never held it during that period—seven years. So when we talk about governance, and they claim that this Government does not have a track record of good governance, we must also remember the things that we have been doing to ensure that there is good governance in the country. That point the hon. Member made about delays and so on, does not hold water, because the Prime Minister has also said we are debating it today, that she will hold election by the time it is constitutionally due and that is in September.

I also want to put on record that the Government respects and upholds the independence of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. We were also at one time in Opposition, and we had also to deal with the Elections and Boundaries Commission reports, but we accepted those reports. But, you see, to imply that in Corinth and here and there that this Government is going to voter pad is the words of someone who does not understand what has happened in this country, does not understand the new intelligence of the voters, does not understand how the politics has shifted and is still going back to the old days of thinking that there is some base that will always vote one way and that you can push people into houses and they will vote for you.

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I want to remind Members of the Opposition, and particularly the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who would have been part of that era, in 1986, there was a 33/3 victory by the National Alliance for Reconstruction, and in those days there were still the EBC reports, and you still had the opportunity to voter pad and still to do all the things and giveaways, but the people voted because they saw that you were not doing the right things in the country, and they exercised that independence. Come back in 2010—29/12, an overwhelming victory for Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the People's Partnership, and we worked with the very EBC reports. We worked with them. We respect the independence of the EBC. [*Desk thumping*]

What is important to me is the forensic manner in which the Member for Diego Martin North/East was talking about the ability of a government to voter pad. I wondered whether the Member for Diego Martin North/East was revealing certain strategic secrets as to what they might have done. Sometimes it is said you cannot keep everything in your mind all the time, your words reflect what you have been thinking and doing all the time. Maybe what he was revealing— [*Interruption*]

Dr. Baker: What they did in Tobago.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Well, you could talk for Tobago and give us a description of what happened in Tobago but I remember also keys being given away to people and documents not being signed up, and people told to go and occupy certain houses and so on, in different times in the electoral processes, on the eve of the election. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: It is happening now!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: But it is being done correctly and it is being done according to process, [*Desk thumping*] and it is being done transparently. That is why the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development was able to come to the public and say that he was going to distribute 100 houses per week. He did not put it under the table; he did not do it surreptitiously. He came to the public and said, "This is the process by which we are going to do it." You see, this Government stands for openness and stands for transparency, and when openness and transparency are presented by real action, you all cannot take that—cannot take that. That is the problem.

So when you accuse this Government of not being open and not being transparent, here is an example of openness and transparency. This is what is available to the people; this is what we are going to be doing. People are going to

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the HDC, people are being processed and they have a fair opportunity to share in the patrimony of this country. [*Desk thumping*] To suggest therefore or to imply in any way or the other, that this Government is engaged in that kind of surreptitious practice, is the furthest from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, people in this country are going to vote on issues; that is what they are going to be voting on—on issues. What are the issues that they are going to vote on? The Member for Diego Martin North/East introduced this whole idea of voter padding and houses. You cannot bribe the population of this country as to how to vote, they are too intelligent for that. You cannot bribe them. This is not “Ap and Jab politics”, this is about people who have grown in terms of their understanding of the politics and what they need to respond to. And what are the issues?

They are going to vote on the issue of leadership competence, and one of the things that has been demonstrated in this country over and over for the last five years is the leadership competence of Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar as the Prime Minister. They are going to vote on leadership example, and I make a distinction between competence and example. By leadership example, I here include moral behaviour in public life. They are going to vote on the manner in which they see public officials behave in the public domain. And I can tell you, in this regard, they are going to vote as to how they really feel about the behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition over the last couple of weeks in the public view.

They are going to vote on the management of the economy. They are going to look at the fact that despite the fall in oil prices, despite the adjustments we have had to make, that no public servant has lost his or her job in this country, that there have not been job cuts in the public service, there have not been wage cuts in the public service. Instead, compare the 14 per cent to the 0/0/1 per cent that was offered prior to 2010 when we came into office.

They are going to vote on the issue of performance and delivery in accordance with our manifesto promises. We are the only party in government that came to this Parliament in 2010 and said, “Here is our manifesto”. We laid it on the table of the Parliament and said, “Judge us by what we are going to do with our manifesto”. We came back in 2013, reviewed our performance, a document prepared by the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, brought it back here, laid it here and showed that 90 per cent of what we promised was being delivered. That is what they are going to vote on. We are not talking about voter padding and house distribution. Mr. Speaker, they are going to be voting on

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what they have experienced, and they are going to be voting on the vision they see this Government and the Prime Minister have for the future of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, allow me, because the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East broke down some statistics about the population and referred in particular to those who are between the ages of 15, 16 and 17, in other words pointing them as voters, and said that there were 98,000 between 15 and 19 years of age. That is part of our youth population. Yes, they form an important voting public. What are they going to vote on? What are the youths going to vote on?

They will vote on the fact that this Government kept its promise not to cut the GATE programme, like they were telling them the GATE programme was going to be cut. When they voted for us, youths voted for us in 2010, we have maintained that contract we made with them, not just to keep the GATE programme, but to expand the GATE programme. [*Desk thumping*] So we expanded the GATE programme, and they are going to vote for that, because their colleagues and brothers and sisters coming after them know that they can trust the word of this Government if we say we are keeping the GATE programme and we are expanding the GATE programme, we have built up a trust with the population and people would believe. [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1), please.

Mr. Speaker: I think he is responding to the Member for Diego North/East; continue.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I am speaking about that 15 to 19 group referred to by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. They are going to vote for the fact that this Government has made more tertiary education opportunities available to them. Consider the young man or woman who lives in Biche and who lives in Sangre Grande or in Manzanilla or Mayaro, and in a low income agriculturally-based community, where they may not have had the kind of income to support rental charges near the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine, or they could not get the kind of money to travel to the university.

This Government placed COSTAATT in Sangre Grande where 1,500 students are now registered. This Government is building the campus in Debe which will save people approximately \$50,000 a year between upkeep and rental. If they had to come to St. Augustine to go to school, that is \$50,000 that they would not have to borrow, and keep them with their families, at a time when we need to improve the quality of family life and bonding in the country. [*Desk thumping*]

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They are going to vote because they have opportunities now with more technology centres established, not just in the urban centres but also in the rural communities. They will vote because of the ICT centres that have been set up by Dr. Griffith in several parts of the country. They will vote because young people now have an opportunity to use and train at Olympic standard facilities like the National Cycling Centre, the lawn tennis centre and also the aquatic centre, real things that they can feel and they can use, compared to the billion-dollar elephant that stands as the Brian Lara Tarouba Stadium. That is what the 15 to 19 are going to be voting for when they come to the polls.

He spoke also about the 970,000; he said that there are probably 100,000 voters that are on the list that should not be on the list, and he questioned the figures. But in that group are elderly people, pensioners, people who have given their sweat and toil and salt to this country, and those people will remember the fact that between 2010 and 2015, they have had two increases in their pensions, to \$3,000 and then to \$3,500.

Mr. Speaker, the differently abled, those who are getting public assistance. All these people will remember how they have benefited from a caring Government. So there is no need for us as a Government to voter pad and to engage in house distribution, like the Member is implying. There is no need for us to do that. We are seeking to deliver to the people on a very consistent basis, consistent with their needs, and we are doing that very well.

6.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the middle class of this country, we have not neglected them. One of the biggest things for the middle class in this country is home ownership—home ownership. You have a family, you want to make sure you have security for that family and that you can pass on some land or pass on a property to that family.

Mr. Speaker, despite the shortages that we have had in public sector housing because of the great demand, this Government has moved—has moved to do what?—to give the 2 per cent loan to people below \$10,000 [*Desk thumping*] so that they can buy a house for up to \$850,000. And for those with over \$10,000 and up to \$30,000 income, to buy a house for up to \$1.2 million at 5 per cent. That has never been done. That is supporting the working class.

Just talking about that, you know, look at what this Government has also done—moved, under the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise

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Development, the minimum wage from \$9.00 to \$12.50 to \$15; twice. [*Desk thumping*] Twice in our five years. This is a Government that does not have to voter pad; does not have to think about the distribution of houses to suit some kind of particular need. We are doing enough otherwise to ensure that we are meeting the needs of people. [*Desk thumping*] Our business as a political party and a Government is to win the minds of people because we have respect for the intelligence of people. We are not here to fool people with empty promises. If you notice, we have closed the gap between what we say and what we have done in terms of delivery. [*Desk thumping*] We have closed that gap.

Mr. Speaker, just yesterday another policy of this Government has begun to bear fruit. I read in the newspapers this morning about the launch of a CNG vehicle by Honda Motor Vehicles in Trinidad which is what is called the City Honda, and there is another company in Toyota that is also bringing down the Prius I think it is called—Prius it is called—and these are CNG vehicles. We are concerned about the environment. Environmentalists have been making a case for us to reduce emissions. This very vehicle which is like a Civic—the Civic by the way which is a gas vehicle costs \$239,512. But the City which has CNG and regular gas costs \$150,000 without the VAT and motor vehicle tax. The regular price is \$179,800. So this Government, because of this policy, has put back \$29,800 into the hands of the middle class, [*Desk thumping*] low income people, who are the ones that are buying these vehicles. That is what will bring us the votes.

That is why—because people are seeing us paying attention to their needs and fulfilling their ambitions. But it is not only about that, it is about the policy of emissions and the reduction of emissions in the country. That is what is important, Mr. Speaker. But do you know what it means for a family to receive about \$30,000 as a result of savings by this Government? But what is more, Mr. Speaker, a tank of CNG costs \$14. A tank of gas for the very vehicle is \$300. So, you are looking at a saving of \$276—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), please—48(1), please, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, if you could connect, again, to the matter before us. I understand—you are going a bit wide now, and if you could probably just connect to the matter before the House, even if you have to make reference to what you are doing. But please, connect to the matter that is before us, please.

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Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I am connecting. The connection I am making is that the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East accused this Government of going to distribute houses to get votes and to place people in houses. I am saying, that is not what we are about. We are a fair, equitable Government. We distribute things on the basis of fairness and equity, and what I am showing is that what we are doing, the alternative policies we have rather than what they are suggesting we are doing for the election. Mr. Speaker, I could go on, but maybe the picture is beginning to be painted. It is a bright—it is prosperity for all; that is what the picture is. Our vision is “Prosperity for All” and that is the picture that is being painted. But maybe they do not want me to go on to talk about, you know, what is happening in health, and 41 health centres are now opening later hours. Okay. I would not talk about that. I would not talk about the external patient programme.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), please.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. Yeah. I think—I am watching the Minister carefully and I am listening to him. Continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: All of these programmes are spread in every constituency. [*Desk thumping*] It is not just in one constituency. So in every constituency. So when a patient has problems with kidney dialysis, today there are 19 centres which are offering kidney dialysis.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I think this is taking it a little too far now—48(1). It is unbearable. [*Crosstalk*] Yes.

Mr. Speaker: No. Listen.

Miss Mc Donald: Member for Tabaquite, you should know better than that.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please. The Member for Diego Martin North/East opened up the debate. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah. He did. He did. And the Member is responding. I am trying to keep him within the limits of the Bill, but he is responding to what the Member said, and he has a right to do that. Continue, hon. Member, please.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I think my point has been made. But just up to yesterday a constituent of mine who had heart problems and needed surgery was able to get heart surgery in the external patient programme at a cost of about \$125,000 paid for by the Government. [*Crosstalk*] I am sure there are constituents of Members opposite who have also benefited.

But, you see, the hon. Member for St. Joseph would not like to hear what I am saying because within recent times, he has been complaining to me that I am

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paving too many roads in the St. Joseph constituency, [*Crosstalk*] out of Johnny King Avenue. But I want to tell him also that I am also going to be paving roads in Mt. D’or also in that constituency. So, he does not want to hear that. But those are the needs of the people and the people have been crying for prior to— [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 48(1), please, 48(1). And when are you paving the roads in Port of Spain South, East Port of Spain, Plaisance Road, and St. Paul Street? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Yes. Member, you are asking me to rule, but you want him to clarify. Well, continue, clarify for her, the hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: If the hon. Member for Port of Spain South will tell me the exact polling division, I will also then be able to go into that polling division and do the necessary work for her.

Miss Mc Donald: 1275 and 1280, please.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, you see, the Member for St. Joseph is giving me more ammunition. He is talking about water. Today, more people are receiving 24/7 water than they have ever received. [*Desk thumping*] That is what the people are going to vote for.

So when the Member for Diego Martin North/East talks about the distribution of houses in Corinth and voter padding, we see the right to shelter as the right of every citizen of this country. That is how we see things. We do not see the tilt of the nose, the colour of the eyes. We do not see those things. We see humanity in front of every one of us. That is what we see, and that is what we respond to.

Mr. Speaker, what I will tell the country about is the fact that parents of young children below six years of age now have more Government-built ECC centres and universal [*Desk thumping*] education for children of that age in all the constituencies—in all the constituencies. My colleague, the Minister of Community Development has, in fact, opened and built more community centres in the Opposition’s constituencies than in our constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, while he was speaking, he referred to San Fernando East and somehow he ignored San Fernando West. He did not talk about San Fernando West. He did not talk about the fact that San Fernando West constituents polling divisions were moved from San Fernando East to San Fernando West. He did not say that. He did not say that. I wonder why? He did not say that PDs in San Fernando West went up from 53 to 55. He did not also say that.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Where did they come from?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: There are two polling divisions in San Fernando East—I believe it is 4055 and 4060. I have the very document that my friend was quoting from there. San Fernando East—4055, yeah, and 4060. In terms of 4055, Coffee Street Boys’ AC School, the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, Mr. Patrick Manning, got 236 votes in that polling division, and the UNC, Carol Cuffy-Dowlat got 90. There are a number of names on the list by polling—500 names on the list. So they are moving 236 votes from San Fernando—well not they—the EBC recommended that 236 votes plus the 90 or the 500 votes, if you wish, be moved to San Fernando West and also 4060. Where in 4060—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure has expired. Would you be interested in an extension, hon. Minister?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And 4060 again, Coffee Street Boys’ AC School—234 persons on the electoral list and that has been moved also to San Fernando West. But he conveniently did not speak about that. He conveniently did not say that. So it has reduced the—in terms of the real voting, according to the 2010 figures—it reduced the difference in terms of the lead that the People’s Partnership had over the PNM in that particular seat. So, he should quote all the figures when he is quoting. Similarly, I cannot recall if he mentioned what happened with the movement of 0125, a polling division from Diego Martin North/East to Diego Martin West—583 members in that polling division.

I wonder—he did not say that was done in order to probably strengthen the Leader of the Opposition whose seat is under threat—whose seat under threat. One of the poorest representatives ever in this country is, in fact, the Member for—the Leader of the Opposition in terms of how he—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 48(6), imputing improper motives, please.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It is a judgment. I do not see improper motives. I make a judgment—judgmental statement.

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Mr. Speaker: Please.

Miss Mc Donald: He is not here to defend himself.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. But I do not see imputing improper motives. Continue, please. Continue, please, Member.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, you know, since the Member blurted out about him not being here, one of the perpetual habits of the Leader of the Opposition is not to sit in that seat there. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker that is imputing improper motives now—48(6). [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: He comes here and he speaks and he walks out— [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Mc Donald: He does not have to answer to you. He does not have to report to you, Member for Tabaquite.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, you have a tendency to rise. Member for Port of Spain South, you can only rise when I give you the authority to do so, but I notice that you take the liberty of rising without looking at me. The Member is on his legs and you force him to sit as if you are in charge. So, I want to advise you, if you want to interrupt a Member, you go to the relevant Standing Order, seek his leave to interrupt him. If he wants to give way, he can, or if you have a point of order, you raise it and I will look at it. But you just cannot rise as if, you know—I notice that that is a habit of yours. You just like to rise. Anyway, hon. Minister, continue please.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people suffering from emotional stress on that side these days. One has to be very compassionate to their utterings and their behaviour. But I believe I have made my point here this afternoon, that this is a Government that is solid in terms of its programmes, its plans, its policies and its performance and delivery, and there is no doubt in my mind how people will vote in the next election. They will vote to put the People's Partnership back into office. [*Desk thumping*]

6.20 p.m.

And not on the basis of what the Member for Diego Martin North/East is suggesting, that this Government is engaged in placing people in houses and so on. “Nah, nah, nah, that is not about us”. That is only a reflection of maybe what they did or, if they come back in office what they will do, serve their people and their supporters rather than serve the national community. Mr. Speaker, we are a national Government and we serve everyone.

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

Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to make a contribution to the Motion:

Be it resolved that the Draft Order entitled “The Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 2015” be approved.

Mr. Speaker, the Members opposite will grasp at any opportunity to politic and to try to win votes, as the Member for Tabaquite clearly demonstrated. He thought he was on the campaign platform already. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, page 2, Appendix B of the EBC report shows that the electorate of the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West increased from 22,660 electors as at January 29, 2009 to 23,634 electors as at January 29, 2014. Over those five years, there was an increase of 966 electors; that means persons eligible to vote, not those who voted, those who are eligible to vote.

Page 3 Appendix C, in the case of the spite, this increase of 966 electors, the number of electors in the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was below the permissible minimum. Page 4 Appendix D, in accordance with the provisions of Rule 4 of the Second Schedule of the Constitution, the max says that the maximum number of electors permissible in any constituency is 29,347, and the minimum number is 24,011. Which means that even with the increase of electors in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West to 23,634 as at January 29, 2014, the constituencies still remained below this permissible minimum of 24,011 electors. As a consequence, the EBC apparently made the necessary adjustments in the demarcation of the boundaries of the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West in order to satisfy this criterion of the permissible minimum of at least 24,011 electors.

So, a further 626 electors were added making the total number of electors in the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, 24,260. And how did the EBC go about this process? If we look at page 72 Appendix F, we see that in the first instance, two polling divisions that formerly belonged to Diego Martin North/East were relocated in the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, these are 0190 and 0195, and in the second instance, another polling division 0680 that formerly belonged to the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was relocated in the constituency of Port of Spain South.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to look at the voting patterns in these three polling divisions in question. PD 0680, that Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West lost to Port of Spain South, is traditionally a PNM stronghold, and has voted accordingly over the previous years. Whereas, polling divisions 0190 and 0195 that Port of

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Spain North/St. Ann's West gained from Diego Martin North/East are traditionally UNC/COP or other strongholds and have always voted accordingly over the years. I should like to make reference to some statistics to substantiate this point. I am going back just to the last two general elections because time is of essence.

In the 2007 general election in PD 0680, 103 votes were cast; 83 for the PNM, 14 for the COP, six for the UNC, and in the 2010 general election, in that very PD 0680; 101 votes were cast, 71 in favour of the PNM, 28 for the UNC and two for a party called the NMV. So, we see that in 2007 and 2010, that PD that I lost to the sister constituency, Port of Spain South, voted in favour of the PNM. We no longer have that benefit. And now let us look at the other two PDs that Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West received, or got, or were allocated from Diego Martin North/East. In 2007, PD 0190, in that polling division 353 votes were cast, 101 for the PNM, 299 for the COP and 73 for the UNC; and in 2010, in that very polling division, 499 votes were cast, 99 for the PNM, 400 for the UNC. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, over these two elections the PNM has never won in this PD 0190, which I have now or the constituency has now received.

Let us examine what occurred in the other PD which is 0195. In the general election 2007, 74 votes were cast; 35 for the PNM, 33 for the COP and six for the UNC. It is a sort of 50/50 situation in respect of this PD. And in 2010, 391 votes were cast; 236 for the PNM, 152 for the UNC and three for the NMV. On the surface it would appear that the PNM was victorious in this PD in the 2010 election. But this was not necessarily so, because according to Rule 93 of the elections rules, the ballots of this polling division were intermixed with the ballots for special voters, the protective services, et cetera. At best, the PNM has a 50/50 chance of victory in this polling division 0190. So, the two I got from Diego Martin North/East, one of them 0190, PNM never won, and in the other one, 0195, at best it is a 50/50 chance.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East said that to him it was not very significant. But, to me as Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, it gives me great cause for concern, because every vote counts. Every single vote counts. And these are the two polling divisions that the EBC has so kindly bestowed upon Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West polling divisions in which the PNM has not necessarily been victorious, and while at the same time PD 0680, a PNM stronghold, was given away.

Mr. Speaker, what this rearrangement of polling divisions means is that the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West will be weakened by some 200 to 300 votes. In other words, there will be a reduction in the margin of victory for the PNM by some 200 or 300 votes. *[Interruption]* The hon. Prime Minister is asking me how much I won by? A very convincible margin of almost 3,000 votes. *[Laughter]* Almost, just shy, 2,900 and something. *[Desk thumping]* I am worried, because this is the mother of all elections and every single vote counts. Every single vote counts. *[Laughter and desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, I cannot and dare not and will not say that these changes were willfully designed since that will be impugning the integrity of the EBC whose members are known to be honourable persons. I am not going there at all. I would not like to do it at all. And more specifically, I certainly will not like to impute any improper motives in respect of the chairman, Dr. Norbert Masson who is widely known as a gentleman of great integrity. So, I am not doing that. As a matter of fact, I should like to refer to the information brief that we received from this Parliament on the EBC report, and I would like to quote page 2:

Role of the Elections and Boundaries Commission

3. Part V provides for the system of balloting and also refers to the Second Schedule of the Constitution in which the rules are set out for the delimitation of constituency boundaries. According to the Constitution, the Commission in the exercise of its function as an independent body shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.

So, the commission is doing its work as a very independent body. So, we want to commend the commission for that. But, as I said previously, as Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St Ann's West, I am quite concerned; as I said, this is the mother of all elections and every single vote counts. And like all the Members on this side, I am determined that this incompetent and corrupt and disdainful UNC Government must never, ought never to be returned to the corridors of power. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Member: What?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: That is a judgment.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! You cannot describe Members of Parliament—*[Interruption]*—no, please, do not interrupt the Speaker when he is on his legs. You cannot impute improper motives or you cannot accuse Members of Parliament of corruption. You have to bring a substantive Motion. So, I will ask you to not go there at all. Okay? Please be guided accordingly. Continue.

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Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I should be guided accordingly. Mr. Speaker, I know the Government is trying to shore up votes throughout the entire country, and why should they not? It is an election year, and Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is no exception. They are trying to shore up their votes in Port of Spain North, and why not? Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is the capital city. It is a crown jewel of Trinidad and Tobago, it is a gem of the country. Indeed, Port of Spain North is the home of the Prime Minister's residence, the President's House, the Diplomatic Centre, NAPA, Queen's Hall, and Queen's Park Savannah, the head offices of all the multinational corporations and major companies of the energy sector, all the embassies and high commissions.

Mr. Speaker, it is also the place where there is prime real estate. You are talking about St. Ann's, Cascade and St. Clair and Ellerslie Park and Federation Park and Flag Staff. Prime real estate, and I would like to look at a piece of prime real estate in St. Ann's, in Fondes Amandes. When we debated the Water Improvement Rate Variation Order, 2011 on February 03, 2012 in this honourable House, I had referred to the plight of the residents of the Fondes Amandes Village Community that WASA was attempting to evict in October 2011. I had actually received a letter from the Minister advising that WASA was going to evict these residents and relocate them in Chaguanas from Fondes Amandes, St. Ann's to Chaguanas, in another constituency, because they were residing on WASA's land they said and they could cause pollution to the water courses, because there is a river running through the land; lovely piece of real estate. But, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth; because many of these residents are part of the Fondes Amandes Reforestation Project that has been a recipient of funding from Green Fund for several years and a project that has received international acclaim for work in the preservation of the environ, Mr. Speaker.

6.35 p.m.

This community has actually been assisting WASA in maintaining the integrity of the quality of the supply of water in the St. Ann's area, and St. Ann's has one of the purest supplies of water in the country, yet WASA wanted to evict them and relocate them on spurious grounds far away in another constituency.

I was sent a list of all these persons to be evicted and it is the way how they did it. Sometime in October 2012, WASA officials visited the homes of these people, took down their names and addresses and all the pertinent information under the guise of gathering information to connect the individual homes to a pipe

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borne supply of water. But, Mr. Speaker, this was only a ruse. This never happened. To date, these people are toting water from standpipes. It was never about connection to any water supply. As soon as WASA got the relevant information they wanted, the data about the people, they immediately sent them eviction notices. And, Mr. Speaker, some of those people have been living there, in that constituency, in that area for over 50, 60 and the older ones, the elders, 70 years. They were born there, many of them. And most of the land, anyway, is not WASA's land. This Government made a vain attempt to re-allocate them all the way to Chaguanas, out of their constituency.

Mr. Speaker, if the Government is talking about land for the landless and if they are serious about this and if they want to be fair to all citizens, then why does this Government not regularize the residents who reside in the Fondes Amandes Village community rather than try to evict them and take their land away from them and send them to another constituency.

I know what the Government wants to do. They want to get into the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. They want to control that constituency. They want to control Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and they want to control the prime real estate in the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and sell it out to their supporters—probably, probably, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to impute—I said probably, I do not want to impute any improper motives. I said probably. The St. Ann's river runs through that land. It is a lovely piece of property.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Maraval River.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Very nice, the St. Ann's river. It is very nice for river limes and so. But I am sending a loud and clear message to the Members opposite, to this Government, that, “doh” matter what they do, “doh” matter how they might try to seduce if they wish, or offer inducements to the citizens, not a piece of land in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is going to this Government. Not a piece. They wish it badly but they cannot and will never get Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. Mr. Speaker, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is not for sale.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Nobody wants to buy. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yeah, “yuh want to take it”. Mr. Speaker, it must be noted because the Member for Diego Martin North/East raised this question. It

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must be noted that no national survey was conducted prior to this report. And this is important because the results of surveys and censuses are used as critical references for delineating or demarcating electoral districts on a national or local level.

Mr. Speaker, the only survey I know about and of which we all are aware was the national census that was undertaken in 2011. Mary King was then the Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs, a huge Ministry she had there. And she piloted this Motion in this honourable House and I was the “respondee”; I was the one who rebutted on this side, the only one.

Mr. Speaker, the census was supposed to be conducted from January 11 to February 19, 2011. I remember objecting to the census being undertaken around that time, that hectic Carnival time. Oh, and the Members opposite, they cried me down, when there is an aura, a whole mood of gay abandon and people are impatient and unwilling to subject themselves to questions and queries, and sometimes there are households filled with visitors from abroad who might be answering the queries and giving wrong information and rendering it almost impossible to tabulate population data with accuracy. I had pointed out to the hon. Minister that the United Nations had advised Trinidad and Tobago that a census should not be carried out in this country around that time of Carnival. That time of joyful abandon, and it should be done when the country is quiet and tranquil and certainly not when people are partying and feting and waving their flags and their rags in the air.

Mr. Speaker, I advised the hon. Minister that the UN had further suggested that a census should be undertaken from the months of April to May when the country is more settled. This is the advice from the United Nations. I had indicated all this in my presentation, but apparently the hon. Minister then obviously did not take heed of my advice, but more importantly the advice from the UN.

So, when I hear my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East said he found some disparities with the statistics, and I did too. I am not a mathematician, but in doing my additions, which I did, I did find that the figures were not exactly tallying. So I only hope that the statistics or data collected from that census of 2011, that the data is completely accurate and reliable. The last thing I heard the Minister say about this census was that there was a lot of challenge, it was very challenging, infiltrating the hot spots in the city areas especially to collect data. So I wonder if those statistics are really complete, Mr. Speaker.

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Mr. Speaker, just like my colleague the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I still have to question this Government's motives for holding on to this report for almost a year, not releasing it since it was had since April 2014, and I want to quote from the report itself, where the report says:

And whereas in accordance with paragraph (a) of the said subsection (1) of section 72 of the Constitution, the Commission on the 28th day of April, 2014 submitted to the Honourable Prime Minister, and on the 28th day of April, 2014 submitted to the Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives, a report in which it recommends that Trinidad be divided into thirty-nine constituencies the boundaries—et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

So this report was there almost a year ago.

Mr. Speaker, and I wonder why it is that this report was not tabled in this House, you know, long before now, so that this debate could have taken place at a much earlier time and all the necessary objections registered. But this is an election year and this Government obviously has its agenda. And the race is on for votes. It is pure and simple, the race is on for votes. [*Desk thumping*] And I know this Government will do anything to get their votes.

Hon. Member: And you would not?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: We all would. And, Mr. Speaker, while the electorate of the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has been increased by 626 persons, I wish to ask, we are increasing and I understand that, we are at the permissible minimum and we have to increase, all right. But what has this UNC Government done to improve the lives of the constituents of the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West for the past, almost five years?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: What did the PNM do for 40 years?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Since the 2012 budget, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has been speaking of growth polls. I am sure the Member for Port of Spain South, the Member for Laventille West, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, they too have been hearing about growth polls and they have mentioned growth polls in Belmont and Gonzales.

What has been done to develop these areas of the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West that we are increasing? We are increasing it, but what have we done to develop it, to generate opportunities for business development, to create opportunities for sustainable development and sustainable employment and to improve the quality of life in general for the citizens and the constituents of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West? Very little, very little. But you see, Port of

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Spain North/St. Ann's West is perceived as a PNM constituency, and therefore it was fairly neglected by this UNC Government.

Now, in this election year, in an effort to woo voters, and I do not care what the Member for Tabaquite says, they do not want to woo voters, Mr. Speaker, let us be practical, it is an election year. Any Government in power would be wooing voters and any Opposition will also be wooing voters. So why are they denying it? Why are they in denial? It is a logical and natural fact. [*Desk thumping*] And in an effort to woo voters, this Government has adopted a giveaway approach, nationwide. Certainly not in my area, but nationwide. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, not particularly in my area.

Hon. Member: What are we debating?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I am talking about votes and I am talking people and I am talking about boundaries and constituencies. Since 2015, the budget for fiscal 2015, the Government has been on a giveaway spree since that budget in September that we debated in this honourable House in September. We had new tax deductible bonds; we had amnesty for tax penalties, it started since then. We had an increase in disability grant, we had an increase in public assistance grant, we had increase in personal allowance for persons over 60, and a lot of the people over 60 are not getting their personal allowance. They come to me, it is too much of a fight to get it. These are constituents, they belong to constituencies. The Government has been giving all these inducements, but people have not been getting them. One million dollars for families—I agree with it—members of the protective service killed in the line of duty, a boost for the small business sector, increase in the senior citizens grant, again, they are not getting it. They are not getting it.

You increase, Mr. Speaker, this Government increased the senior citizens grant by \$500. Right now I have a senior citizen that I am helping to assist to live, by giving her \$500 because she is not getting that extra 500 dollars. She is there with the \$3,000 and she cannot get the \$500. I have them coming to me, several people are coming to me, and they are not getting their grants.

Mr. Speaker, we had increase in monthly pensions for retired officers; we had provisions for self employed in the National Insurance Scheme system; we had an increase in contributions for registered annuities; we had a distribution of lands to Caroni workers; [*Desk thumping*] we had incentives for agro processing sector; we had the new 5 per cent mortgage programme, increase in minimal wage.

Dr. Moonilal: House, 100 a week.

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Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, everything was given away; ever since September 2014 the giveaway started, the inducements started. We are in an election year, we are in an election year, who can doubt that. I said that when I made my contribution in that budget debate that it was like Christmas come in September.

Mr. Speaker, and last but not least we got \$500 a month for the babies. [*Desk thumping*] And this wooing and these inducements have continued. In recent months, the UNC Government has been giving away land like nobody's business and they have reached a point where they are renting out land in Chaguanas to their supporters. Thirty years with an option to renew for a next 30 for pepper corn money. This is selling out the patrimony of our beloved country.

Dr. Douglas: To the people of the country. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, no, no, the Member for Oropouche East and the Minister for Housing and Urban Development, he is there, as he said, giving out 100 houses a week. [*Desk thumping*] I cannot get a single house for the constituents in my constituency, not one, and I have begged him.

6.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, about three years ago, I gave the hon. Minister a package with all the documentation of a gentleman, who was waiting for a house for about 58 years, he looked at it—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has expired. Would you want to guide me?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Would you like an extension?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Certainly.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Port of Spain/St. Ann's West be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Forty-eight or 58. And even when I gave it the hon. Member and I showed him, he say, "Oh God! Nah, I have to work on this." Never! "The man say he waiting on yuh. He say he waiting." He say, "Ah waiting on him." You know, my advice to the population is to take everything and vote

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them out. Take everything and vote them out. [*Desk thumping*] Take it all. Do like Tobago. Do like Tobago. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind this UNC Government that while they are seeking votes, seeking to acquire votes and to buy out voters, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is not for sale. I want to tell them that. We are not for sale. You cannot buy us out.

As I conclude, I should like to bid farewell and God's speed to the electorate of polling division 0680 and to assure them that they are going to a good sister constituency, and on behalf of the People's National Movement, I should like to express our sincere appreciation for their undying support to the PNM over the years.

Mr. Speaker, to the electorate of the polling divisions 0190 and 0195 that I gained from Diego Martin North/East, I should like to say welcome to the happy PNM family of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and the People's National Movement is looking forward to their support in the upcoming general election and to serving them well by doing everything within our power to make them happy and contented citizens.

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

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, Minister of Health.

The Minister of Health (Hon. Dr. Fuad Khan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was saying goodbye to the House, you know, I tried to listen but I was falling asleep, and thank God for the Member for Oropouche East, he called me and said, "wake up, wake up". So I started to listen, and while I was listening, I was trying to figure out what the Member was saying. But what came out of the whole conversation that took place from the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was, here the Member was singing the performances of the PP Government. Every single thing that the Member said, Land for the Landless, baby grant \$500, \$3,000, child support, the minimum wage, decrease in the interest rate to people who deserve it and the middle income families are now—everything that the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West said was basically the performances of the PP Government, and then it dawned on me why this was occurring. I realized something.

You know, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you are younger and you are playing cricket—the Member for Oropouche East, he plays cricket. You know, when you are standing up, you are going in to bat and you are watching the other side with a fast bowler like Curtly Ambrose—[*Interruption*]

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Mr. Deyalsingh: I thought it was Tim.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan:—and you watching—like Tim Gopeesingh, my friend, the Member for Caroni East—the fast bowler and he skittling out your partners, you know what I mean, one, two, three, like how the Member for Diego Martin West skittle out the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, skittle out the Member for Laventille West, skittle out—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 48(6), please.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, she rise again. She did not ask permission.

Mr. Speaker: No, she rose on a point of order. I am following to see where he is going. I do not think he is inputting any improper motive as yet.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to elaborate on a point that we are here looking at a fast bowler. You are going in to bat and you are watching the other side with this very good fast bowler skittling out the wickets, and I made comparison to how the Member for Laventille East/Morvant was skittled, the Member for Laventille West was skittled, the Member for Point Fortin was skittled, well the Member for La Brea is still pending to go to the wicket [*Laughter*] and you have—

The reason what I am trying to say, Mr. Speaker, you are watching this fast bowler, he is taking these wickets and you are now going in to bat. So you tell your friends, you telling your partners—because you know you are going to get skittled too—you say, “You know, ah should come with meh better bat. Ah should come with meh better pads. I mean, I should check meh vision.” And when the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West was speaking, that sort of imagery came to my mind because the Opposition is quite aware that they are going to be skittled. So what they are doing, they are making excuses upfront for the skittling, and at the end of the day when you do that, you make what they call upfront excuse for when you lose. When you lose, you will say, “Well you know, they sell out to the voters, they gave the voters everything. The voters did this, the voters did that by constituency.”

So what I am saying is that these upfront excuses are not going to work because the people of Trinidad and Tobago, as the Member for Tabaquite said, they vote in somebody based on a certain level of, a new electoral voter now is no longer a tribunal voting; it is now younger people looking on. Performance as they say beats old talk any day and that is one of our tag line, and the performance

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that we are doing has now I think, and it looks as though it is frightening the other side.

I was in the Opposition at one time and we had certain hurdles to overcome before we came into Government. I was part of the hurdles, Gillian Lucky and I, together with the COP, and everything else were formed at that time, and I would like to recommend to them there is a certain way of doing things to change things. Now I know and I am quite aware you are all embarrassed at the antics of your leader. I know that.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: No!

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, that is why they behave like this today. They are extremely embarrassed, and what they are thinking about, they are making the excuses upfront. They are making upfront excuses because they know how the leader has behaved in the last couple days about whatever. I do not want to use the word “catfight”, but it is there on the front page and what I am saying is—it is there on the front page. She has risen again.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, imputing improper motives, 48(6), please, to the Leader of the Opposition. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, I do not think we should get into that about the conduct of any Member of Parliament. That is a matter that must be raised on a substantive Motion as you are well aware.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I really was not talking about his behaviour, you know. I was just saying something that the *Express* alluded to, the front page of the *Express*.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: But you called the leader.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but we cannot deal with the *Express* because you know it was he.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Okay. What I would like to recommend to them based on what is happening as a result of the electoral process of the country, how the election is going to go, because based on the constituency level, we have about 41 constituencies and everybody thinks that they own a constituency for some reason.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West prior to this, spoke about the ownership of the constituency and the ownership of 0608, and the ownership of that, so she is releasing it to the other side and the ownership. Mr. Speaker, what—[*Interruption*]

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Mrs. Mc Intosh: Ownership?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: That is what you said.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order. The word “ownership”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order. No, take your seat. It is not a point of order. If you want to say someone is misrepresenting you, you can seek my support and at the end of his contribution, but it is not a point of order. Continue, please.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay, all I wanted to recommend to the hon. Members of that side, if they want to have a chance in the next election and make sure they get more than 21 constituencies as we are doing, we are doing what we have to do as the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West. It is an election year and we are giving the electorate what is due to them in the form of performance.

Unfortunately, the Opposition cannot do that because they are not performing. What you could do though, as a result of that, is to just write the President. All you have to do is just write the President. Since you have about, say seven of you all are disillusioned there, if you write the President and you sign it, seven of you all could move the Opposition Leader. You all could do that. [*Desk thumping*] What I am saying, if seven of you all there get together, sign a document for the President, you will move the Opposition Leader and you will be okay after that. You have nobody to worry about.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 44(8) for clarification after the— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: At the end of his speech.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I am speaking, Mr. Speaker, about electoral politics and this is how it works. At the United National Congress election in I think it was on 2005—2007, we were able to change—no, sorry, 2009/2010 based on our elections, we were able to change the leadership of the UNC, and in doing so gave us the thrust and moved into Government. I am just recommending, since you are not happy with the behaviour of your leader, what you all could do is sign a petition and state Member for Diego Martin Central [*Desk thumping*] as the next

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leader. You have 12 Members, all you need is seven and the President will do it. So what I am suggesting that in the case of the next election—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to rise on 48(6), imputing improper motives. We are very happy with our leader. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Happy! That is right.

Miss Mc Donald: On that world happy day, International World Happy Day, we are happy with the Opposition Leader. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: The Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South has been rising every time. I know she is happy with her leader because she is still there and she has been chosen. I have not heard anyone else get up and say that. The Member for Port of Spain South said that.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: We clapped her.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: You said that. No, the only person who got up and say that because she has been picked already. The Member for Diego Martin North/East has been picked already. Point Fortin has gone the Dillon way. You know what I mean? So, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day I am just giving them an approach that they could use so they could change the dynamics of the election based on constituency. If they do that, they might get more constituencies on that side.

Anyway, what I want to say, when you look at constituency, everyone is speaking on that side about their constituency, their roads, their drain, their river, their house, their whatever. The People's Partnership under the hon. Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, we do not speak about ours, ours, ours. We speak about country, and the Minister of Works and Infrastructure and the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, he does not see his constituency alone of Tabaquite, and he looks at the whole country. Roads are paved, the highways are done, Diego Martin is done, they recently opened a sort of highway to St. Helena, we have done the bypass in Valencia, life is easier going to Mayaro, soon to have the Naparima/Mayaro Road, and this is what we are about. We are about opening the country.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to share something and I will share something here because, you see, the Carenage Health Centre has—they were trying to build it for a very long time and it is the People's Partnership, under the Ministry of Health, is building the Carenage Health Centre. It is going to be a state-of-the-art two-storey health centre with all sorts of X-rays and in-house patient stay,

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together with an accident and emergency area. Now, Carenage is not my constituency. It is none of us. It is the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, but we see development on a whole. Not only have we done that, we have the Arima, we have the Sangre Grande Health Office, and we have the Palo Seco which is close to La Brea more than anything else, that is being done. So, when you look at performance, we look at performance on a holistic manner.

When we do the EPP programme and we do our cataracts, prosthesis, we do CT scan, MRI, pathology, as well as hip and knee replacements—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: It dormant.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, we do the whole constituency.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: It dormant, you have to do everything?

7.05 p.m.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: But I “doh” say I am only doing it for my constituency. I do not say I am doing it for my constituency, we do performance for the whole Government—I mean the whole country. So when we do that, it is the performance that is, I think, irking the Opposition and I have given the Opposition a method of approach as we did in 2009.

Now, if, Mr. Speaker, they want to increase their votes in polling—I am coming back to the Bill—in the polling divisions, if they want to increase the votes in the polling divisions, they have to look at how people in those polling divisions view them. Now, election, as I said, is about choices, either “yuh like A or yuh like B” and why would you like A, why would you like B. Most people in those polling divisions, some people may like roads, lights, water, which we have been delivering throughout our term of office. What we have also given to them is something different. It is something called performance not yet seen in Trinidad and Tobago.

As a result of that, those polling divisions, they are going to vote for the People’s Partnership because of performance, we have made life better. If we did not make life better, then what would occur? People would then vote us out as they did to the PNM in 2010. They were only there for two and a half years, and they had done such a poor job that the people decided they did not want them anymore and they left. So, you see, it is all about choices. Choice of what you have—choice A/choice B or leader A/leader B. Which leader will you decide to vote for? So, in all aspects of political life, it is about choices. Are you

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comfortable with this leader? Are you comfortable with that leader? And as you go forward, that is what is going to happen in every single constituency in this country.

In the last couple of weeks, I think there is now a comparison of leadership attitudes. Which leader the people are going to vote for? And day by day, one is seeing a deterioration in some parts of the leadership on that side and on this side, we are seeing an elevation of the leadership. So once you belong to the polling division, and I will say polling division 1405 in Barataria where we do have a sort of marginal area, the people of that polling division has said to me that they are so happy about the performance, of the roads, of the drains.

And what has now started, a movement by the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development, where, for the first time, we have a housing Ministry telling you that they are going to give out 100 houses a week and for people to come in and apply. There are lines there every single day. Why? People feel they have a chance, they think they have a chance. Before, they realized they had no chance, they did not know who was taking the houses and where it was going.

For the first time, the transparency in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is there and the people are lining up to say, "Okay, I want a chance to get a house". Had it been on the other side—I have yet to hear, I mean I have been here for quite a while in Trinidad and Tobago, one Minister of Housing, other than this one, who has said, "Come, I have houses to give to you. I have 100 houses a week, come and apply for it". This is the first time a Minister of Housing has done that. And people have realized, that, wait, with the People's Partnership Government, they can get something of their own. [*Desk thumping*] They could get it. I do not think the Minister of Housing and Urban Development is saying that he is going to only give Oropouche East alone houses, he is giving the country. Everybody in the country getting houses, not only just one place. So when we speak about a movement and performance in every single constituency, every single polling division, you do have—you definitely have a movement of performance moving forward.

Now, it may sound a bit, I mean, boastful what I am saying, but at the end of the day, it is an election year, and if we have done so much and for everything, we have to talk about it. If one drives along the Solomon Hochoy Highway and takes a look on the left hand side going down to south, they see a magnificent structure on the left. That is the Couva Children's Hospital. That is going to service quite a lot of children and adults and it is moving at a rapid pace. On the other side, when

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you look up, you see the Aquatic Centre, you see the cycling—you see a whole set of development. If you go as far down and you keep going down, you see the highway—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1) please, relevance.

Mr. Speaker: I am following him, I am following him, if he goes—

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: What I am trying to say is that in order, we are talking about elections and during elections, you talk about polling divisions, you talk about different things.

Mr. Deyalsingh: What PD the Aquatic Centre is?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Not PD, I said constituency.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Yuh see, yuh gone back to constituency.”

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, but you could go on constituency and PD.

Hon. Members: All right, all right.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, the way they are speaking, they want a representative for each PD. I am talking about a representative for the constituency. Why they are talking about PDs? They want one representative per PD, then we have too many representatives.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I think what this country needs to go forward with is proportional representation. If you have proportional representation, a lot of the things that are occurring here today—this is mine, this is yours, whatever it is—will be nullified. You see, when we introduced the difference to the local government election, remember the holler that took place, but now it is working quite well. In fact, the aldermen, as they say, it was a sort of proportional representation for aldermen. And what did it do? It gave the PNM seats in areas they never had and they were able to get that and certain smaller parties that did not even have representation, they have representation now.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Chaguanas West.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: So they got it. Yeah, the Member for Chaguanas West, my good friend. I would say, in fact, I am very glad he got some seats in and he is able to serve the people of his area.

So what we are looking at is not just mines, yours; this is ours, this is yours; this is PNM, this UNC; this is whatever, we are looking at a country. When we look at the electoral system and also the CSO figures, one has to decide: are we going to

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continue with this approach where the Member for Diego Martin North/East gave us a dissertation on how the PNM does voter padding? That is what he did. He said, “Okay”—the Member for Diego Martin North/East and he is, you know, very good at that, sort of spinning what he normally does. I was there for the 2000 election and the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East was there also and working in the Commission of Enquiry, et cetera, so he has the whole thing.

So, in order to nullify all this and bring performance to its head, we are looking at the proportional-type representation which will come out of this as we mature. So therefore, when you talk about housing going here, people going here; this one giving out house here, this one giving out house; that will be totally nullified. So, as the result of it, it will be a total vote of a total system moving forward as proportional representation is supposed to do. You follow what I am saying? Rather than the Member for Diego Martin North/East—the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West when he was in the People’s Partnership, he also said—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Member, would you give way?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Give me two minutes.

Mr. Speaker: No, you have to address me on that.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I will give you just now. What he said, if he had put two more maxi-taxis in Diego Martin North/East, the Member would not be here and this is what he said. So this is what they talk about, you know, about voter-type “ah” thing. But however, the Member for Chaguanas West did not put those two maxi-taxis and that is why we have the Member for Diego Martin North/East here.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Member, for giving way. You said that proportional representation will come out of this, could you explain what you mean by that, please?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No problem. I am very glad I gave way to the Member for St Joseph. When I talk about the proportional representation will come out of this, the Member for Diego Martin North/East gave us a dissertation on voter padding, right, and we do not believe in voter padding. Because he was very angry that the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East was saying to the population, “I am giving 100 houses a week” and then he accused the Member of Parliament for

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saying that, “Oh, yuh giving it here, there and everywhere, San Fernando East and Oropouche East going to San Fernando East”. Had we had proportional representation, then the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East would have had a very short contribution, might have been a one minute, okay, because then he would have nothing to speak about.

So, what I am saying is that we are evolving as a country and when you hear the arguments from the other side and the arguments from this side, it brings into question, after all the picong is done, where we are going forward. This is what we have. We were speaking on the local government election, we tried the proportional representation and it worked nicely. And who knows? Next five years, whoever is here will determine exactly if we are going to go into proportional representation and for a total country, and we will move out of this constituency/polling division system where people accused everybody of giving hand outs or giving outs based on demographics of a marginal seat.

In a marginal seat, people think, okay, you have six marginal seats, both sides will say, “I am going to target them for the six marginal seats, forget the rest”. That should not be so. It should be targeting everyone in the country, uplifting everybody, when we speak about political representation, electoral politics, EBC politics.

During an election, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you something. On election day, you get a whole set of people coming to your office, “Ah did not get meh name here, ah did not get meh name here, ah did not see meh name here, ah did not see meh name there. Yuh follow what I am saying?” This is the result of it. And when the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East says that both sides and everybody should go forward and do checks and balances because there are one million people and the thing is supposed to be 900,000 approximately. Sometimes you say there is a 60 per cent or 70 per cent voter turnout. And in any electorate, and you look at it over the board, you will find out that 60 per cent or 70 per cent is what is there. The other 30 per cent do not really exist although it is part of the electorate. They do not come out because they do not exist, they are not around and we need to upgrade our electoral list. I know that the EBC puts out the list on January 01 and July 01, and you could correlate your electorate with that.

So this is just evolving and an evolution of what is yet to come. When we look at it, one has to decide once again that electoral politics is about choices—what is the choice, who you are going to choose and why.

So, with those few words, I want to thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

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Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to clarify something, please. The hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, when he started off, he kept saying that I used the word "ownership", I kept the word "ownership". Not once, as the *Hansard* will report, did I ever use the word "ownership". I consistently said the constituency of Port of Spain North/St Ann's West and I called the other constituencies, Diego Martin North/East and constituency of Port of Spain South. I never said ownership and we ought not to be misrepresented. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh (*St. Joseph*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me an opportunity to make a contribution on the EBC report. It is incumbent upon us on this side to bring this debate back into some focus because after the contributions of the Member for Tabaquite and the Member for Barataria/San Juan, I am afraid the population is a little bit confused as to what we are actually debating. They may think that it is a budget presentation but it is not.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to discuss the issue of voting which is the ultimate expression of democracy. Trinidad and Tobago has been blessed over the years with free and fair elections. We have been blessed with a system of voting which has been known to all man, woman, everybody over the age of 18 that produces a result which is predictable to some extent and which generally provides for a stable Government. It is a known system.

However, Mr. Speaker, this general election and my friend, the Member for Barataria/San Juan is correct, it is a matter of choice. But it is a matter of choice, not in the frivolous way it was put over, but it is a matter of choice where regardless of whether you are a UNC, PNM, COP or that floating independent voter, they are going to have to make a choice. And the choices they have to make now have to put into the context of what has happened to this country in the past five years, where almost every institution has been demolished, where the integrity of institutions has been called into question.

7.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this very Parliament has been misused over the section 34 affair. The Judiciary, unfortunately, was dragged into a parliamentary debate. The Police Complaints, another institution, has been dragged into the political debate. All our boards under this Government, which are there as an extension of government, an extension of good governance, almost every board is riddled with corruption, the NGC Board, the Chaguaramas Development Board, in the most obscene manner and this is what this Government has brought to us over the past five years.

Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of St. Joseph, for which I have the honour to be the representative, that constituency stretches from Riverside Road in Curepe; Caiman, St. Joseph; Champs Fleurs, Quarry Drive; Quarry Road; Mount D'or, Champs Fleurs; Quarry Road; Aranguez; Mount Lambert; Farm Road; Valsayn North; Bamboo No.1; San Juan; Petit Bourg and you will find all spectrum of voters there: PNM, people who want to vote for the UNC. You will find the independent voter. You will find members of the Congress of the People.

But regardless of one's political persuasion, regardless of where one wants to cast their vote, as they are entitled to, one has to be concerned that our predictability and the safety of our voting system, as imperfect as it might be, but it is the best of what is available, is now under threat. And I would speak directly to that in a very short while and that has to do with the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill and I am going to speak to that.

Mr. Speaker, what discerning people are looking at in this society now, in the context of a coming general election, is what type of economy we, in the PNM, will inherit when we win office. With all the distractions facing the population, has it dawned on anyone that the price of oil is now hovering and dipping below the revised budgeted price of \$45? Has that occurred to anyone? And I think not. Because in the noise of an election campaign, these issues tend to get lost. These issues are not front page news but this is a very serious matter, because whosoever forms the next government is going to be faced with an economy where one of our main foreign exchange earners is not going to give us the type of comfort it did.

Mr. Speaker, as recently as 18th March this year, the price of oil actually went down to \$41 a barrel, which is below the revised budgeted price when it went from \$75 to \$45 and the Government is silent on this, totally silent. And the population has been distracted from the real issues facing us. I quote:

WTI is now down over \$2 from the massive API inventory billed last night and is testing down to a \$41 handle. The latest leg is not helped by the Saudi officials comments that it will not interfere with the oil market and that oil market would fix itself.

Mr. Speaker, if I translate that, it simply means do not expect OPEC and Saudis to cut production to boost prices. That is what it means. So, Mr. Speaker, I just say that to put this debate in the context of a general election which is going to be funded with massive and obscene spending with oil at \$41 a barrel.

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Mr. Speaker, you would have noticed I asked the Member for Barataria/San Juan to give way and he made a very important statement about proportional representation. But before I go to that and treat with that, and I will, it is incumbent upon the PNM on this side to remind the country of what took place in this Parliament on 11th August, 2011. On 11th August, 2011, August when the Parliament is normally on vacation, parliamentarians were called out. Parliamentary staff was called out to discuss something called the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill.

That Bill, Mr. Speaker, which had to do with changing the mode of election of a government was deemed so vitally important in August of 2014—sorry, 11th August, 2014 was deemed to be so vitally important to the country to change the Constitution that everyone was called out from their vacation. We debated this Bill on 11th August, 2014, lest we forget. It was then rushed to the Senate and certain amendments were made in the Senate. Then the amendments found their way onto the Order Paper in August of 2014. Those amendments have languished on the Order Paper from August 2014 to today.

What was so critically important about that Constitution (Amdt.) Bill? What were they trying to accomplish that they had to call us out, call out the parliamentary staff in August to deal with this and then have the amendments stay on the Order Paper for now close to what, six months. And every time you ask anyone opposite: when are we going to debate this? We get absolutely no answer. No answer. And this is what begs the question. How can an election, an upcoming general election, be fair and free when the population, as I described in my constituency: UNC supporters, PNM, COP, independent, how are these constituents to know by which method they are going to cast their vote for the general election in 2015? How are they to know?

Mr. Speaker that is why one must speak about that Constitution (Amdt.) Bill and what took place on 11th August, 2014. Mr. Speaker, you would remember in that debate, both the Members for Tunapuna and San Fernando West voted against the Bill. But it is important to put on the *Hansard* and to read back into the *Hansard* certain critical paragraphs from that debate.

Mr. Speaker: Member.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I thought you were dealing with this matter en passant. You know Standing Order 48, I think is 48(3)—[*Interruption*]

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think we should be reviving a question, one, and secondly, there are matters that are pending before this honourable House, amendments. You are anticipating by reviving, so you are coming close to violating Standing Order 48(3), but in addition to that, you have amendments. That debate is yet to be completed. So I am asking you not to revive the matter in that detailed way. We will get a chance to deal with it whenever these amendments are debated. I do not know when they will be debated. Then, at any rate, and so on, the matter is still before us. So I allow you to go but now you are going to quote, I think you should be cautious.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, and I think you are quite right and you took the words. We do not know when this is going to be debated and that is the question I want to ask the Government. On behalf of the electorate, when is this going to be debated? So, Mr. Speaker, you took the words right out of my mouth. When is this Constitutional Reform Bill to be debated to put an end to this sordid affair? Because the only way you can describe this Bill and the travesty that took place is that this is a sordid affair. It is a sore that needs a balm. It needs healing. It needs gashing and let the “puss” run out and let us heal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will just talk about a part here because this is where the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan gave way to me. He said coming out of this will be going to a system towards proportional representation. But without reading the *Hansard*, let me remind, through you, the Member for Barataria/San Juan, that the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna stated that this very Bill is the antithesis to proportional representation. So where are we going? You are seeing proportional representation. The Member of Parliament for Tunapuna saw this as the antithesis to proportional representation.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we use the word “honourable” in this Chamber so often and the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, when he rose, sought to put words in the mouth of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, that he was attacking members of the EBC, where the Member for Diego Martin North/East did the exact opposite. Is that the level of debate that we have to go down to?

Mr. Speaker: Well, I have already ruled on that.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: But it is a concern, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It may be a concern but I have ruled on it.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. Prime Minister, who piloted the Motion on this report, in her wrap-up or anyone else

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who has the testicular fortitude to tell us: what is your position on the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill? Tell the electorate, each man and woman over 18 who has to go and cast their ballot, what system are they using? Are they using the first-past-the-post and that is it, or do we have to have this convoluted system that came down from the Senate? Do we have the run off? Please, somebody go on record. Be men, be honourable men and women and go on record and tell the population tonight, Friday 20th March, 2015, tell us tonight, hon. Members, when will the amendments on the Constitutional Reform Bill be debated? What is your position on that?

7.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this Government, in their manifesto, spoke about three things, three things as it refers to constitutional amendments: fixed date for elections, term limits for Prime Ministers—and I forget the third one.

Hon. Member: And recall.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh:—and recall. I want to deal with this fixed date of elections because we are talking about a report from the EBC which has to do with elections, and this part of my contribution is grounded firmly in this report because, you see, the Prime Minister, in piloting this, was very careful to be selective and not open up the debate. I am going to ground what I have to say next on the words of this report.

Specifically, subsection 72(1) of the Constitution requires the commission to review periodically:

“...the number and boundaries of the constituencies into which Trinidad and Tobago is divided”—for the purpose of elections—“to the House of Representatives...”

So what I have to say next, Mr. Speaker, is grounded firmly in the words of the report, and it is linked to the Government’s utterances when they were in Opposition in the run up to the 2010 elections: fixed date for elections.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister, when in Opposition, made it compulsory at every turn to talk about Mr. Manning having the date of the election in his back pocket. Coming into office, she continually spoke about this undemocratic way where a Prime Minister has the date in his back pocket, and she promised to bring legislation for a fixed date of elections, and that was tied up in this Constitution (Amdt.) Bill. So, it begs the question, even if the hon. Prime Minister does not want to debate the Constitution (Amdt) Bill, what deters her, what detains here, what prevents her from telling us a date of the election. Do you need the law to do that?

The principles by which you stood when in Opposition, the principles which you espoused on the campaign trail and the principles which you espoused after taking office should not prevent you now from telling us when is the election, and that is what the discerning voter is looking at. It is convenient to talk about a fixed date of election when you are in Opposition, but you do not need the law to do what is right. There is no law that prevents you from signalling to the national community when the general election will be called.

So I call on the hon. Prime Minister, in her wrap-up, to tell us a second thing. In addition to telling us when we are going to debate the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill, please regale us with when the general election is to be held, because you piloted in the national domain, in the national conversation, that the date for election should be known. That was your mantra; that is your philosophy. Stick to your principles now and tell us when is the date of the general election. You do not need a law to do what you deem to be right. You do not need an Act of Parliament to fulfil an election promise of a fixed date for elections. That is what I have to say on that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you would have heard the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East speak about the Elections and Boundaries Commission that they need to be resourced. I concur with the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East that they, as a matter of course, should be given the resources to do a house-to-house verification, and I would tell you why. In preparing for the St. Joseph election, we have discovered 900 electors in some polling divisions which traditionally the PNM does not do well in—900 that we have submitted to the EBC to be struck off. They do not exist; they may be deceased; they may have moved out of the area. As a candidate or as a political party, we have to do this work but, ultimately, that responsibility, in my humble view, rests primarily with the EBC, and it is not for lack of will, like the Salaries Review Commission, it is for lack of resources.

The EBC should be sufficiently resourced to do the grunt work, the bull work and the footwork necessary to have an elector's list that they themselves are confident in. Because, as you saw coming out of the commission of enquiry, they themselves back then have expressed reservations about the integrity of that voters' list, and I do not think anything has changed in the past 14 or 15 years. So, we have submitted to the EBC 900 people in polling divisions, not friendly to the PNM, to be struck off. That is your margin of victory there. The election has to be free and fair. So, I join with the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East that the EBC should be sufficiently resourced to do that type of house-to-house survey, that type of grunt work.

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Mr. Speaker, I promised not to be long, and I want to ask—much has been said tonight about housing, and the same way I have asked that the hon. Prime Minister or someone respond to me about the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill, I want to ask the Member for Oropouche East to join this debate tonight and tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago—tell the 160,000 applicants for houses—what is the Government's distribution policy for those houses? Because since becoming a Member of Parliament, I have a letter on file which tells me that a year ago you had 160,000 applicants for houses.

Dr. Rambachan: More than that.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Possibly more than that, Member for Tabaquite. You are right. But the point is, if we agree that you have 160,000 applicants and I was told for 10,000 units. So, you have a ratio of one house for every 160 people and that is on the files of the HDC. The question is, Mr. Speaker: how is the Member for Oropouche East now treating with all the new applicants that have flooded in, that have flown in, that have come to him since he has announced 100 houses per week?

So you have on record 160,000 applicants for 10,000 units. They have a legitimate expectation that if there was a lottery system—after you put aside X per cent for army, X per cent for police, X per cent for civil servants, which we have no problem with, the Y per cent of houses remaining—what is the distribution policy of the HDC to distribute those houses amongst the existing 160,000 persons plus the X thousand number of new applicants? What is your policy, my friends opposite? Are you going to put it in terms, in order of how old the applications are?

So, you have people applying for houses 30 years now and you have people applying for houses three days now: where is the preference for the 30-year applicant or the three-day applicant who just went down on Monday? Are we going to do some screening? So, regardless of the length of your application, it is based on need. So that if you applied 30 years ago but somebody applied three days ago, but they have a blind son, they have a parent who is whatever and they are in greater social need of housing: are they getting the preference?

Mr. Speaker, these are questions that no one is asking in all the distraction, the same way no one is asking about the price of oil. Everyone is just caught up in this frenzy, a 100 houses per week, but we have had no official word. What is your distribution policy so that, like the election, it could be free and fair? Because we do not want to go down the road where we hear houses are being

distributed to relatives, concubines and whatever.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Supporters!

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Supporters. We want to know what the system of distribution is so that everyone has an equal opportunity of getting a house.

Mr. Speaker, what is also lost in the debate amid all the noise of recent weeks is the cost of construction of homes, and what has happened to the ceiling for people to qualify for homes. No one is asking these difficult questions. You are hearing now the cost of a three-bedroom home produced by the HDC has gone up over tenfold over what it cost the PNM to build a similar structure. There needs to be an airing of that; there needs to be an airing of that. The cost of construction of a three-bedroom home or a unit under this Government has skyrocketed tenfold. [*Crosstalk*] You will reply to me. [*Crosstalk*] Tell us what your housing distribution policy is. There needs to be a clear statement.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said by the Members of Parliament for Tabaquite and Barataria/San Juan that took this debate down an avenue that we should not have gone. It was not my intention to speak on this debate tonight, but because of the direction that this debate is taking, I must speak about certain things. Everyone here speaks about the health centres and the wonderful things they are doing.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for St. Joseph has expired. Would you like to?

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like my extension.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Joseph be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Before you rise, may I have a procedural Motion move?

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 15(5), I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the completion of the debate on the Motion to approve the Draft EBC Order, 2015 and consideration of the Senate Amendments to the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt.) Bill, 2015 as well as matters on the motion on the adjournment of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

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7.50 p.m.

**DRAFT ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION ORDER, 2015**

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. [*Desk thumping*] I shall not detain the House for the full 15 minutes. Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of St. Joseph, we have a particular problem with water. Mr. Speaker, Quarry Road, Maitigual (My Tower), Mount D'or, Quarry Drive, Champ Fleurs, Mountain View Terrace, Knobb Hill, these polling divisions do not get water, and no matter how you try to communicate with WASA, you get no relief. Why is that in these polling divisions? Why is that?

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to use the opportunity here tonight to fight for my constituents living in those polling divisions. Please WASA, give them some water. Come and do an ad in my constituency, north of the Eastern Main Road, come and do an ad there to show that there is water. Please come. I invite the Member of Parliament for Couva North to come with the camera crew. Come, I will take you around and show you the dry taps. For weeks, those polling divisions do not have water.

Mr. Speaker, last note, the Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan spoke about—what? The “e-something, something”. The Member for Caroni Central can help me with this, this thing to get prosthesis. Mr. Speaker, I had to hear the Member of Parliament and Minister of Health at the Monday night forum in Aranguez stating now that you could get a prosthetic leg in one week. Mr. Speaker, I am trying a year to get three prosthetic legs for my constituents, a year, cannot get it. I was supposed to pass it on to the Member for Caroni Central, I passed it on three weeks ago, nothing, but on Monday night, I am hearing in one week you could get a prosthetic leg. Mr. Speaker, what is going on? North of the Eastern Main Road, no water in those polling divisions; three prosthetic legs, a year and change, I cannot get it, but people on that side could get it in one week. Why is that?

So, Mr. Speaker, the last item I want to talk about in my constituency—because the Members for Tabaquite and Barataria/San Juan opened this debate to some absurd levels—I put in for 12 roads to be paved in my constituency, 12 roads. I am the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph for the whole constituency, five of those roads in Aranguez, south of the Eastern Main Road, and seven throughout the entire breadth of the constituency from Quarry Drive to St. Joseph,

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and I have to thank the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite for paving the five roads in Aranguez—job well done. Well done, but nowhere else.

I cannot get the other seven, north of the Eastern Main Road, paved. I have to be phoning this one, phoning that one, making noise, writing follow-up letters, but the five in Aranguez could be paved. I am the Member of Parliament for the whole constituency, I do not discriminate, but the seven roads, north of the Eastern Main Road, Mr. Speaker, cannot get them paved, cannot. I do not want to use the “D” word here, but something is rotten when a Member of Parliament puts in for 12 roads and the Government can only pave five in PDs sympathetic to them, and the other seven in PDs not sympathetic to them, “none for yuh, no water for yuh, and no roads”.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I just want to remind the Government, tell us, what is the position of the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill? Tell us what prevents you from calling the election on a fixed date, and, Mr. Speaker, just call the election. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

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

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to speak on this Motion piloted by the hon. Minister Prime Minister, under section 72 of the Constitution, in having laid this report of the EBC, and now the debate is taking place. The debate, really, is on the Motion of the approval of the Draft Order which has been laid by the hon. Prime Minister for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of recommendations made in the report, on about the first four or five pages, touching a few of the constituencies in the 41. The constituencies that were given some consideration, as spoken about, were the areas of Diego Martin West, Diego Martin North/East, Diego Martin Central, then Oropouche East, San Fernando East, San Fernando West; these were the main ones that were spoken about—and Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West. Mr. Speaker, the issue of the movement or the transfer of votes, transfer of voters from Oropouche East to San Fernando East and from San Fernando East to San Fernando West—so they have moved a certain amount of electors from Oropouche East, which is a stronghold of the People’s Partnership, to San Fernando East, which has been a stronghold of the People’s National Movement, with Mr. Manning, but our Member for Oropouche East, in a previous election campaign, gave him “a run for his money”, and came close to narrowing the gap

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between what Mr. Manning used to get previously, and the Member for Oropouche East now, in the contest of that election, narrowed the gap, considerably, although he just only had a month's notice to beat the candidate at that time. We could imagine if he had a little more notice what would have happened at that time, in that election.

But the issue there is, you are moving votes from a stronghold of a UNC/People's Partnership constituency to a stronghold of the PNM, but the stronghold of the PNM constituency, the margin of victory is quite wide. So when you move 1,000 electors who would have voted for UNC to San Fernando East, it makes no difference to the election results, although the now incumbent for the seat, who is going up for the PNM, says, that seat is a marginal seat now, and it is really going to be marginal since PNM took him to be the candidate for that seat. Now, Mr. Manning is not there, it is definitely going to be a marginal. There is no question about that. So, we would be working very hard in that constituency to win that San Fernando East seat.

Now, you moved a certain amount of electors from San Fernando East to San Fernando West, San Fernando West had been a borderline constituency, a marginal for many, many elections, and the election was won, generally, by the voters from the train line in Embacadere, and I distinctly remember that in one of the elections—I believe it was in 2002—1,197 votes separated the victory by the PNM over the UNC in three constituencies, 1,197 votes. And those were the constituencies of Tunapuna, where Team Unity went in and got about 300 votes, San Fernando West and, I believe, the other one was Pointé-a-Pierre, at that time. The third one I am a little uncertain about, but I remember, distinctly, San Fernando West and Tunapuna, and 1,197 votes made the difference between the PNM winning that election in 2002 and UNC losing three of the marginal seats. When we realized that we were close to winning the election, the Embacadere votes had to be counted, and we realised that we were going to lose the election because the PNM had a stronghold on the Embacadere votes on the train line.

The point I want to come to is, you are moving votes that traditionally would have been PNM votes, from San Fernando East to San Fernando West, thereby weakening the ability of the People's Partnership Government to win the San Fernando West seat, but, nevertheless, we are going to win that seat. [*Desk thumping*] We are going to win that San Fernando West seat. So, despite the fact you are moving strong PNM supporters and voters from San Fernando East to San Fernando West, thereby wanting to weaken our hold on the San Fernando West, we are still very determined that we would win that seat.

Now, San Fernando West had an excess amount of electors at one particular time and they moved out the Palmiste polling division, which was traditionally a People's Partnership or a UNC voting population. They moved out the Palmiste, so they weakened the San Fernando West for the UNC by moving out a stronghold of the UNC supporters, and that is why San Fernando West became a marginal, and now when you have to fill it back, why did you take from San Fernando East? Why you did not bring back Palmiste into it? Now, we are not criticizing the EBC at all, Mr. Speaker. We have tremendous respect for the constitutional independence of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, so opposite to the time when they were in Opposition at one time, and they asked for a commission of enquiry into the functioning of the EBC, and I will come to that in a while.

So why not move back Palmiste into San Fernando West? This is a question we can ask, and bring back some of the People's Partnership votes into there, or why not move some of the People's Partnership votes that we have been getting from Oropouche East into San Fernando West. Why move it to San Fernando East? Why we could not move the Oropouche East electors into San Fernando West? Those are UNC supporters. So, here it is, we can make some comments on it, but this is the business of the EBC to make their recommendations, which we, as a responsible democratic Government, will accept, and this is why we have laid this, and the Prime Minister is piloting this for acceptance in this House today, and the four recommendations from the team opposite, from the Opposition. But we have listened to one, two, three speakers, and there are no recommendations coming forth from them. So, the whole point of debating this Motion on the EBC's report have not resulted in any recommendations from three speakers so far on that side. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: St. Joseph—

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I do not think he raised any.

Now, another area, Mr. Speaker, that we can question, but we, as a responsible Government, true and democratic, with tremendous respect for the independent institutions, we can go to the EBC and ask, well, why you have done this and why you have not done this. Another area is the Diego Martin North/East constituency, and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about the movement of some of the electors from Diego Martin North/East to Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. You know what polling divisions have been moved from Diego Martin North/East? Polling divisions 0195 and 0190. Yes, 0190 and 0195, with a combined total of 838 electors from the electoral district of Diego Martin North/East to that of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

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8.05 p.m.

In the process of adjusting the boundaries of the latter, Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Member for Diego Martin North/East won that seat by less than 400 votes. We teased him and said that he lost it by two maxi-taxis, because really we could have won that seat with a little more effort, and he is more unpopular now. So he is fighting in desperation to hold that seat back for himself.

Let me deviate for a minute. As my colleague was saying, there are eight on that side who are being thrown out and only four remaining. That is a sad state—eight out of their 12.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I was not thrown out, you know. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Okay, you volunteered to throw yourself out. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I chose another path.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, we could heckle you and say "yuh take in front", you know what was coming and you decided to move out. [*Laughter*] Marlene, why you looking at me so vex, because you throw out everybody? [*Miss Mc Donald rises*] Okay, no Marlene, I take back that. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: As soon as I said that, Marlene got up. But Marlene, you know a little bit of that is true.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Member for Port of Spain South, you know a little bit of that is true.

The point I was making is that in Boissiere, those polling divisions have traditionally voted for the UNC and have voted for the People's Partnership. You know when I summed up the amount of electors from those polling divisions who voted for the UNC, it is 530 voters from there who voted last election for the UNC, now being taken out and thrown into Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. So here is another constituency which our candidate could bring home for the People's Partnership, the Diego Martin North/East, and defeat the Member there now, but here it is we are posed with a difficulty of another 530-plus votes being moved out who would have supported us.

So if we are to have discussions with the EBC, we can ask the EBC: Well on what basis you made that decision? Show us the geographic locations. Why did you take some from Diego Martin North/East and move to Diego Martin Central? Why did you move some from Central to West? Why did you move Diego Martin North/East to Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West? These are questions we can ask, but we respect the independence of the institution of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. So those are the two most important issues in this report related to the next general election: how it is affecting San Fernando West and how it is affecting Diego Martin North/East; two critical seats for the next election.

I remember when the Member for Diego Martin North/East was in Opposition, they made a lot of noise and hurrah of the conduct of elections, and I am surprised this evening to hear the Member speak about the tremendous respect he has for the Chairman of the EBC. I do not know whether something came out from him, that in his own heart he knew that he felt something else, but he was just giving lip service.

We can all remember as a nation very vividly when the Elections and Boundaries Commission enquiry was on, the Member for Diego Martin North/East—some of the colleagues across there are young in the parliamentary “ting”, they might not have even remembered or known about it—began to give evidence before the Commission of Enquiry, sworn evidence, that people who are dead are on the list. He began to name a number of people who he said were dead, and next day the man, it seemed as though he rose from the dead and was walking. So then he began to chastise the EBC, and obviously had no respect for the functioning of an independent institution of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and gave sworn testimony to a situation where he was found to be less than truthful about what he was saying at that time, just to try to make some point about the functioning of the EBC.

We must also remember that this same person, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, spoke about the ink of the EBC. He said we were not going to have a free and fair election because the ink was no good and the ink would be rubbed off; people would be able to go and wash out the ink and come back and vote again. The population must remember that.

So when he speaks about respect for the EBC and the Chairman and so on, that is a pinch of salt, and I take serious umbrage to the fact that here it is, somebody is prophesying something else, saying something else and they mean something else, and, in their past history, has demonstrated just the opposite of what he is

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saying today. So when it suits him, he probably says what he wants people to hear, but he does not feel that in his heart.

That was a time too, Mr. Speaker, at an election, they accused the UNC of voter padding, and they said that we were registering people across the country and moving people who were supposed to be living in a certain area to vote in a certain area, and we were moving people across to their constituencies to get to vote in a constituency where we had some difficulty. They accused the UNC then of voter padding. Whatever happened? They arrested about 55 people at that time for questionable voting padding—big hurrah, voter padding by the UNC. They got one person out of the 55; 54 other people were freed. The process of the judicial system took so long and painstaking that those people had to endure the pain of going to court—going to court—and having to take attorneys to represent them, because of the spite and the maliciousness that occurred at that time, to speak about the voter padding, and locking up people for what they said was voter padding at that time. [*Crosstalk*]

We must never forget as well that at that same election, one of the senior members of the PNM at that time went and interfered with a ballot box, and a charge was laid on him, and that was the depth.

We must never forget in one of the elections in the Tunapuna constituency, people were forced to stay in their homes and not be able to come out and vote, because people were moving with machine guns and so on in their vehicles, instilling fright and fear into the people not to come out and vote, and Tunapuna is a marginal constituency. That is one of the reasons we lost in the Tunapuna constituency at that time. [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 48(1) please; relevance.

Mr. Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, we are debating the electoral process. We are debating the systems of the election, the conduct of the election, the reason for moving from one constituency to another in the electorate. [*Crosstalk*] So these are three important things I needed to speak about, and this is why I got up. I told the Leader of Government Business to let me speak for a few minutes on this, because I wanted to remind the population of these issues.

In Tunapuna, people were forced to stay in their houses and vote, they were frightened to come out. Interference with the ballot box in San Fernando by a PNM member at that time, and the voter padding issues of locking up 55 people and

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creating scare for the people to come and vote, particularly in the San Fernando West constituency again, and we must never forget that.

Another point I think is important to make, we had at one time about 24 seats in the House of Parliament in Trinidad and Tobago, and as the population grew, it was moved to 36 seats. As the population grew more, they decided to move to 41 seats. Where did the population grow? We would remember, my hon. Prime Minister would distinctly remember—and Mr. Speaker, I do not know how to say it, but you were part of the team with us; it was you, myself and the hon. Prime Minister, while we were in Opposition that went to the EBC and asked the EBC: You are moving 36 seats to 41 seats, on what basis are you increasing the seats from 36 to 41? So, therefore, where is the largest increase in the population? The largest increase in the population was in central and south Trinidad. So why are you not increasing the amount of seats in central and south Trinidad? Why are you moving it across from one area from the eastern side to the western side?

I remember distinctly we were told, “We are moving the electorate to the left”. So you look at a map of Trinidad this way, [*Dr. Gopeesingh gesticulates*] Toco and Mayaro and Moruga on the south, this is the Eastern side, so they are moving from the west to the east, and they increased the amount of seats by generally—the only seat in south that was increased was Oropouche moved to Oropouche West and Oropouche East. The other four increase in seats moved to the left of Trinidad. “Why you moved it to the left?” There was no answer, because they do not know whether the Chairman of the EBC is left-handed as well. [*Laughter*] No aspersions cast, but they could not give any answer to that as to why they did. So then when we asked, “Why you are moving the electorate from Oropouche East to San Fernando East, and why you are moving San Fernando East to San Fernando West”, they cannot answer. They would not be able to answer, but we have to respect that. We are not going to call for a commission of enquiry into that; all we could do is try to ask on what basis you did.

If the population is growing in central and south Trinidad, “what happen”, you cannot increase constituencies there as well now? They are calling for increase in constituencies. You can see from the report that the amount of electors in the various constituencies are falling, so they are doing all sorts of things. They are at the lowest level, 22,000 and so on, so they have to add votes, and they are trying to pick up votes, electors from one area to another and juggling, moving one to the other while the electorate is decreasing across the East-West Corridor in major constituencies. While those in central and south are bursting in their seams, and at the maximum level that is permissible.

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So one or two seats could be added there. Why they are not added? These are the questions that we have to ask, Mr. Speaker, but we respect the independence of the institutions. These are thoughts that we have to entertain, and why they are not being done, we have to ask at times.

8.20 p.m.

We would remember as well, Mr. Speaker, they speak about voter padding and at election time, they are asking about the distribution of houses and they are trying to make an association with distribution of houses and voter padding. There is no question about that. If you look at the composition of the people receiving homes, it is a reflection of a society that has fairness and equity in the distribution. There is transparency, there is accountability and you can see it in the newspapers, you can read it, that this is a Government that provides for all. There must be prosperity for all led by our hon. Prime Minister. These are her watchwords which she has, in fact, instilled upon. The Member for Oropouche East and the distinguished hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development has ensured that there is fairness and equity in the distribution of homes across the country.

Why is he finding himself in this to now give out so many houses at this time? Because he could not have done it ever because of the serious dilapidation that the PNM left the houses in over a period of time, that he had to go and do work on the houses again, more water, electricity—they were unsafe, no toilet facility is running properly in the homes, no water runs. So the HDC, obviously, had to do a lot of work to bring it to a state where they can now have a certain number of houses for distribution across the country. This is not—the houses are not distributed in UNC constituencies or PNM constituencies to get votes. There are housing developments across the country, and if the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development has the opportunity to speak, he can tell them where these houses are in Trinidad and Tobago. When you read about it and you see it for yourself, you would realise that the housing developments are across the country.

I am making the point now to indicate that in one of the elections—the Member for Mayaro will tell you—when there was a hot contest in the Mayaro election, the then People's National Movement, Minister Peters was finding the situation where a number of people were going into the constituency never being seen before there, about six months before the election and finding places and homes inside there whether the homes were rented for them and they were being registered on the electoral list. People were being given grants to fix their toilets and their water system and so on. Nothing is wrong with giving people good

things and improving their lives, but it was all done surreptitiously to try to win votes at that time—yeah, for nefarious purposes. The Minister of Community Development, and now MP for Mayaro, could remind this House about these issues. So they have no moral authority to speak about anything about houses for voter padding, absolutely no moral authority on that issue.

Now, a lot of them spoke about they hope that they give the EBC the human resource personnel and the finance so that they can do their work. There is no question, Mr. Speaker. I was just telling one of my colleagues, can you remember through Cabinet about four or five months ago, that a request came from the EBC to increase the staff considerably? When you examine the request from the EBC, there was no question at all by this Government to say well, look, we questioning why they want it. It was automatically given and said that the EBC needs these people—[*Crosstalk*] what they asked for, they got, and there was no question asked by any Member.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Minister of Education has expired. Hon. Minister, would you like an extension?

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Education and Member for Caroni East be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you colleagues for giving me a few more minutes to now just respond to some of the statements made by the Member for St. Joseph.

The first thing that he spoke about was the economy. Well, they have no moral authority to speak about the economy because when we came in as a Government, Mr. Speaker, we met an economy that was in shambles, totally collapsed. We were owing about \$20 billion to the people from Clico. We were owing contractors another \$5 billion. So \$25 billion we had to deal with in the first year. The work of the Member for Tunapuna, Mr. Dookeran, and the work of Sen. Larry Howai to bring the economy back to a stable state where in all the macroeconomic parameters that we used for determining the state of the economy are all pretty good at this time, where we have over \$110 billion in savings, the lowest employment rate, single digit inflation and stability of the foreign exchange and so on.

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So the economy is on a sound footing that we now can withstand the shock. At that time, we had to withstand the shock of the price of oil falling at that time too when we came in 2010, and we have to now withstand it again in 2015. But such is the situation and the work done by the Ministers of Finance and the Economy that the economy is fully buffered that we could withstand the shock of the price of oil dropping. We have made arrangements, as the Prime Minister said, that each Ministry is looking at cutting the cost by about 15 per cent, and this is what a number of the Ministries are doing.

He spoke about obscene spending. Mr. Speaker. What obscene spending? Can anybody on that side—when we speak of infrastructure, we are not putting up tall skyscrapers and skyscrapers across the country. We are putting up infrastructure that is required for the population: housing, schools, roads, bridges, box drains, hospitals, health centres. Mr. Speaker, you cannot hear what cost overruns in any one of these—whatever. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is not true.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is a thing of the past. What you are seeing now is value for money. They are not going beyond the cost of the contractual obligation. You heard the Member for Tabaquite speak this afternoon. [*Crosstalk*] All over the country, roads are opening. The Prime Minister just recently, two days ago, opened the Southern Main Road in Cunupia. Mr. Speaker, three miles of beautiful roads. People got up—like they got up overnight and they saw a new road and they were surprised. It was built so fast in such a short period of time with less than the cost that was allocated for it, that they had a saving of a few million dollars well which would have gone on to give some extra work. So all over the country—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Cadiz: What about the Member for St. Joseph talking about telephones.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—talking about?

Mr. Cadiz: Telephones.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes. I am surprised if the Member did any mathematics whatsoever because he is a pharmacist—a good pharmacist—there is no question.

Mr. Cadiz: Who is that?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yeah. The Member for St. Joseph. Give Jack his jacket. But the cost of a home, the cost of a unit in the HDC—there is about \$600,000, over \$700,000 around there. He said the cost is tenfold. Mr. Speaker, 10 by \$600,000 is \$6 million. Which house in Trinidad by the HDC is about \$6 million? So, Mr. Speaker, the impunity of the dialogue and the contributions of some of our Members are really shocking. So, you wonder if there is brain behind that type of statement—anyway. [*Crosstalk*]

Then the housing distribution policy—the Minister of Housing and Urban Development has got up from time to time and has said in the country repeatedly, he has a housing policy, the Government has a housing policy and, in essence, there is a certain amount that has the jurisdiction of the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to allocate. There is a certain amount to give to the protective services. You ensure that those who are looking for a house for more than 15 years, they are given some priority now. There is a lottery system for some allocation. So, the Minister will be able to tell this population that there is openness, there is transparency and there is probity in the distribution of the houses at the national level.

Then he began to speak about the water. He spoke about roads. He requested nine roads to be fixed, to be repaired, and to be paved. He got five! Some of us, Mr. Speaker, he probably got more than some of us in our constituencies. Yeah. Look Minister Moonilal will tell you and Member for Oropouche East, he will tell you, “Member for Caroni East, you, in fact, got the least number of houses amongst all the constituencies.”

Dr. Moonilal: Of course.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: PNM constituencies got more houses than my constituency, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency I got 18 houses and in the PNM constituencies, some of them would have been given 50 houses for their people—more.

Hon. Member: What? What?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I got none. [*Crosstalk*] Not one.

Dr. Browne: Zero.

Dr. Moonilal: “Who say dat”?—Browne? Please.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right. [*Crosstalk*] Then the water—
[*Interruption*]

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Dr. Moonilal: Get up and correct that. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—Mr. Speaker, 17 per cent of this population was receiving water when we came in 2010—24 hours a day. Today, we can certainly say that through the leadership of the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, more than 72 per cent of our population are now getting water more than 24 hours a day, and this is climbing, Mr. Speaker. There were areas all throughout Trinidad and Tobago where people had not had water in their life and they have lived over—families lived over 50, 60, 70 years and they never had running water. Now they can boast of running water in their homes. You see the people certifying that. So when the Member for St. Joseph begins to make the statement of water, he should keep that back and “doh” mention anything about it. Of course, from time to time, you will have some difficulties with the water supply, but that does not mean to say that there is no consideration in improving the water supply from area to area.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that [*Crosstalk*] I have been able to speak on the issues which I thought were important having been through the Parliament for a number of years and having been through a number of elections. I was elections officer for the United National Congress for three local government elections and one general election. So, I followed the process of the elections for a number of years. When you hear the comments of a number of our colleagues from the other side, you are shocked, and we remain aghast at some of the contributions that they make. They have spoken, they have made no recommendations, and we hope that at the close of the day, on this Motion which the hon. Prime Minister has piloted, that there would be support for the continuation of the work of the constitutionally enshrined, independent institution of the EBC with tremendous respect for the hard work of the chairman and the board and for the distinguished work of the members of the EBC.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to conclude and say that it was a great opportunity to speak on this Motion. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Amery Browne (*Diego Martin Central*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] Immediately the Member for Oropouche East seeks to make a clown of himself from his chair. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please. You cannot say that. You withdraw that, please.

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Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Caroni East—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: No. No. No. I have asked you to withdraw that. You cannot describe a Member as that. You have to withdraw that.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment that I made earlier and I crave your protection from the foolish comments being thrown by the Member for Oropouche East.

Mr. Speaker: No. No. No. You cannot use that kind of language here. Listen. Listen. You cannot use that kind of language in this honourable House. You know what you just said. I do not have to repeat what you just said. You are talking about a Member engaging you and you are referring to his comments in that kind of language. You know you cannot do that. As you rightly said, if you want my protection, you seek my protection and I will give it to you. But please, do not describe any Member of this House in those terms.

8.35 p.m.

Dr. A Browne: Mr. Speaker, yes, and I apologize. I did not mean to engage you like that. But, really, even before I began speaking, a Member is throwing talk across the floor. I probably need to ask for your protection in those circumstances, I thought it was obvious.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin with the Member for Caroni East who never seems to learn—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Please, allow the Member to speak in silence.

Dr. A. Browne:—because he came back with this talk about the Treasury was empty in 2010. I really wonder if the Member for Caroni East has been paying attention to the very things his own Government has been saying. Because, how could the Treasury have been empty in 2010 when they came into office when the very first thing they began to do was to spend money in large quantities and they have not stopped or turned back up to now?

Mr. Speaker, do you remember the pension promises that were made even before they came into office? That has cost this country billions of dollars. How could that be a sign of an empty Treasury? How could it be? Where did that money come from? They boast about increasing grants, which we did before, but they boasted about that in their first year of office. Where did that money come from? From an empty Treasury? I really have to ask the Member for Caroni East if he really listens to his own Government. They talk about all the legal costs and legal fees. We just got a written report from this Government, billions of dollars to their lawyers and friends. Where did that money come from? I want to ask the

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Member for Caroni East, was it from an empty Treasury? I really want to know. Was it from an empty Treasury? They gave themselves—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, they gave money to their friends and lawyers.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Member for Diego Martin Central, well, you are imputing improper motives to Members of the other side and you know better. You cannot make these sweeping statements which is in violation of our Standing Orders. So, I want to guide you again, because you know better. Do not go there. Please!

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I am referring to large sums of money as laid here in the House on the public record, being paid to lawyers in Trinidad and Tobago, who, as is alleged on the other side, are not friends of Members of the Government. I do not know whose friends they are. Large sums of taxpayers' dollars that they found in the reserves of this country, saved there, based on sound PNM policy. [*Desk thumping*] So, the issue is not whose friends they are, the issue is the fact that large sums of money was spent, and the Member for Caroni East still is telling this country that the Treasury was empty when they came into office. I spoke about the state cars, the helicopter fuel being burnt up and down the place. Where did that money come from? The public relations contracts and all sorts of crazy people getting communications contracts from this Government. That is a fact. Where did that money come from? Large sums to Ernie Ross, he is probably one of the richest communications experts in the Western Hemisphere by now. Where did that money come from?

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development always boasts about wage settlements and other things. Well, the halls were filled today with protestors, but he boasts about those things. Mr. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, through you, Mr. Speaker, where did that money come from? The same empty Treasury that they are trying to still fool this population was well stocked by the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] So, Member for Caroni East, you know I have great respect for you as a lecturer in the University of the West Indies, but when I hear contributions like that and aspersions like that, I really—[*Interruption*]—sorry, I really wonder. After five years, they are still holding on to the same talking points from 2010 when they have been proven to be false time and time again.

And then he went on to my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East. He made a very curious statement. He said that it would be harder for

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them now. You see, he was trying to counterbalance the concern that was expressed that votes that has appeared to be very much UNC or PP votes have now been moved into the constituency of San Fernando East. That was part of the contribution by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. The counterpoint to that, by the Member for Caroni East, is that there have been changes between Diego Martin North/East and Diego Martin West, and based on that, 500 PP votes are no longer available in Diego Martin North/East because they have been moved to Diego Martin West.

Dr. Gopeesingh: To Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Dr. A. Browne: To Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, out of Diego Martin North/East. That is your point. [*Interruption*] No, but that is the point he is making, and he is saying, they would be targeting Diego Martin North/East, and if this was somehow a manipulation, why would they have gone ahead with moving PP votes from a seat that they would target. But, Mr. Speaker, he has missed a fundamental reality, and this is where this Government continues to be asleep. You see, they are still going on the 2010 election results, and he has made a very dangerous assumption, and I want to wake him up today to tell him that those 500 votes are no longer PP votes. So, no matter where they go, they are PNM votes, [*Desk thumping*] because people have been paying attention to this Government. Besides all their platform rhetoric, people have been noting the actions of this Government and they have recognized this is not the kind of leadership Trinidad and Tobago needs from 2015 into the future. They are no longer PP votes. Maybe they were before, they are now votes for the People's National Movement. Certainly, they are anti-PP votes by this point.

Mr. Speaker, anyone listening to this debate would have some serious concerns about what went before. I want to make passing reference to the contribution of the Member for Barataria/San Juan. He tends to be very light-hearted in his contributions, and he made a suggestion that Members on this side should get together—what was it?—on the bench, should get together and write a letter and remove leader and install new—he stood up and said that, the Member for Barataria/San Juan. Mr. Speaker, but in doing so, in saying that, he gave us some insight into UNC-level treachery—because, this is a Member who has probably done exactly that in the past, the Member for Barataria/San Juan. But I want to tell him, Mr. Speaker, and every Member on that side, through you, the standards on this side are much higher than that. [*Desk thumping*] We do not engage in that level of deceit. We do not engage in that level of deceit and treachery, and I see the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande looking on in rapt

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attention. I will leave him alone for now. He exerted himself heavily about a week ago. I will leave him alone for now.

Mr. Speaker, so that was really the core of—I think that was the whole point of the Member for Barataria/San Juan, talking about the leader and putting a leader and so on. It had appeared to me that the Member for Barataria/San Juan, deep within his heart, is really searching for good leadership, and I want to tell him that is available, and if he would only cross the floor, it is available on this side of the House. It is available on this side of the House.

Hon. Member: You start a new party?

Dr. A. Browne: “Nah, nah, nah”, not at all. Not at all. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Barataria/San Juan turned his attention to my colleague, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, and he claimed that she was saying goodbye to the House of Representatives, and he went on to cast some manner of aspersion based on that. But, I want to tell the Member for Barataria/San Juan that no one knows what the future holds.

Mrs. Thomas: Correct.

Dr. A. Browne: Maybe this was his swansong and he does not know. You never know. Mr. Speaker, he can get a heart attack tonight and this would have been his last contribution, same way with the Member for Oropouche East, even though he is a little slimmer and fitter these days. Mr. Speaker, we do not know. So why would he take the time, when he should be talking about the future of the country, this is an opportunity so to do—to make those kinds of references to the Member, to my colleague on this side. It really was a very sad excursion by this Member.

Mr. Speaker, he then made a strident appeal—the first I have heard on this side during this debate—for proportional representation in Trinidad and Tobago, and the irony was already referred to by the Member for St. Joseph. First of all, this report has nothing to do with that, so he was on his own personal excursion—*[Interruption]*—a frolic of his own. But, Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the Member for Barataria/San Juan and the entire Government, through you: how can we trust you with such an endeavour or exercise? How can we trust this Government when they messed up? They messed up their opportunity. They had a chance at constitutional reform and you know what they did? They blew it. They messed it up, and the wreckage is all around us. They cannot even tell us when they are bringing their so-called run-off provision for proper debate and scrutiny once again in this House. They cannot do that. They messed it up.

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Mr. Speaker, I have an article in my hand here from the *Trinidad Express* newspaper. The headline is:

“EBC claims it was not consulted about changes”

This was during those heady times, August 16, 2014, and I will quote:

“The Elections and Boundaries Commission”—the authors of this report that we are discussing here—“...has disclosed that it was never consulted prior to the controversial Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2014 being laid in Parliament.”

Mr. Speaker, this is after the Government spent millions of dollars and then boasted up and down the country, and on the *Hansard*, about consultation, the very Elections and Boundaries Commission is telling Trinidad and Tobago that they were never consulted about something like this, but they want us to trust them on an issue like proportional representation. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Member for Barataria/San Juan, through you, they are not going to get such an opportunity. That is not going to be available to them. We do not trust them with the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

And then he went on to boast, amazingly, about the Diego Martin highway, because he got an avenue and he decided he would list a series of Government achievements and so on, because he is very much in election gear. So, he talked about the Diego Martin highway, but he really omitted to mention that it was the People’s National Movement that designed that highway in the first place. [*Desk thumping*] He forgot to mention that it was a People’s National Movement Cabinet that approved that highway in the first place, he forgot to mention—[*Interruption*]—I know the Member for Diego Martin North/East is excited—that it was a PNM Government—in fact, the then Minister of Works and Infrastructure is sitting not too far away—that initiated the expansion of the Diego Martin highway in the first place, and he forgot to mention that it is the People’s National Movement that is using the highway and will continue to use the highway as well.

So, in boasting about that as a Government achievement, he was actually giving some kudos to the hard work and policies of the People’s National Movement. But, I just want to tell him, in his excursion, that he needs to recognize that there are still needs associated with that particular project, including the need for a walkover for the people of Four Roads and Wilson Road—the current Minister of Works and Infrastructure has promised that. That is yet to be fulfilled, and we have had citizens knocked down. Voters, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]—no, well, that is another one—and also a walkover right

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around the corner. There is a higher volume of traffic in that area, at Powder Magazine, Phase 1. These are not negotiable, these are the demands of the citizens, they have been conveyed very clearly to the relevant Minister, and we are expecting concrete feedback and action in a reasonable time frame, which is as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, just to wrap up on the Member for Barataria/San Juan. He talked about wickets, and the PNM is losing its wickets, and who skittle in and skittle out [*Laughter*] and there was a lot of that level of discourse. But, in all of that skittle talk by the Minister of Health—because that is what he is—he missed yet another opportunity, and every time I speak after him, I am going to call upon him. Because people are making decisions during this period, not based on talk about skittles, but on the level of accountability, transparency and achievement of the various parties engaged in the election to come. And, Mr. Speaker, this Minister has done a very poor job of accounting to this House and the people of Trinidad and Tobago on matters under his purview, which is not sports and wickets and skittles; it is the health sector of this country, and just as I close off on him, I am going to remind him of some of the areas on which he has been requested to account and he has failed. One of which is that baby Simeon Cottle, which they hate to hear about. [*Interruption*] Baby Simeon Cottle who was beheaded. He is a potential voter that was destroyed.

Hon. Member: Exactly. That is right. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Browne: Hidden and buried by the medical Mafia.

Mr. Deyalsingh: His parents are voters.

Dr. A. Browne: Lack of accountability. [*Interruption*] I wonder. I would not speculate as to where those parents would vote, or even if they would be motivated, because they are still crying out for answers, and they are asking all of us—[*Interruption*—no, this is not a joke. This is not a joke, Member for St. Augustine. It is serious and I am very, very serious. He still has not accounted. There are voters in the East-West Corridor who are wondering, are they living next to a clinic that performed a cocaine surgery, no accountability from the Minister at all. Silence from him up to now, but he is talking about wicket and whose wicket is falling and skittle this and skittle that. Maternal and neonatal deaths, potential voters being lost every day; citizens of this country, potential leaders. We are not getting any accountability. Report after report, they are looking into it, they are investigating, never any results, never any consequences; that is the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

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8.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, but again, the Member for Diego Martin North/East registered a very serious complaint that this Government was holding on to this EBC report for about 11 months, before they were compelled and pressed to bring it to the House and the public's attention. It is a very straightforward claim. The Government had this report in its hands, in its clutches, for about 11 months before disclosure was forced from them.

Mr. Speaker, you know what the Member for Tabaquite's response to that was? He did not challenge the veracity of that claim in any way, shape or form. His response was, well in the past, the PNM held on to an EBC report for nine months, and therefore, that is the end of the point from Diego Martin North/East. And that is the logic we have been hearing. That is the standard of this Government. We have been hearing this time and time again, and the Member for Tabaquite prides himself as some kind of PR guru in the Government. He is always singing the talking points.

But, that is a very weak counterpoint. Because this Government came in claiming they would raise the bar, elevate the standard, solve the challenges that were confronting Trinidad and Tobago, but all they keep doing is echoing back to the People's National Movement and reminding this country that secretly in their hearts, the PNM is their gold standard and they compare everything they do [*Desk thumping*] to the People's National Movement. So there is a problem with the EBC report. They have been holding it for 11 months, his justification for that is the PNM held one for nine months.

Mr. Speaker, that is just not good enough, very disappointing. And then he went on, the Member for Tabaquite, to boast about transparency and fairness at the Housing Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago. And his evidence for that boast was look at, we have tens of thousands of people lining up and registering and there is hope. The Member for Oropouche East keeps saying there is hope, and he smiles when he says that. And there are citizens who fold their hands and are asking, what is this man talking about?

Mr. Speaker, people are seeing their fellow citizens, brothers and sisters lining up on the pavement in the sun and the rain, based on one political utterance, these citizens have no clue whatsoever about the details of this system that they are engaging with. The Member for St. Joseph mentioned it. They have no clue whatsoever. So he is saying they have hope, but, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask, do they really have a chance of getting those houses? And without that level of

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transparency, accountability or disclosure, there are many who, out there, feel that this is a done deal already, you know. They already know who those houses are going to, but they are still entertaining people because that hope might translate into a vote or two down the road. We will see if that is correct. Do the new applicants have any chance? Do they have a better chance than the old applicants? My colleague mentioned someone—

Hon. Member: Forty-eight years.

Dr. A. Browne: Forty-eight years, that is a long time. How do their chances compare? How do their hopes compare? But we threw out this thing very casually to citizens and tell them, well they have hope. And he is not saying come and line up, he is not saying do not come and line up. So citizens really have very little direction. The staff at HDC seems to be working very hard, they are very hard pressed. They are stretched at this time to manage with those crowds, and we really wonder if the Minister is comfortable seeing citizens being—I do not want to say mislead, but being directed in such a manner that they do not feel comfortable about their future.

Mr. Speaker, how many of those houses are going to be disbursed by ministerial decree? What is this random draw that people are being told about? You are in the system; that is what citizens are told all the time, they are in the system. And you know what they are going to say, well it was like that before. But again they claimed they would improve things and I am not seeing any improvement whatsoever. What is really meant by that random draw? Are we ever going to get a public draw for houses in this country, Mr. Speaker? I asked the Member earlier and I am not going to repeat his answer because it would discourage every citizen in this country. Are we ever going to get to that standard? Otherwise we do not know what is going on in the HDC. We do not know what is going on in the Minister's office in terms of these houses, because these are not his houses, Mr. Speaker, these are our houses, the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, but I want to—I gave my word earlier, and sometimes we have to give credit. In fact, all the time we have to give credit where credit is due. So in spite of that, I recognize that there are citizens who sometimes would encounter disaster, and there was one family about a week ago, who, in Diego Martin, the constituency of Diego Martin Central, who were plunged into an unimaginable disaster, where their large family home, very large family home, over 20 family members resided there, was destroyed by a horrific fire. And the HDC was engaged, the Managing Director—I believe she is Ms. Jearlean John—and the

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Minister was also communicated with. And I would want to say—well, two things about that.

First of all, a gentleman arrived at the scene late that night who purported to be representing the Attorney General, purported to be representing or working on behalf of the UNC's Diego Martin North/East crew. I did not know there was any such thing existing in the world.

Mr. Imbert: They have such a thing.

Dr. A. Browne: Well, yeah, hear what, purported to be representing. And I realize from his interaction with those around that disaster that he appeared very anxious to spend money in mitigating, in helping something. I said, what, these people have a big war chest that they are anxious to spend. Mr. Speaker, it turned out that we got locations, temporary locations for the family members right in the immediate neighbourhood, and we had settled on that. Mattresses were being brought and placed in three homes in the neighbourhood so that at least they would have a roof over their heads for the night. But no, that intervention from that crew resulted in a phone call that said we have a house in Belmont for all of you all. Now, a family in that situation would be happy to hear there is an entire house available for a few days, and these very generous folks would be paying for it out of this so-called war chest from Diego Martin North/East, UNC war chest, from Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to drag it out too much, because I want to end with a compliment to a Member on the other side. But I just want to say, without giving too many details, the experience of that family, my constituents, the experience, the scenario that they experienced that night was the most horrific they could imagine, a follow-up to that disaster, ending up in a house. There were allegations that there were inebriated gentlemen in the house that they were, that there was a claim that they could utilize, that the men were looking through the windows and doors and peeking at the young ladies. It was horrific. Mr. Speaker, I got so many calls that night and by 5.00 a.m. the family was in public transport heading out of there at full speed in terror. They said never again.

Mr. Speaker, just to say that we need to be as proactive and responsive as possible with our stock of public housing, because when some of these private initiatives come in, it may be with noble intent, but trying to spend money to solve these problems or plug these gaps sometimes, we plunge our citizens into very unfortunate and embarrassing and hazardous circumstances. So that was a very negative outcome from that crew that tried to intervene.

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And as I was saying, very fortunately, the Minister of Housing and Urban Development and the HDC has, I would say, in reasonably short order provided accommodation for this family and they have already taken up residence in a new accommodation, with a roof over their heads. [*Desk thumping*] So I just acknowledge that as an example of what can be done. But in acknowledging that particular activity or initiatives, there are so many constituents—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: You are welcome.

Dr. A. Browne:—of Diego Martin Central—thank you—and many other constituencies on this side—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: He did not, you know.

Dr. A. Browne: Sorry—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Carry on, go on, go on.

Dr. A. Browne: Once you are speaking the truth, I am comfortable with that. I will be comfortable if you are speaking the truth.

Mr. Deyalsingh: You should be uncomfortable.

Dr. A. Browne: I should be uncomfortable.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. A. Browne: All right, anyway, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to distract myself. The fact of the matter is, there are many other citizens who have been waiting an inordinately long time. They cannot benefit from that kind of ministerial magic decree, and they just wonder what realistic chance do they have. And they are coming to us now, Members of Parliament, I am sure my colleagues' offices are filled. My office is certainly filled with people based on this hope that has now been going on. People are just going from pillar to post, and some of them go to every single Member of Parliament, and now that this announcement has been made, they are going twice a week, and sometimes three times a week, and then they are going to HDC.

I do not think it is fair, Mr. Speaker, and I think a little for clarity and direction and honesty needs to be provided to these citizens so they would know where they stand. There was talk in this House from the Prime Minister recently about some list from Members of Parliament. The Minister of Housing and Urban Development really owes it to the House, the Parliament to be very clear on this and, you know, engage very forthrightly with Members of Parliament with respect to this so call 100 houses a week.

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Mr. Speaker, just one other point and it has to do with the voters in Diego Martin Central, because sometimes when we have these developments, HDC developments being completed, there is an environmental impact on some of the existing residents. And there has been a lot of strain certainly on the Powder Magazine Phase 2 residents, because Victoria Keys has been constructed and there is landscaping occurring right in their backyard. There is a lot of dust and environmental hazards. I have engaged with the EMA and other agencies on it, but you know what they are asking me, Mr. Speaker, after the sacrifices that we have made in bearing with this dust and these hazards and noise and so on, with all of this construction and landscaping works, what chance does my son or my daughter or my family member have, even remotely, of being able to access one of those units that we have borne with and lived with, the construction of those units. Do they have any chance? Again, we are not too sure what is going on at that Ministry.

And just to round off this point, Mr. Speaker, we have—what is his name? Mr. Leladarsingh, Leladarsingh. How do you pronounce that?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Jaishima Leladarsingh.

Dr. A. Browne: Sorry—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: And they want to disown the man.

Dr. A. Browne:—exactly. [*Crosstalk*] No, no, I am just telling you the question that arises. We are here to reflect the views of the citizens, you know. The question that has arisen—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: One of your sons.

Dr. A. Browne: No, no, no, we do not have to go there. The question that has arisen—it is alleged that this gentleman has an HDC house. He is on four State boards.

Mr. Deyalsingh: What! And he has an HDC house?

Dr. A. Browne: And he has an HDC house. So the question is, how did he qualify? Was this by random draw? How did he get that house? Was it by random draw? Was it by ministerial decree? Did he have a natural disaster? Would we ever know? These are taxpayers' dollars. What is the policy of the Ministry in this regard?

Mr. Deyalsingh: He is on four boards and yet an HDC house.

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Dr. A. Browne: I do not know what is going on. These units are supposed to be for the ordinary, humble citizens, not somebody like that, worse yet his ranting and ravings would be unacceptable in any civilized society.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East also raised the prospect or concern about voter padding the possibility that without the thoroughness and scrutiny that we would want applied to this process, there is the potential for voter padding. Of course, the Member for Tabaquite took that as his excuse to launch into all sorts of old talk. But, Mr. Speaker, his basic response was, we are not voter padding because we do not have to voter pad. That was his response. The Government is doing well so we do not have to voter pad. And that is his reassurance to the country as to what guarantees there are that this thing will not be abused. Again I have to say, that is just not good enough, we cannot accept that reasoning. And again, I am calling for a national house-to-house survey. If the EBC can be properly resourced, I believe it can and should be done, it is very important to ensure that there is a level of rigour to this process as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Diego Martin Central. The speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central has expired. Are you interested in an extension, hon. Member?

Dr. A. Browne: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

9.05 p.m.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then the Member for Tabaquite went on to boast about the Government's treatment of workers, and I thought today was a very— He chose a very poor occasion to make that boast because there are Members who, when they came here, they were almost deafened by the cries and appeals of the same workers' right outside the Chamber, and he is coming here, knowing that is going on outside, and boasting about this Government's treatment of workers and saying, "That is why they will be put back into office because of their treatment of workers." But I do not know if he spoke to those workers outside because I do not think that was a rally in support of the People's Partnership. It did not appear so to me. I read their placards, I spoke to them. Not at all!

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Mr. Speaker, their treatment of workers and thousands of workers are protesting as we speak, and he was joined by the Minister of Health in that boast. If you just take a little drive to Sangre Grande, you will realize our health sector is in complete and total chaos up there. Complete and total chaos. No mention of that at all but boasting about treatment of workers. We have nurses, doctors, radiographers, radiologists, other individuals under complete strain. I am told that radiographers at the Sangre Grande facility sometimes now have to work 24-hour and 36-hour shifts. Is that fair for any citizen of this country? We always talk about the long hours in Parliament, I do not know if we have gone that far. The boasting about the treatment of workers and claiming that is going to get them to vote for the Government this time, I think they are going to be up for some real, real surprises.

Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes of this contribution, I want to reflect a little bit on the changes to the constituency boundaries of Diego Martin Central. I just want to describe the constituency. It is a very small densely populated constituency. One of the most densely populated in Trinidad and Tobago, and I want to emphasize that it is a mixed community demographically. Very mixed. I am mixed myself, but the constituency is very mixed. Sometimes we make assumptions, and I hear assumptions being tossed all over the national landscape, every aspect. Cocorite is mixed. There are people of all races. Just like Laventille, you know. One of these days, I will regale you all with a story about—my great grandfather was a white man from Laventille. [*Crosstalk*] Oooh? Yes. All of these communities, if you go into them, instead of just describing them or labelling them, there are people of all ethnicities and backgrounds in all of them.

Mr. Sharma: Your grandfather was an Indian.

Dr. A. Browne: Yes, yes, of course. You know that. Mr. Speaker, all of the communities within Diego Martin Central are very much mixed. There has been a change now because a new polling division 0066 has been taken from Diego Martin West and brought into Diego Martin Central. And for any constituent or members of public who would like to know where that is or who are these new voters that are coming into the constituency, that new boundary begins at Starlite Shopping Plaza, that corner of Morne Coco Road. You will go westward along Morne Coco Road to the Diego Martin River, and then the boundary comes back northward along the Diego Martin River till you reach back to the big tree—so there is a little triangle there that is new for the constituency—and then the boundary follows the Diego Martin Main Road right up to Crystal Stream. So

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there is a strip of housing between the Diego Martin Main Road and the Diego Martin Highway between the big tree, as we call it, and Crystal Stream that was in Diego Martin West and now is part of Diego Martin Central, and we have about 773 new voters coming in.

Interestingly, some of the team members of the office of the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central are already familiar with a lot of those voters, because, during the massive floods that we have had in the past, we really did not follow any boundary. But we went into some of those same areas including an animal hospital there and provided significant relief. So it is not an unfamiliar area, and we are not going to rely too much on who voted for what, when, in the past, because I think the people of Diego Martin, let me just say, have been paying very close attention to the misdeeds and transgressions of the People's Partnership administration. So they know where to go when Election Day comes.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that there has been very little mention—in fact, you would find no mention in this report of this term of art “marginal constituencies”, as a constituency is a constituency. But if you listen to any political analyst or read the polls in the newspapers, and all the other activity that is going on right now in this special season, you will hear lots of talk about marginal constituencies. What makes a marginal constituency a marginal constituency in this country? It is claimed these are the areas that decide the general election and will decide the next one. What makes them marginal? Because the votes are almost equivalent; are almost 50/50 in those areas. I have another question: why are those votes almost 50/50 in those specific geographic areas? The answer is not really a happy one at all. It is not one, as a citizen, I am very proud of at all, because when you drill it down to the basic level, you are talking about ethnicity, a balance of ethnicity in those geographic areas.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say in closing this contribution that I am very, very concerned about the potential by what participants do say during this period that we can worsen the fractures in the society of Trinidad and Tobago. It is just a note of caution. The stakes are very high. Members on that side want to stay in charge, Members on this side want to take charge, Members on that side want to stay in charge, but it will never be worth it in the end if, in doing so, our citizens are torn further apart, the love of Trinidad and Tobago is destroyed, and we place a strain on the ties that bind us all.

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

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The Minister of Legal Affairs and Justice (Hon. Prakash Ramadhar): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I could hardly have agreed more with my learned friend from Diego Martin Central, when he spoke about the dangers of dividing the society along ethnic and racial lines. Indeed, it becomes even more worrisome then to have heard a Member of this House, the leader of a party—not on this side—use words that are denigrating, that are inflammatory and racist, downright racist on a political platform, and we must take note—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker? By your earlier reading Standing Order 48(6), that is clearly imputing improper motives to a Member of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I will not sustain that point of order. We keeping saying and I want to repeat, when we wish to raise the conduct or reflect on the character of any Member of this honourable House, we do so on a substantive Motion, not in the normal course of an ordinary debate. So please be guided.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. But it is the point really that we must be very, very cautious, especially as proposed leaders of the society, of the language that we use and the messages that we send, because it is true, no victory is worth a scorched earth where the very things you fight for are destroyed before your very eyes. That is why democracy is so important to be protected and the electoral right of every citizen must be held high on the priority of the rights to be protected, and it brings me right to a point when, very loosely, we had spoken this evening about proportional representation.

It had been said a long time ago, and it is the truth, that proportional representation stands as a dagger at the heart of the PNM, and I ask my friends: if it is that we all regale it privately and sometimes publicly as a source of great healing to the nation in terms of how we vote and many of the ills of the first-past-the-post system, why is it that the Members on the other side will not support proportional representation? Why is it that they speak of improving the nation but when we have the opportunity so to do, we do not take hold of that great opportunity?

They made it quite clear that they will not support constitutional reform at all. As a result of which, this Government having consulted, yes, and decided that because of promises we had made in relation to consecutive terms, the right of recall and strengthening the democracy, we had to take a decision that look, constitutional reform, having been spoken of for two generations, we had promised to bring it into reality. Therefore, we had to decide on what matters we could succeed with the votes that we had and we brought legislation to this

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House, and that legislation is now awaiting return to this House and I expect it will come here shortly. This is the promise we had made. But it will not be right to just flippantly speak about it and do not support it, and questions were posed to this side and I pose the question to the other side: will you support proportional representation?

I have put that question many times into the public space. Sometimes there is a resounding silence and sometimes a resounding no. So therefore, we must put things in perspective, why are we here today? We heard all sorts of things in this debate on this Motion, but really at the end of the day, the EBC, a constitutionally independent body, has made its recommendations and that is what this is about. It is a report to the people on their decision and there is nothing on either side we could do to change that. What we can do, however, is to comment on ways moving forward.

I have heard the suggestion of the need to resource EBC better, but we have suddenly forgotten that there was in fact a Commission of Enquiry in 2002 of the EBC. One of the recommendations then, in 2002, was to better resource the EBC for the very things that my friend spoke about, but the administrative and executive authority rested in their arms and in their hearts from 2002 into 2010. I do not know what resources were put. What I can tell you, as my friend, the Member for Caroni East, has reminded us, that whatever has come before this People's Partnership Cabinet in terms of resource for EBC, for Judiciary and for other independent institutions, we do not question. [*Desk thumping*] Whatever is asked of us we give. It is as simple as that. So it would not be absolutely accurate to suggest that they are not properly resourced. Maybe they need more; maybe they need to ask for more.

But, Mr. Speaker, the reason I am here, more than anything else, is that there is a nefarious suggestion, a dangerous one, of the potential for voter padding. Indeed, I had left the Chamber, but I returned because my conscience said I had to return to speak to this matter. In the year 2000, there was a rupture of confidence in the society when allegations were made that there was rampant voter padding throughout the length and breadth of this nation. Mr. Speaker, what happened then was that there was a launch of an investigation by the police. Do you know which department of police conducted these investigations? The homicide department which is the highest level in terms of seriousness of crime that they investigate, the greatest resources, the most dangerous in terms of the ability when you hear homicide at your door, it will send shiver and quiver down your spine. But the homicide department had that moment in time, in 2000, to put aside all of

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their immediate work, investigating murders and killings, to investigate allegations of voter padding.

Cast your mind back for those who could remember. There was a suggestion that it was rampant and I repeat, throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. Guess what? Several persons were in fact charged. Whether it is 10, 15, 50, it was nowhere near 100. The allegations were baseless and I will tell you why. Because I was the lawyer who, in the profession, thought this was an attack on the democracy, because the very reason that the allegations were made and the hype of the investigations was to put a fear factor into people. Some of whom without knowing better, who really not as interested to vote, thinking, “Listen, if I have to go and change my registration because I had lived at place X, I have now moved to place Y, could I be charged for voter padding?”

9.20 p.m.

And you know there was a big issue in the country at the time that we had to clear up with the EBC. It was this. Many persons being born in their parents’ home never bothered to have changed their registration and would have gone to live in different parts, probably even in Diego Martin Central. [*Interruption*] I am coming to you, “Gypsy”. And there was a fear now that, look, “whoa, I am living here”, like my friend—you know the MP from Mayaro, you were charged? Were you?

Mr. Peters: Yes.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: For voter padding—

Mr. Peters: In Mayaro.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—in Mayaro where he was born, where he grew up, where he had his ancestral home, he was charged, prosecuted and put before the courts. We have forgotten these things. When, in fact, during the case, it was so obvious that all of his foundations, his ancestral connections, his other home, was in Mayaro but they charged him for voter padding—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: “In meh own house.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—in his own home. [*Laughter*]

You know what they did? [*Member knocks on desk*] Open up, open up! Two o’clock in the morning, they would go to homes with guns, carloads and jeep loads of fully armed with machine gun police officers and pick up little old ladies and young people who had just attained the age of majority, put them in

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handcuffs. And you may well remember—I have the copy—of an elderly woman, shivering and shaking, with handcuffs held like this, dragged into the court. An MP at the time, his niece, young girl, 18, grabbed, taken from her home and put before the courts, and walked from the police station to the courtroom. We have forgotten these things. Member for San Fernando West, you remember? The torture and terror of young doctors, professionals, yanked as common criminals by the homicide department. And hear what the wickedness of this is, eh. Not only were they brought and charged. You know what the charge was? Giving a false statement to the EBC.

Now, if that is so, it is an offence under the Representation of the People Act which is a summary offence which, at most, will attract a fine. But here is the mischief. The very offence of giving a false statement to the EBC, they were charged as perjury indictably. Member for St. Joseph, I know you did not know this. They were charged for perjury indictably and on the endorsement on the warrants were put no bail or bail to be approved by the Clerk of the Peace free, of whom in the country, there were, I think, three. So that if you were taken as you were, many of them, on a Friday afternoon, no bail because no outside JP who is lawfully empowered to take bail would do so because you had to go to the Clerk of the Peace, three, who are connected to the courts and when the courts are closed, there is no access to them.

Many of our citizens taken as common criminals kept in police station cells; people who had never done a single crime, never even thought of breaking a single law, had to spend time in police custody on a charge of perjury and I and a team of lawyers—I shall not call their names here tonight but I want to thank them, they know who they are—took a decision that we had to protect the democracy of this country. And we made it known to all that any time you had a problem of intimidation by the police, and I call it that—I said that publicly then and I shall say so now—it was deliberate to put a fear into the minds of law-abiding citizens to not vote in that election of 2000. Put your mind back and remember the surrounding circumstances and I will not go tonight into the Sadiq Baksh affair of the water tank. I would not do that tonight.

Mr. Speaker, having told you about the bail, the refusal or the inability to get bail, do you know what also we found during the cases? There is something called disclosure and a bit of—what shall I say?—fortuitous circumstance. A bit of disclosure was given to us to prepare ourselves for trial and in it was an endorsement of one of—not the most senior but the one of the most senior investigators, in relation to these matters leaving a particular police station and

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going to Balisier House. That is a fact, gentlemen and ladies. We do not know what happened there at Balisier House but it was in connection with voter padding.

What I can tell you, however, is that not a single one of the persons who were charged, prosecuted and paraded, were ever convicted in Trinidad and Tobago. They could not get off the ground. And I want to tell you, the torture and trauma on those citizens will be marked in their memories and in their psyche forever. They will never forget the pain and humiliation of what happened. And we all knew where that came from, so it is important to remember that.

So when the Member for Diego Martin North/East sixing this thing about voter padding, I say, “whoa, whoa, whoa, never again in this country, Sir, will we allow the citizens to be terrorized by forces of the State for political ends”. [*Desk thumping*] There were police officers who were sympathetic and said, “But you all cannot charge these people, there is nothing here”. I had to represent that police officer afterwards because he was demonized and falsely prosecuted for the stand he took down in bay—it is Bay Road?

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Down the train line.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Down the train line. The very train line they gone parading now. So, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious thing. It is easy to talk about voter padding and thing but there are real life consequences. And I tell you all of those cases, as far as my memory could serve me, dealt with persons who had left their ancestral homes and went to another place to live. It is a long time ago, yes, but they are the same persons who still occupy office to have charged the Member for Mayaro, a living example of what could happen when the law and the power of state is abused because he was acquitted on a no-case submission because there was no case. That is a stain that we must never forget but ensure that must never return.

Mr. Speaker, the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. [*Desk thumping*] There are players in this game who were there then and who are here now. And therefore—[*Crosstalk*] Yes, I shall repeat it for you. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. We shall ever be looking at you, never for a moment trusting the pretty smiles and the well-dressed appearance because there is a history that goes with this thing. So that is why I could not have allowed this debate to pass without my putting on the *Hansard* the record for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, my personal experience as a professional in this matter standing to defend the rights of innocent individuals.

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I remember there was this young girl from Chaguanas who, when I went and met with the family, she was shaking, she was just barely 18 years old. Never in her life had she attended—she did not even get her driving permit; she had never been to a police station, never been to a court and when I went and I saw this girl—do you know what they call knock knees when your knees are shaking? When she had to stand before the court, she was trembling. Her father, her mother, together with her and other members of the family, charged before the court like common criminals. And for what? Because somebody wanted to poison the democracy and talk about voter padding, and used mischievous ill-willed persons to further their end. I say no more [*Desk thumping*] and I am reminded equally in that period what happened in Tunapuna. The Privy Council has spoken to that, you know. We have forgotten about deals cut with certain nefarious elements in the society. To get certain lands, they had to do certain political work. On Election Day, persons—and I am not saying this to put fear in the citizens because we are prepared to ensure that that never occurs in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Men and women, on their way to vote, were told if you go and vote, when “yuh come back, yuh house burn”. Gentlemen, is that not true?

Mr. Peters: Yes, they did it in Mayaro, too.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: They did it in other places. So there is great evil and wickedness in the democracy. And that is why I want to tell you, as I look around, as much as they will complain about the People’s Partnership, there are men and women here—the Member for San Fernando West, the Member for Mayaro, the Member for Caroni East, the Member for Tunapuna, the Member for Pointé-a-Pierre and I could go around and around—who would have had personal experience and came forward because they decided the things that would have happened to them and the things that they would have seen, and the things they would have learnt of, they must stand up against and come and take power to ensure that things are not—never happen again. [*Desk thumping*]

This gentleman, one of the finest doctors you would ever meet, a professor of medicine, the Member for Caroni East, around the same time, he was prosecuted, charged. I was with him. Taken as a common criminal through the streets of Port of Spain, taken to the cells, on a charge where bail was set—and you know what? He was given a little courtesy to sit outside of the cell because in it, at the Port of Spain Magistrates’ Court—in those cells, they were first of all, overcrowded but there were persons charged for murder, rape, robbery, you name it. A certain police officer, a senior one, passed by, looked on and gave an instruction that he must go into the cell.

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Dr. Browne: What was the charge?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “Ah coming just now.” They put him into that cell, a most dignified gentleman. I and some other lawyers stood outside that cell for two reasons. One, to show that we will stand with him literally and two, to ensure his security while he was in there.

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh ah bodyguard.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Yes, I am a bodyguard, I defend people, Sir. Do you know after years in court and a tremendous effort by the prosecution of the State, it turned out that having suffered all of these indignities that the court found that the charge under which he was prosecuted was unknown to the law of Trinidad and Tobago, unknown to the law of Trinidad and Tobago? You asked, what is the charge? It is unknown to the law of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, I want to tell you, there are reasons that some of us get involved. Some of us get involved for reasons that sometimes should be known to the public. These are the things that I experienced as a lawyer and I knew that this democracy that we so love and heralded, could be imperilled by those who only want power as a weapon and not as a tool for the benefit of all mankind and for all of our citizens and those persons must be pushed back and out of the political landscape. That is why we insist that this hall, when we say “honourable this” and “honourable that”, it should not be because you have arrived here but because you have earned the right to be called honourable, that your decisions are not for personal gain, as we are hearing now, an allegation of one on the other side, not in this House, where they used the hallowed halls of the Parliament, of the people’s Parliament, to push an agenda that really is about their professional and personal gain.

9.35 p.m.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 48(6), please.

Mr. Speaker: What is the point? I am trying to get clarification, Standing Order 48(6)? Because I did not hear the hon. Member accuse anybody. Okay? Continue, please.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: It is a colleague of yours. I am sorry. The Member for Port of Spain South admits it is a colleague of hers. Well, they shall have to deal with that internally but we shall also have to deal with it at a national level. The point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that we cannot allow a simple Motion like this to be distorted. Because I am sure there are people out there who might believe, when I am hearing loose talk about we move this and we move that. We did not

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move anything, none of us here. It is the EBC that did it on their own protocols, on their own wisdom and the knowledge that they have to do things. *[Interruption]* No, I just want to make it clear.

Because as it goes out, when you mix it with voter padding. Talk of voter padding and things being moved, boundaries being moved, voters, PP supporters, COP supporters, UNC supporters moving from one PD to another. What does that tell you? What does that tell the simple, average Trinidadian who does not know the details of things? It gives an impression, really that there is a manipulation of the electoral boundaries and who is in power gets the blame. So we have to be very, very clear and that is why I decided to stand and speak on this Motion, let us put it back in focus. Let us put this thing back in focus. EBC made decisions based on criteria. We are here just to debate the Motion but we can do nothing about those changes. It is their right. It is their responsibility and they have executed their duty. We are here to speak about things, how better to improve but not to give the wrong impression on matters.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph, he spoke and I am tempted to just say that he spoke, but the Prime Minister has indicated that elections will be called when they are constitutionally due. The issue of the fixed date for elections is not law, not because we did not want to bring it but it is because they on the other side have said that they will not support constitutional reform and the requirement, the majority as I understand or have been told, that is required to bring into force a constitutional change, to put a fixed date for elections, we on this side do not have and we require the support on the other side, which they have refused, repeatedly, to give, publicly and privately.

To say that you do not need law for it, who says that you will not have an election? We will have one. When will it be? When it is constitutionally due. The exact date is not yet fixed. Are we to manufacture a date? Is the Prime Minister to just because the Member for St. Joseph is of the view that you must give a date today? Of course, she has a date. The date is within that period when it is constitutionally due. But if it is we speak with two sides of our mouth and say you want this but you do not support it when you have the opportunity, what are we to do? The future of this nation depends on the honour of persons who populate the highest office. Do not give me sanctimonious statements and ridiculous questions at the same time on answers that you could create by your actions and your deeds.

We have a great opportunity. The Parliament will be dissolved in June. I think it is the night of 17th June. There is a lot that we have to bring before this Parliament. We have campaign and party finance reform legislation that we are

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working on. We were able to have brought procurement legislation. We were able to have brought constitutional amendment, all of the hype and hysteria of mobs standing outside of this Parliament.

Hon. Members: Mobs?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Yes, mobs! That is what they attracted for that constitutional reform, when Members of this Parliament, on their way to do the people's business were verbally and I imagine almost physically abused. They are the magnet for that. Lincoln almost lost his hat. [*Laughter*] It was a hat attack, I understand.

Miss Mc Donald: Member for St. Augustine, are you bringing the run-off?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Wait, it is coming. It is not up to me alone, but there are many bits of legislation that have got to come here. But to hear "when yuh bringing run-off? When yuh bringing run-off?" But when you bring important legislation like the motor vehicles, joint select, "I ain support all yuh unless yuh go joint select. Yuh bring trade mark". As tame as it is, there is no political anything in it, joint select. Just to, not slow, to kill it! Joint select.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to—they supported bail after how much criticism. The way they went because the Member for Diego Martin North/East, the intellectual leader—I am sorry there is a competition for you, Sir—spoke about and put arguments before us that led us to believe that they will not support it. But they took a political decision because they knew full well, had they not supported that legislation, well the population would have dealt with them. So it was politically expedient for them to do that but not for the MVA, not for trademarks, not for, at the time, procurement, you see. These are the games that are played. As this term comes to an end and a new one will begin, we need to set our house in order and I am most grateful for the opportunity to have spoken here tonight. I thank you very much.

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mine is a brief intervention, only to speak to some matters relevant to Point Fortin.

Mr. Speaker, you realize you cannot win eh, because we gave support to the Bail Bill today and the response by the Government is that we are being political. We are being genuine in our support for crime and crime initiatives. Little has come forward from the Government, but there you are, we are being political.

With regard to the Trade Marks Bill and the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Bill, there is nothing we could have done about that, more than to recommend that it went

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before a joint select committee because those Bills were poorly constructed, and in the interest of putting good legislation on our books, it was in the best interest that those pieces of legislation would have been forwarded, not for a long time, not for a lengthy discourse, but at least two or three sessions so that we could get the technical matters correct and make sure that we put good legislation on our books.

But I want to respond to a point that was raised by the Member for St. Augustine. He spoke about a particular circumstance where, and I quote him:

Not a single one of the persons who were charged were convicted.

And then, of course, you spoke to the pain and humiliation. And in the circumstance, all of us will bear the pain at this time when we reflect on that occasion. However, you spoke about the pain and humiliation and I want to draw your attention to the 8,000 people who were picked up during the state of emergency, 8,000 people detained, one convicted. And you talk about 55, I speak about 8,000 and they too will never forget the pain and humiliation caused by this Government. He said that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. The sum of 8,000 persons picked up, for no good reason, innocent individuals and he talks about evil and wickedness in the democracy. Your words, Member for St. Augustine, but that is nothing more than evil and wickedness on the part of this Government, Mr. Speaker. Your words. And I tell you none of those 8,000 persons had any special seat outside the jail cell as some people on your side had.

The Member for Tabaquite, just one point that he made. He said the Leader of the Opposition is seldom here, and nothing could be further from the truth. I want to make the point that he may not be here now but neither is the Member for Siparia, and it is that the Member for Siparia is hardly ever here and as a matter of fact, has the lowest participation record in this Parliament, lowest participation record in this Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] I believe this is probably the second Motion or Bill that the hon. Member for Siparia may have presented at all in this Parliament.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 38(6).

Hon. Members: What?

Dr. Moonilal: I did not know that you are judge of participation record.

Mr. Speaker: Member, I do think we should.

Miss Mc Donald: She did not cross the line.

Mr. Speaker: No, I am saying we do not have to go in that direction. Okay? Please.

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Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Mr Speaker, I was simply responding to a statement made by the Member for Tabaguite, when he spoke to the Leader of the Opposition not being here and I just emphasized that the Member for Siparia is hardly here and her participation in this Parliament is minimal, except at committee stage. I make that point.

Here we are and I am not going to be long. But we are here to speak to the Elections and Boundaries Commissions Order, 2015. We get back to the debate of this Motion after the Member for St. Augustine. Again, I join with my colleagues in expressing my disappointment that we have been in receipt of this Draft Order for more than a year. You too, Mr. Speaker, I see noted in the Order Paper and I looked—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Listen, do not get—take your seat! Take your seat!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Sure.

Mr. Speaker: Do not get the Speaker involved in your business. “I hear yuh say something about Speaker. Is me yuh going and talk to?” Leave the Speaker out of that debate. Cool.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, if you do not mind, I was just reading from a tenet in the Motion on the Order Paper. It is right there:

“*Whereas* the Commission has submitted the report to the Prime Minister and the Speaker in accordance with the provisions in subsection (1)...”

That is all I was referring to, not casting aspersions or anything like that, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Mc Donald: It is a recital here.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, sorry.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Right. I move on. So I made the point again, along with my colleagues, that the Government has been in receipt of this Draft Order for about a year now and it is disappointing that it has come here so late and this is only after great objection has been raised by the Opposition and it is that it was put out in the public domain. That is the only reason why this is here at this time.

Firstly, let me just—and I think it is very important that I commend the work of the EBC under the direction of Dr. Masson, who brings to the organization a number of years of experience. And this is not something that we should ever take for granted. And I look only to the situation which took place, I think it was in

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February of this year, just a month ago, in St. Kitts, in the run-up to the general election in 2015, when there were some issues regarding the Boundaries Commission. It is that new boundaries—if I could just give a little bit of that story—favourable to the ruling administration were delivered a mere month before the polling day and the opposing United Opposition Party moved to the courts and obtained an interim order restraining the Boundaries Commission and the supervisor of elections and the administration from using the recommended boundaries in the election process. So much happened within the internal court system with the Opposition finally appealing to the Privy Council and indeed the appeal was allowed. Of course, the result being that the election was conducted, had to be conducted, on the existing boundaries and not the ones that were recommended by the commission.

So then, further of course, you would realize coming out of that scenario, the election supervisor was very tardy in announcing the decision of the elections. So that the results were announced rather late and it was indeed a fiasco which is well known across the Caribbean and perhaps globally as well. I make that point to say that happily so, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have not had that kind of activity and those kinds of actions by our EBC. So it is in commending our EBC that I raise the point of just what took place last month in St. Kitts with their commission, and this time I take the opportunity to applaud the EBC in Trinidad and Tobago, under Dr. Masson. And no doubt there would be similar circumstances across the globe, but our EBC in Trinidad and Tobago has acted with integrity and alacrity and the highest degree of professionalism and we are quite pleased that to date the EBC remains an independent organization.

9.50 p.m.

With regard to the changes made in the Order, no changes at all had been made by the EBC affecting the polling divisions in the constituency of Point Fortin. So that our electors are about 25,000—just over 25,300, an increase of just over 1,000. But I, too, make the point that the Government had been attempting to do so—when I say so, increase the numbers in Point Fortin, I think, by their very actions with regard to the distribution of houses, and I refer to the situation in Point Fortin with the distribution of houses in the La Fortune Housing Estate.

Now, those are PNM houses, and quite a number of them had been available from 2010 and, perhaps, we should have given out those houses as early as then, but there had been a problem with the sewer system, and I guess it was not wise at that time, but it took this Government five years to begin to deliver any of those homes—I would say four and a half—in Point Fortin. I raise this because the

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Government—I am accusing the Minister of Housing and Urban Development of not using the proper distribution process as expressed in the Cabinet Note, which I believe they are still following, with regard to the distribution of homes.

I am informed that persons have been given homes—at least, about 30 to 40 of them—and it has not been through any particular process, and I am told that it is all about the Minister's discretion, and I would like him to correct me, if not now, on another occasion. I am very concerned because, you know, Point Fortin is a depressed area and they were not given any particular attention by this Government and, obviously, like the rest of Trinidad and Tobago, the people are, in fact, under pressure and you have thousands of persons looking for a few homes.

So that, Mr. Speaker, I raised this because I am aware that 175 homes will be given out in Point Fortin, and I need the assurance. I know the Minister has used his discretion in giving out the first 30 to 40. I am asking that he follows the prescribed process as detailed in the Cabinet Note, which I believe has not been overturned or anything like that. I have submitted to the Minister a list of persons who are fire victims, senior persons, disabled persons, members of the security forces as well. I have not been very lucky in making contact with the HDC and the Minister relevant to particular persons who are in distress, and who have been in distress over the last four and a half years because they have been victims of fires in particular. We have not been successful. Only one such person has gotten a home thus far.

I raise a particular circumstance, a recent one, where just last Friday—and I want to put the Minister on notice that he will receive a letter. I signed off on it yesterday—a fire took place in the Era Forest area, Food Crop Road, where the home of Raphael Mendez and his wife Latoya and their two children was completely destroyed; all of their belongings. These are two young persons who put everything that they have earned into the building of this home. I mean, it is a distressing thing to come back and hear that everything that you have worked for has been destroyed. I have written to the Minister and I am trusting that, in fact, the Mendez family will be afforded a home as soon as possible, and to be relieved of some of their distress and discomfort at this time.

So, I have a concern about the unfair distribution of homes in Point Fortin. And, generally, as well, apart from the unfair and indiscriminate granting of homes and so on I, too, am concerned about the granting of contracts to build homes. Whilst I know it is certainly more than four contractors who have been afforded those opportunities, Mr. Speaker, as far as I know from information

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brought to us, it is that most of the contracts, the building of homes, have been given to four contractors and, of course, the notorious SIS is included in that. But, in large measure, I understand it is four contractors. I understand that there is one construction firm that is being given more than 800 homes, and the Minister can clarify but he seems amused or bemused by that fact. Maybe there is some truth in it. Under our time, I would say that those opportunities were better spread to all contractors right throughout Trinidad and Tobago. So there is that disturbing piece of information that continues to bother all of us: the contractors, the people as well who are not benefiting from State funds being distributed unfairly. I speak to the indiscriminate and unfair distribution of food cards and grants as well.

Advertisements: I want to speak a little bit about the advertisements that are meant to influence voter behaviour as well. Again, these are not transparent at all. There has been quite a large sum of money being spent on advertisements to influence voters. I mean, I spoke last week about it during the debate on the Trade Marks Bill that there is an inordinate number of advertisements; both on the foreign and local channels paid for by the State and, to me, it amounts to nothing more than heavy campaigning and promotion of the UNC-led PP Government.

I refer to when we were in power, Mr. Speaker, and I read into the record last week, and I will read it again this week, the views of the Member for Siparia who was quoting and giving a legal opinion on a similar matter, and that letter was dated April 29, 2010. The Member for Siparia was extremely critical of the advertising campaign undertaken by the PNM then, and she said and I quote:

The timing and frequency of these advertisements and the appearance of the said website is significant. Further, none of these advertisements expressed the advice that they are paid political announcements. The question clearly arises as to whether the expenditures on these frequent political advertisements aired in the immediate run up to a general election paid for by political funds were and are being lawfully and properly incurred for a legitimate purpose and not for party political advantage.

I bring this to your attention, Mr. Speaker, because the sheer hypocrisy is very, very evident, and we cannot continue at a time when our revenues are falling sharply. Oil prices are—what?—\$43 at this time, and yet still we have all of these advertisements paid for by the State, and we are not seeing below, “paid political advertisements” because that is what it was meant to be, paid political advertisements. Yes, Mr. Speaker, a lot of expenditure to garner votes at this time.

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The Member for St. Augustine spoke a bit about the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill, 2014. And, again, I raise the question of the run off. They brought us out in—was it August 2014, Member for St. Joseph?

Mr. Deyalsingh: August 08.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: August 08, 2014—to deal with the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill and the run-off and so on where a candidate must secure 50 per cent of the votes in a general election or face the run-off. There was severe criticism of the proposal by members of the legal fraternity, academic, NGOs, business people. The population was aghast at these proposals put forward by this Government—the run-off and other matters they felt at that time would favour them.

And, of course, the Prime Minister then defended their proposals in the extreme. I remember her saying that the reforms were about power to the people. Well, I ask the question: why are you not giving powers to the people by bringing those proposals back again? You then said that leaders want to hold on to power until you have to drag them screaming and kicking out of the door. I ask the question again: where is the right of recall and you have gone cold on this one, because I do not think at this time it really suits the way you see things are shaping up for you.

So that, the Government, I said, has gone cold, and I have asked you when are you going to share your intention to bring or not to bring the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill as you had proposed. When are you going to share this with us, the population, the Opposition, with the EBC as well? You have to remember that you have to share it with all political parties. There are some new political parties on the scene as well and a fair amount of preparation needs to be done by the EBC as well. It is very important. Make up your mind. Are you bringing it or are you not bringing it, the right to recall, et cetera? Right? It suited your fancy then, perhaps, you have realized it does not suit you anymore, but make up your mind and let us know, let the EBC know as well.

As I said, I just needed to bring these matters pertinent to Point Fortin to the fore. Again, I am very disappointed that this debate had seemed to have gone the way of a campaign. The kinds of things that I have heard here tonight really did not belong in this debate. I think it went far too wide. I come here to say that we are supporting this. We are definitely supporting this Order, without amendments. We are not supporting it at all—yes, we are, sorry. We are here to approve it and to vote for the adoption of the report, as I said, without amendments.

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In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that regarding all of these criticisms, all of these statements made by the other side, I can understand why they would use this today to campaign in the Parliament, but I want to say it would be pretty soon when the PNM would be moving on from the shadow Opposition to the substantive Government within a matter of months.

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

Mr. Speaker: Is there anybody else? The hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start first and foremost by congratulating the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the report before us. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would be failing in my duty if I did not respond to Members opposite that the People's National Movement did nothing for this country.

Mr. Speaker, this Government had over \$300 billion to deal with, more than the People's National Movement ever had to deal with. I want to start by just listing a few of the things that our People's National Movement Government has done over time. Mr. Speaker, we built 25,000 houses for this country from 2003 to 2010, 25,000. We built the Hall of Justice, the Central Bank, NAPA, SAPA, the International Waterfront Centre, Campus Plaza, Chancery Lane complex, the Jean Pierre Complex, the National Stadium, Brian Lara Stadium, Brian Lara Promenade, the Priority Bus Route, the Uriah Butler Highway, Rienzi Kirton Highway, hundreds of primary and secondary schools, UTT campus. We funded the University of the West Indies, Eric Williams Medical Complex Mount Hope, free tertiary education, free secondary education, electrification throughout this country, free school transport, free school meals, free school books, water taxi service, the Point Lisas Industrial Estate that you all seem to be hugging up now, the LABIDCO and Union Industrial Estate, the Riverside Plaza, the Rienzi Kirton Highway, Petrotrin. We all know the importance that this Government played in Petrotrin.

10.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the whole question that we left a Treasury with over 11 months import cover, about \$9 billion. We left a Heritage and Stabilisation Fund with over \$4 billion. Mr. Speaker, it was our People's National Movement Government that introduced MuST, HYPE, OJT, MiLAT, MYPART, YAPA, with stipend. We can go on and on and on and on, and, therefore, it is indeed ridiculous to say that the People's National Movement Government did nothing for this country. Without

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the PNM, there would have been no development in this country. [*Desk thumping*] I further want to state, under the People's National Movement Government, our record would show that in terms of—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I need your protection, please.

Mr. Speaker: Please. Please. Please, allow the Member to speak.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, let me leave that for a while, [*Interruption*] and let me go and deal—Mr. Speaker, I need your protection.

Mr. Speaker: Please, allow the Member to speak in silence, please.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the fact that we have—it is alleged that we have 52 more days before the general election, and I pity the work of the Elections and Boundaries Commission in this scenario. Mr. Speaker, when we look at Oropouche East, there is a small polling division, 3872, and 64 voters are being transferred to San Fernando East, just 64. We go to polling division 680, from Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, with 217 names on the voters list being transferred to Port of Spain South. We go to San Fernando East, again, polling division 4060, with 234 votes being transferred to San Fernando West. Now, Mr. Speaker, let us put this thing in perspective. If in those small polling divisions you have to transfer to fall in line with the band that is set for the constituency, I wonder what the situation will be.

If we are to take the *Express* newspaper of March 06, reporter Anna Ramdass, where she states—she quotes the Minister of Housing and Urban Development as saying that 701 HDC units for Carlsen Field; 96 for Chaconia Crescent in Four Roads, that is Diego Martin; 346 for Greenvale Park, La Horquetta; 574 for Fairfield complex; 1,190 in Cypress Gardens, Union Hall; 1,066 for Oasis, Egypt Village; 398 for Bon Air, and, Mr. Speaker, I am asking the question, if we are giving out 100 houses every week and the transfer that we see taking place is not within the constituency, it is not, for example, like in Point Fortin, somebody from Mahaica going to La Fortune Estate, what generally happens, we see taking place is from constituency to constituency, and I am asking the question, does the EBC have the resources to police this thing to see, for example, when this transfer is taking place? This is, indeed, a very serious scenario that we need to take into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, from the *Guardian*—again, that same *Guardian* report—we are told that for 2013 to 2014, 2,141 units were given out; 2014 to 2015, 2,280; 2015

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to 2016, 2,728. How is the EBC getting to keep up to date? Because they tell us that between 2011 and 2014, 7,718 houses were distributed. How is the EBC dealing with this thing? I want to put this into the mix, the selection, or this so-called lottery system, is a hoax. It is a hoax. Mr. Speaker, what we are supposed to see is that a—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I am in need of your protection, please.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. Yeah. Please. Please. Please allow the Member to speak in silence.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, what we see taking place with this distribution is that—I know, for example, there are people who came to my office, right, they are asking, well, they want to get an HDC unit, and, Mr. Speaker, without having a reference number, they had their little contact. They gone to the HDC and they got houses, five people—five people. And, Mr. Speaker, when I see that they gave out 7,718 houses, and just five persons got from my constituency, I hold my head. I hold my head, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we would also know that in the La Brea constituency, [*Crosstalk*] we had the situation in the Coffee area, whereby the Minister of Housing and Urban Development and the then acting said Prime Minister made promises to give those people houses. Mr. Speaker, I think it is a form of genocide, because with that Corexit 9500, I know these people and them before long, they would not be able to vote. They would not be able to vote because they would not be around, and what I am saying here is this, that here it is you are building houses—I understand 90 are supposed to be given in Pierre Road; 50 are supposed to be given out in Hubert's Town, and up to now they have not catered for one person from the Coffee area, and we say that the Government is working for you. Tell me? Tell me, Mr. Speaker, tell me, because, you see, if we are talking in terms of serving the people, as they claim to be, that could not have happened in this scenario.

I think it is indeed reprehensible of this Government to talk about this housing situation as though, well, all right, it is an equal thing across the board. That is not the case. Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, because I do not want to be long, I understand that from opposite, tried to attack my political leader. Mr. Speaker, that is indeed reprehensible. "People with glass windows should not throw stones", because my political leader has stood up against allegations of corruption, he has stood up. My political leader has stood up—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, your protection, please. [*Crosstalk*]

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Mr. Speaker: Please, allow the hon. Member for La Brea to speak in silence. Please continue, hon. Member.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, my political leader has a clear vision for this country. My political leader is able to show a clear-cut vision for this country. Mr. Speaker, all the old talk, he has never used the word “pipe” in any of his contribution, never used that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: If you have nothing to say, talk and say “wha yuh goin and do nah”.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker—if you want talk, you will get talk, you know. “Yuh will get talk.”

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Members, please.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Right. “Leh we go dong da way.” Right.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, [*Desk thumping*] I want that the Elections and Boundaries Commission deserves to have the funding to be able to police what is taking place with this housing distribution, [*Laughter and crosstalk*] with 100 houses being distributed every week. That is from the official level, right, and they are giving 100, but we know for a fact that more than 100 houses are being distributed every week, more than 100 houses, and, therefore, we need to ensure that the Elections and Boundaries Commission is well staffed, well funded, so that they could do their work. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for this opportunity to speak on this Motion of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order. I want to make reference to something that the Leader of Government Business would have indicated in coming to this House to lay the report. He said that the Government wishes to advise that the EBC report being laid in the House was approved by Cabinet on February 12, after having gone through the usual channels required in matters of this nature.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to state, again, that the brief intervention—well, he, basically, was making a brief intervention, he claimed, to refute preposterous allegations made by people equally preposterous in their public domain, the usual suspects, that Government is engaged in a conspiracy to suppress the contents of

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the report, and, even more bewildering, that the Government is involved in some conspiracy to voter pad. He said, in his closing of that particular statement, that nothing could be far from the truth. What the Minister did not indicate to us was the reason why there was such a long delay in terms of the bringing of the report before Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, he did not provide a justification as to why—the report, basically, would have been received in March 2014. He did not state why it took so long for the Cabinet to approve the report, which he indicated was in February 2015, and why it took almost a month again to lay it before—well, actually, about two weeks or so, or three weeks to lay it before the House of Representatives on March 06. The question is why did it take so long, and the length, or the duration of time between which the report was received and the report was approved, and then laid, would have been not stated. That particular reason was not stated, and I am sure the Minister, in even presenting a particular reason as to why, or a justification as to why it took so long, it would still be unjustified.

Mr. Speaker, if we were to look at section 72(3) of the Constitution, it states:

“As soon as may be after the Commission has submitted a report...”

That the report should either be laid by, or should be brought to the House, by the Prime Minister or a Minister acting on behalf of the Prime Minister. So, as soon as the report is received, Mr. Speaker. I did not think that the Constitution meant nine months later for it to be brought, or even to be approved by the Cabinet. The Minister sought to refute again what he called “preposterous allegations” about the Government suppressing the contents of the report. He also sought, again, to refute claims that have been made that the Government is involved in some conspiracy to voter pad. Mr. Speaker, these are two very serious allegations, and I am sure the many individuals in this society who highlighted those particular concerns were highlighting those concerns on the basis of some measure of truth in it.

10.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that we cannot—and I am saying “we”, the members of this great nation of Trinidad and Tobago, cannot trust the Government. When we look at the issues of section 34; when we look at the issues of “Prisongate”; when we look at the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill, which caused such a hue and cry in this country; when we look at the issues of the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill which introduced proportional

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representation as a thief in the night, we have to have concern when the Government says to us, “Trust us, trust us”. We know, the members of this country know we cannot trust them, based on some of these things that I have highlighted, and this is just a small number of examples. There are so many more examples that I can give.

Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Tabaquite talks about good governance, and he provided that the Government provides good governance, I am asking him: Are these good examples of good governance? Section 34 is not a good example of good governance.

Dr. Rambachan: You also voted for section 34.

Miss A. Hospedales: “Prisongate” is not a good example of good governance; the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill that brought proportional representation is not a good example. When they passed the Bill in the middle of the night, and it really came upon the population as a thief in the night. The Constitution (Amdt.) Bill again, is not a good example of good governance.

When the Member for Tabaquite talks about fair and equitable treatment, I am asking: Where? I could tell you that in 2010, the Member for Port of Spain South, as the Minister of Community Development, had approved the construction of two community centres, one for the Bon Air community and one for the Trincity community. When this Government came into office, they scrapped it entirely; the facilities have not been built to date, and on the guise that they have no money—they have no money. Look at millions of dollars—the \$400 million spent on LifeSport could have been better utilized constructing those facilities for the communities of both Bon Air Gardens and Trincity.

When they talk about equitable and fair treatment, I want to raise the issue of the ECC centres that were scheduled to be constructed, one for the Bon Air community, one for the Arouca community, one for the Trincity community; again, this Government scrapped it. Despite how many appeals via letter, via raising it during debates, raising it during Standing Finance Committee, you name it, talking to the Ministers one-on-one, calling them, they refuse to construct those facilities.

Then when we look at the upgrade of the recreational grounds for the constituency, particularly the Bon Air Recreational Ground, the Henry Street Recreational Ground and the Clayton Ince Recreational Ground were scheduled for upgrade. Today, not one bit of work has been done. But you know, the

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Auditor General's Report for 2013 highlighted a significant factor, where a contract was awarded for the upgrade of the Clayton Ince Recreational Ground, the contractor was paid. But guess what? Nothing has been done to date on that ground. Mr. Speaker, that is what they are talking about, fair and equitable treatment. I really cry shame on the Members on the opposite side, when they come here to talk about good governance, fair and equitable treatment, no way. I cry shame on you all.

We are talking about the issue of trust and good governance, fair and equitable treatment, and I want to go back to the issue of trust again, because Members on the opposite side are claiming that they are 1,254 houses already constructed to be distributed in Pineapple Gardens, but there are no houses constructed—no houses constructed, not even grass has been removed, not a hole dug, not infrastructure put in, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. Even the Trestrail property, nothing, nothing, nothing, has been in place for any distribution to occur. When they come here and talk to us about good governance and trust and equitable and fair treatment, I say shame on you all—shame on you all.

Mr. Speaker, the EBC report indicates to us that there are 29 constituencies, that there has been no boundary changes. They highlighted Arima, Arouca/Maloney, Barataria/San Juan, Caroni Central, Caroni East, Chaguanas East, Chaguanas West, Cumuto, Manzanilla, D'Abadie/O'Meara, Fyzabad, La Brea, La Horquetta/Talparo, Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West, Lopinot/Bon Air West, Mayaro, Moruga/Tableland, Naparima, Oropouche, Pointe-a-Pierre, Point Fortin, Princes Town, Siparia, St. Ann's East, St. Augustine, St. Joseph, Tabaquite, Toco/Sangre Grande and Tunapuna. The report also stated that the two Tobago constituencies, their boundaries have not changed as well.

The affected constituencies have been identified as Couva North and South, Diego Martin West, Diego Martin Central, Diego Martin North/East, Port of Spain North, St. Ann's West, Port of Spain South, San Fernando East and San Fernando West and Oropouche East. The one that is of great concern to Members on this side is the San Fernando East constituency, where a major change has taken place. Where we have three pro-UNC polling divisions having been moved from Oropouche East into San Fernando East, weakening the seat by approximately 1,000 votes.

Mr. Speaker, I will not go to any analysis, because I think that the Member for Diego Martin North/East presented a very comprehensive analysis of the

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movement of the three polling divisions from Oropouche East into San Fernando East. I listened to the Members on the opposite side when the Member for Diego Martin North/East was presenting the analysis, and how the weakening of that constituency would have occurred, based on the fact that three pro-UNC polling divisions have now been inserted into San Fernando East, and there has been two pro-PNM polling divisions that have been shifted to San Fernando West. I listened again to the Members of the opposite side who were shouting at the top of their voices, “Dey dead, dey loss”, and this is part of their strategy. They know exactly what they had planned to do with reference to this particular constituency. As the Member for Tabaquite was saying, they were revealing their strategic strategy.

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: So the EBC is part of that strategy?

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, the UNC does not stand for openness and it does not stand for transparency. We have cause to be concerned on this side with reference to what is occurring with reference to San Fernando East, because there is potential for voter padding. I did not see it, but there are several analysts who said that depending on the housing allocation policy, San Fernando East could become less safe for the Opposition PNM. Because of the potential voter padding and house padding that can occur, I would want to agree. As Members of the PNM, we have to be vigilant and ensure that a comprehensive exercise of canvassing is done in those areas, to pick up on those areas where there is voter padding, house padding, et cetera.

One of the country’s leading pollsters said that the proposed changes to the electoral boundaries could be the single most important factor in determining the results of this year’s general election, especially in particular with reference to San Fernando East. When you look at the possible lowering of the number of votes or the weakening of the number of votes that it stands as a potential for determining the outcome of the election for that particular constituency.

Mr. Speaker, similarly, I know the Member for Point Fortin made reference to the Nevis experience, and the Opposition Leader, at that time, in Nevis, indicated that the changing of the boundaries was a new scheme to steal an election. I do not want to cast any aspersions on the EBC, [*Crosstalk*] because we recognize that they are members who work very hard and have been diligently monitoring and making the necessary changes with respect to the boundaries. But what we can say is that we cannot trust the Government. We cannot trust them, particularly with reference to voter padding and house padding. We cannot trust the Government. We know that they have the capacity to do anything, because we have seen them over the last almost five years operate in this House. We have

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seen them. We have had major outcries against their modus operandi, and all I can say is that we on this side will be vigilant. We will be vigilant. We will be monitoring. We will be looking out. We will be canvassing to identify those areas of voter padding and house padding.

Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues in voting for the EBC's reports without amendments. I thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there anybody else? The hon. Leader of the House.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring this debate on a very important Motion to a close, but I must make some observations before moving. What is phenomenal to me is that a Motion that asks the House to approve a report from the EBC, became a debate on housing.

The Prime Minister, in moving this Motion, spoke to the EBC's report specifically, to the polling divisions that were being moved, the constituencies that were being affected and, therefore, it is a report from the EBC the Prime Minister asked the House to approve. Mr. Speaker, it took all of four minutes and 34 seconds for the first PNM speaker to introduce housing in a debate on the EBC. Had I known that this entire debate from the perspective of the Opposition, that the EBC equates with housing—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Would you give way?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No. If I knew that a debate for the PNM on the EBC equated with a debate on housing, I would have brought officials of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. I would have invited officials from the HDC to come to the House, but nothing prepared me for the Opposition PNM equating a debate on an EBC report to a debate on housing. I found that astonishing, because it means in the PNM's mentality, in their structure, in their operation, in their ideology, the EBC equals housing; it equals HDC. So for the PNM, HDC is EBC, and that I found fascinating.

Who could have said this morning that we are going to debate an EBC report, but for the PNM EBC equals HDC, because it brought to the fore their housing policy and strategy for not one year, two years, five years, but since 1962, their housing policy was equated with their electoral strategy. This is why today, every single speaker opposite spoke about housing, not the EBC. They were not concerned about electoral systems; they were not concerned with voter problem, with a booth, they were not concerned about other matters relating to casting your vote and so on, the challenge and new electoral systems and computerization

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systems, they were not concerned with that. They were concerned with this housing business, because to them EBC is HDC, and EBC was NHA. That is what they are coming with.

My friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: We are not friends.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I say “friend” in a metaphorical sense, because he cannot be friend, but in a parliamentary way—[*Interruption*]—“de man from Diego Martin North/East, leh we put it dat way”.

Mr. Imbert: Hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that all the housing sites today—most, but not all—in fact, “lemme” say all—every single housing site today that we are distributing houses was selected by the People’s National Movement—every single one, including sites where we built and turned the sod in Union Hall, Princes Town, Chaguanas, where we are moving to build in Pineapple and Trestrail, have been selected by the People’s National Movement.

10.35 p.m.

In fact, this Government has not selected one new site, but has built new houses. The sites were selected before—Trestrail, Couva. And I want to say that what—they have a disease of the mind when it comes to the EBC and HDC. It is a disease of the mind that everything the EBC does has to do with housing. That is why they are paranoid with housing.

Mr. Speaker, your humble servant, in preparation for a major distribution, announced 100 homes a week. This thing became the most dynamic announcement that ignited Members opposite and started to talk about how you giving this—first, they said we could not give a hundred because we do not have houses. When we explained that we have houses, then how you giving out? When we explained we using the same policy you used—well they “get frighten when they hear that one”. [*Laughter*] When they heard we were using the same policy that they used, they “get frighten”, but we have not changed the policy. The policy is there. You know, Mr. Speaker, I will come to some housing matters in a little while, but it is astonishing that they cannot see the EBC report outside of housing and all of them, all raised the issue of housing.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for La Brea, particular case in point, you know, spoke at length about the great work the PNM did. But if they did so much great

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work, why is your constituency in a state of underdevelopment? Why? Why do you come here and ask a thousand questions, and when we are doing everything conceivable in La Brea, if the PNM did so much and spent so much and developed the country, but the people of La Brea cannot feel development today. Mr. Speaker, one of these days, he will ask us, when are we covering the manhole on the road? But, Mr. Speaker, the PNM, according to him, did so much, spent so much money, developed the country, but they did not develop La Brea.

You know, the Member for La Brea comes here, spends 45 minutes talking, when he went for screening, it took seven minutes in San Fernando to screen him. I am told walking up the step and going into the room took five minutes. [Laughter] It took five minutes to get in and get out of the room, and his screening was seven minutes eh. Then they say, it was pending. You know, I feel sorry for the gentleman from La Brea. I honestly feel sorry because he speaks here with such passion. [Crosstalk] The Member for La Brea speaks here with such passion, such commitment, such zeal for the people of La Brea. He went to be screened for five minutes and they say, well you get out, we pending.

When he stands in the House, it is with dynamism. He stands up and you see him every week, he is moving left to right, and sometimes, you know, he moves and he “backs back” on my friend from St. Joseph, you know. He could “back back” on him, and sometimes he aims at him with flatulent precision, you know. [Laughter] He aims at him given his stature, with flatulent precision. He goes back onto him as he debates, arguing for the people, arguing for the people of La Brea. You know, Mr. Speaker, arguing for the people of La Brea. It took seven minutes to screen him.

On this housing matter, my friends opposite, not only the Member for La Brea, others raised the matter. People go and line up by the HDC. So, I dropped into this line one morning, I saw a line by the HDC, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, I stopped. I went and talked to the people. I said, “What is happening here”? You know, with people, Mr. Speaker—that is a line of hope. So, I made a very bad remark to some people there. I said, “My brothers and sisters, there is no need for this. If you have some information—if your information has changed, wherever you are living now, change of address, telephone change, you can communicate to the HDC in writing”. They said, “No, no, no, no. We want to come in and give them the information because my phone number changed, my address changed. I am renting somewhere else”. I said, “Listen, we are giving out a 100 houses a week, although we averaged more than a century now”. Tomorrow, in Exchange, it will be 108 homes distributed—108. [Desk thumping]

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Mr. Speaker, I told the folks there, I said, “we will continue this”. They said, “Dr. Moonilal, we have to ensure that we sign up and everything is in order. We want a chance”. I said, “But after the general election, it will continue”. They said, “It will continue if you there”. I said, “No, the houses are there to be distributed. God forbid if the PNM comes in power I am sure they will distribute”. They said, “What?” Let me tell you something, there is a reason why people protesting out there for their thing. Everybody wants to settle with this Government. Everybody want to settle with the Partnership. [*Desk thumping*] Make a joke and tell “de” fireman—the PNM will come back in power. The PNM will deal with you. The fireman?—my friend, they will take off their hose and hose you down if you tell them the PNM will sort them out.

Go and tell people waiting for house that, you know, it will have an election this year, and in a nightmarish circumstance, the PNM could get in power and I am sure that you will have a fair chance to get a house. Ah? “Doh make dem joke. Doh make that joke”. That is serious joke. The people who are protesting for road, go and tell them—well you know brother man, there is an election this year, and maybe if there is a change of Government, the PNM will give you road and drain and so on. “Doh make dem joke” with people. “They dead.” The people who are protesting now for wage increase, go and tell them the PNM might come back in power, back in an election, and the PNM will treat you fairly and you will get a wage increase. “Doh make dem joke.” Everybody who is anybody in this country wants to settle with the People’s Partnership Government today. [*Desk thumping*]

My friend, if you have a pothole in front “yuh” house, they want that fixed before election because, in their mind, if a nightmare occurs, that pothole “ain’t” fixing. That is correct. That is why people are doing that. You think if people have faith that if the PNM is in power that they will get houses equally, you think them lining up for five hours in “de hot sun” on George Street? You think them lining up in “de hot sun” by South Quay. If they have faith that if the PNM comes in power they will treat them with equality, they will get homes.

Mr. Speaker, under the last administration, once in a blue moon, they would have a house distribution. You would never see a distribution. You drive through some place—and they call a place Balisier Avenue, eh. That is what they called a street you know—Balisier Avenue. You drive through Balisier Avenue in an NHA development and you see curtain and window and people coming out. They would never have a public distribution. You know, they would do their business, a letter would come from the Office of the Prime Minister, which I have

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recommending 44,84 people for housing. When I tell you, not even the Minister of Housing and Urban Development.

There was a case, a former MP—they were in Government, I was in Opposition—a former Member of Parliament and Minister came to me. He said “Doc, do meh a favour?” I said, what? He say, you could recommend about five people for housing for me? I said, “but chief, you are a Minister. You in the PNM Government.” He said, “dem doh take me on. But if you recommend, they might help yuh”. That is the PNM. The housing list came from White Hall. Not even the Minister of Housing—and MPs have no chance—forget that. Forget that. MPs “ain’t” have no chance.

Mr. Speaker, today, we have received lists from people. I could bring the list one day and show them, but I do not want to embarrass them eh. I “doh” want to embarrass them. Because many of them today, they will come here and I “doh” mind, they will speak in the Parliament, they cannot speak in the screening committee, and they will come here, they will make their talk and so on because they are saying goodbye to the Parliament. They are saying goodbye, so they can talk. Eight out 12 of “dem” gone?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Of their free will and volition. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Some people “get kick out at de door”. Some people, sensing what happen, they dive through the window. [*Laughter*] “They bail out.” They dive through— “they dive out”. [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 48(6)—48(6), please. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: My friend from Port of Spain South cannot dive through the window, [*Laughter*] and she is already inside “de” house.

Mr. Speaker: Please. The Member has raised an issue. [*Crosstalk*] So, you are saying that the Member is imputing?

Miss Mc Donald: Improper motives, Sir. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I want to ask you to be very careful how you continue, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes. So, Mr. Speaker, today—I will get back to the contributions. We will forget the House and who dive through and so on. Today, Members opposite raised some fascinating arguments. One Member said that the Government is—and actually to our credit—the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West recited all of the provisions that we were giving the citizens and said it is an election year, so we are giving out one, two, three, four, five—

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and credit us with distributing and giving to citizens what are due to citizens [Desk thumping] goods and services.

Mr. Speaker, and we take a bow that the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West recognized all the goods and services we are giving out—and better than me, repeated the child grant and the pension and the housing and the land and so on which—and the Member went on to almost insinuate that every day now is like Christmas. It is Christmas. But the Member, of course, is not going to be returned as well.

But the Member for Diego Martin North/East gave us with forensic precision how you can go about voter padding. With forensic precision, he broke it down by PD and streets and explained how we could voter pad. Now, I want to tell him that maybe we should have brought this earlier so we could have gotten this kind of advice, you know. Mr. Speaker, I never knew how this thing worked. But with precision and with a forensic analysis, he said you could do this, you could do that, you could voter pad here, this housing development in PD this, and if this comes to that and you put people here, then the voting will change. [Crosstalk] Who living by lamppost. Mr. Speaker, and now I understand what they are about. Vacant lot—how you could do it. You know, then tell us that the PNM is monitoring.

I want to tell Members opposite, if you send PNM people in any housing estate and tell them to pose as WASA and T&TEC officials, we will send the police and lock them up for fraud and misrepresentation. Because there are PNM people who are walking around in HDC sites now telling people that they are representing—they are working for WASA and T&TEC and want to know the people's names and when they came to live there and so on, but they are not telling them that they are from the People's National Movement. They are telling them they are from WASA and T&TEC. It came to me. A report came to me. I sent the police, the HDC security and I informed the police [Crosstalk] that if people come—I am now telling HDC residents throughout this country, if anybody come by “dey gap and telling dem they from WASA and T&TEC” and they are really from the PNM, call the police. [Crosstalk] They ought not to be misrepresenting and fraudulently passing themselves off as officers of the State.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 48(6), please—48(6). No. It is imputing improper motives. [Crosstalk] No.

Mr. Speaker: No. No. No. No. I do not think—[Interruption]

Miss Mc Donald: All this will come to an end just now.

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Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the Member is saying that any Member of Parliament. Remember our Standing Orders deal with Members of Parliament—Members of Parliament. The Member is not accusing any Member of Parliament of that. Continue, please.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I am accusing persons outside the Parliament of fraudulently passing themselves off as officers of WASA, T&TEC impostors, when they maybe working for a political party. I have alerted the security at the HDC sites—anybody comes there and tell “yuh they from WASA or T&TEC,” call the police, and lock them up. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Mc Donald: You have to go on a platform to—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker—the Member for Port of Spain South.

Mr. Speaker: Control you temper.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Control your temper. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, there is a—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Listen, Chief Whip, you are supposed to be leading by example. You cannot be continuing like that man. You have an attitude—you just do whatever you want. Please, control your emotions. Okay. Continue, please.

10.50 p.m.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, let me proceed with my argument. The EBC report is to us, the Member for Diego Martin North/East tells us that the report was kept at Cabinet and only when they had a press conference that the report came out and so on, as if, you know, this is something strange that a report of this nature would take so long, because Cabinet members, members of F&GP and so on, looked at the report, we want to be certain the report is properly done, there is nothing amiss and so on, before we bring it to the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out the monumental hypocrisy, that when we did the research quickly, under their administration, they had a report for nine months and then brought it to the Parliament, and when they brought it to the Parliament, they were three months away from a general election. Today, they come and they cry and they moan and they groan that we are coming now to bring it before an election, and how long it took, and what you were doing before, and people in the PD do not know, and tonight if they cannot sleep is because they do not know which constituency their PD in, so tonight they will not sleep, and maybe their children would not go to school because they are not sure which PD they belong in and which constituency.

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They come and moan and groan, and when we look at their record, he was Leader of Government Business as well, I must say, that is when they kicked out Ken Valley, and as Leader of Government Business, they took nine to 10 months to bring it from Cabinet to the Parliament but today you want to condemn this Government because we took so long, and the world is falling down. Then the Member for Diego Martin North/East, cleverly, he said I have faith in the commissioners or the board members of the EBC, but I do not have that faith in the professional public servants.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, 48(6), the Member is imputing improper motives. I never said that!

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is what they are doing the whole night.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Imbert: Why do you have to tell untruths?

Mr. Speaker: Listen, please! Please! The Member is claiming that he did not say that, let us not go there. [*Interruption*] May I appeal to the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Port of Spain South, to observe Standing Order 53 and allow the Minister to speak in silence. Continue, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I will paraphrase that and we will be happy on both sides. The Member for Diego Martin North/East expressed confidence in the integrity of the commissioners. Correct. The Member for Diego Martin North/East could not express similar confidence in the integrity of officers below. [*Desk thumping*] I think that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, he said—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No. What “he said”; it is not a Standing Order. You can sit down. [*Crosstalk*] That is imputing improper motives.

Mr. Imbert: He said that I have no confidence in the public servants. He has not withdrawn that remark. I never said that! I never said anything about the public servants.

Mr. Speaker: All right. Okay. Member, the hon. Member is saying he never said that.

Mr. Imbert: Stop putting words in my mouth!

Mr. Speaker: And I am saying, if he is saying he did not say that, his word is his honour, let us not go there. Please!

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Hon Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, he did not say that he had no confidence in the public officers, but he said he had confidence in the commissioner.

Mr. Imbert: Withdraw the remark! Mr. Speaker, 48(6), he has accused me of saying I had no confidence in the professional public servants. That is an untruth. I am asking that it be withdrawn.

Hon. DR. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I can withdraw the statement.

Mr. Imbert: Withdraw it!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I withdraw—Mr. Speaker, it is not a problem. It is not a problem.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Listen! Listen! Let us not badger Members of this Parliament. [*Interruption*] Please! You have asked the hon. Member, because I have already ruled on the matter and you are prepared to withdraw it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Speaker: And let us conduct ourselves with some degree of decorum and dignity, and just hold your fire. Please! And allow the Member to speak in silence. Withdraw your statement and continue, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the statement. If he finds it so offensive, I withdraw it. I withdraw it—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Move on.

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

Hon Dr. R. Moonilal:—but I will put on record that the Member expressed confidence in the integrity of the commissioners, members of the board of the EBC, and could not express similar confidence in the integrity of those below the board. Fantastic.

Mr. Imbert: Stop.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But he said it, it is on the record. Mr. Speaker, I am not withdrawing that one, because that is on the record.

Let me proceed, Mr. Speaker, the EBC has been functioning for some time in this country and you know what is an observation I want to put on the record, anytime the PNM is in trouble and they lose or feel they will lose an election, they will always attack the EBC. [*Interruption*] Always they will attack EBC.

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They caused a commission of enquiry into the EBC, and the Member for St. Augustine made a very important point today. During that period, I remember, persons were grabbed by their collar and by their belt and dragged to the court, voter padding all over the country, handcuffed, women in San Fernando handcuffed and taken to the courthouse and thing, voter padding—10 years they are going to court, some of them could not leave the country and travel, they had appointments at the court. Every single body, the court dismissed their case. One person, I believe, in north Trinidad was convicted, and that one person say it was a PNM MP who told them to register. That is in the record.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But do not tell them about the coke in the water tank.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, you could not tell them that, that was an EBC matter too.

So, Mr. Speaker, their track record on this matter of the EBC is a suspect record. Very suspect. Members before said, when the EBC comes to the Cabinet, make request for any and I believe everything, there is not one—to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, I stand corrected—note that ever came to Cabinet where the EBC is requesting something and the Cabinet says no or did not support. [*Desk thumping*] We are very proud of that, and I challenge any Member to tell us that the EBC requested A, B, C, and the Cabinet of the People's Partnership, led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, said no, we are not giving you that. We have given everything they asked for. We have given them, so there is no intention at all that in any way this Government will undermine their role and function.

Mr. Speaker, they then lead another argument which I find is difficult, these arguments, just as the housing. They went PD by PD and then looking in the PD to see what happened in the box the last time, and what will happen in the box the next time. So, are you saying that people will not change their mind? Some people may not vote as they did before? What are you suggesting?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Look at historical signs.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and Member for Point Fortin.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The outgoing Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is telling us that there are historical signs and trends and so on. Well, it is a historical sign that you are leaving. But, Mr. Speaker, I find that almost insulting to people, to take a ballot box in a PD and say they do vote PNM and UNC and that is how it will be in 2015, and that means you win and I lose, and you better off and I less off. I find it is almost insulting to treat human beings like that. [*Interruption*]

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Mrs. Mc Intosh: I was responding to him.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Member, please. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, I have appealed to you on three occasions.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Two, two occasions.

Mr. Speaker: Well, this is the third time I am appealing to you. [*Laughter*] Just allow yourself to sit and listen in silence, you cannot be cross talking. You are disturbing the proceedings. Please, I am appealing to you for the third time, just allow the hon. Member to speak in silence. That is all I am asking. Continue, please!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. So, the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke about ballot box from Oropouche East—and I took offence, I want to say—all evening, all this focus on Oropouche East. Oropouche East coming into San Fernando East and, what is his fascination with Oropouche East? What is the big fascination with that?

Mr. Sharma: Cuchawan Trace.

Mr. Speaker: Member, please!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: What, is Cuchawan Trace they like? They are bringing votes from here. Who is bringing? No Government is involved in that, the EBC does that. We may agree or disagree, but it is not the Government doing that. It is the EBC. And PDs come into San Fernando East, it is their own candidate in San Fernando East, Randall Mitchell, who addressing, the first time he ever talked in his life, he say, aye, San Fernando East which was a diehard PNM, he said this thing is now a marginal and the UNC could win it.

Imagine the candidate they appointed, first statement representing a diehard PNM seat, he said, listen, this thing we could lose, eh. He said we could lose this thing, this thing is a marginal. Mr. Speaker, it is they who said that, not us. But my friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, was very quick to point out the boxes coming from Oropouche East into San Fernando East, but said nothing and did not profile the PDs from San Fernando East that are going into San Fernando West, and there are PDs from Mon Repos HDC or NHA as we call it, two PDs, I believe, are going into San Fernando West, but he did not bother to profile that. That was not important. What was important is Oropouche East coming there.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Oropouche East and Minister of Housing and Urban Development has expired. Would you like an extension?

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Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Oropouche East and Minister of Housing and Urban Development be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. So, Mr. Speaker, they did not bother about the impact of Mon Repos in San Fernando West—but when you come, you must come with clean hand. If you want to speak about an electoral impact of Oropouche East in San Fernando East, then talk about the impact of San Fernando East in San Fernando West as well, and San Fernando West is well known as a leading marginal seat in this country. It is well known, everybody knows that, but they will not discuss that at all as if to suggest in some way that the Government had a hand in that. But, we will have a hand in that to give us an electoral disability, a weakness, to weaken the position of the Government. No, not at all. And I find that very alarming. It is distressing that Members opposite will take those kinds of arguments, and I still think it is distressing that they will equate the EBC with the HDC. And it suggests that if by some nightmare they get into office, that HDC will be used for EBC.

The Member for Diego Martin Central, the gentleman may be under a lot of pressure now, I think his screening is coming up as well and his political head may be on the chopping block. But, the Member for Diego Martin Central admits in a left-handed way that the HDC did help him. It is not the first time that the HDC came to help him in his constituency, and I would tell him that there are people in the HDC who will help and has helped several MPs, but they also indicate there are MPs who are ungrateful. They will get help and then they will come and bad talk, bad mouth the HDC and housing and so on. They tell me, they say there are some MPs we help but they are ungrateful. [*Interruption*] But the HDC did help.

Mr. Speaker, you know, they talk about housing and I want to tell them, when Trou Macaque in the constituency of Laventille West had a fire two o'clock in the morning, the whole building burnt down—and Trou Macaque is what? Where you think that is, Cuchawan Trace? Those people never spent one night outside in the dew; the same day we housed all of them. Correct? [*Desk thumping*] He says, correct. The Member for Laventille West, he came and made representation. He called me early in the morning. Early, early in the morning this man wake me up to tell me it had a fire somewhere. I said, where? He said, Trou Macaque, he is up there now. I said what is happening? But he is a good representative for Laventille

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West, “they throw him out and they bring somebody who still in rehab.” They replaced him by somebody in rehab.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 48(6), please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: About what? Mr. Speaker, I deserve more than 15 minutes the way these people interrupting me, eh. So, the Member for Laventille West made representation—Trou Macaque, the HDC, under my watch, took every single citizen of Laventille and put them in a housing unit the same day their housing burnt down. I did that. Today they talk about discrimination in housing. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, in Pleasantville—you all know where Pleasantville is? Pleasantville is in San Fernando East—another building burned down there. The Member of Parliament for San Fernando East called me immediately, they went in a community centre. I did not go to gallery, I sent the HDC staff. The Member for Diego Martin, the people in a community centre—now, Mr. Speaker, when he called me I could have told him I want to come and talk, I want to come and meet them and take the press because I want the Minister of Housing reach to meet people homeless in a community centre. I told him, no, I have my own problem to deal with. I say “we will send the HDC, we will deal with that”. I am not looking for gallery.

When the Member for San Fernando East called me for Pleasantville, I say, “where are they”? He said “they are in a community centre”. I say, “all right, we will organize”. Everybody in that housing settlement in Pleasantville—not Felicity—there, we housed them when a fire took a building, under our watch. Under our watch that happened.

11.05 p.m.

Mr. Cadiz: “And dey throw him out.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But he gone too. No, some of the best representatives they have, gone you know. Yeah, they gone. [*Crosstalk*] You see, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant is writing aggressively seeking housing for her constituents, but she gone too. I do not know who replaced her, but she gone too. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, they are not getting a cent, they are not getting a penny. So to accuse us of discrimination on housing when we took the citizens of Laventille and put them in housing the same day their building burnt down, when we took citizens of Pleasantville and put them in housing the same day their building burnt

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down. We had distributions in Port of Spain—I have pictures, I keep pictures on video when we went in Port of Spain South, I think it was Clifton Hill, and the Member for Port of Spain—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: That is PNM houses, sweetheart.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So it is PNM houses. “Yuh hear now, mouth open and tory jump out.” [*Laughter and crosstalk*] “Is PNM houses ah hear.” [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, you heard it for yourself, live and direct. [*Crosstalk*] Well, why you did not give it out if you built it? No, they build all the houses but they never gave out any. If you built it, you should have given it out. We spent \$150 million to rehabilitate and repair houses. Up to now, people write me letters, people get housing, Mr. Speaker, and two weeks later, I get a letter. Now, I think it was a thank you or something—70 defects in the house.

My colleagues know, some people they recommend to get housing. When I think people are coming back to send me a nice thank you card or a letter thanking me, they say okay, thank you for the house but it has 70 defects in this house. We spent \$150 million fixing their work. You know they will say PNM build all the houses, but they will not say PNM build Las Alturas, eh. They build Las Alturas too, “yeah dat is PNM”, they build that too. But they do not take ownership for that. “No, PNM eh build that.” People from Mars build that, “dah one”. In Port of Spain South, we are accommodating housing there. Mr. Speaker, we have housing units becoming available in Diego Martin now, in Point Fortin, some in La Brea—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: What about the Coffee people?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not know about coffee and tea and so on, you know. They are getting housing. We will look at the list that the people gave and we will make recommendations. Mr. Speaker, we gave—a housing unit went to somebody the other day. A person came to me. You know what that person told me, he said, Mr. Minister, thank you for the house. I say, great. He say, I want to tell you something, I was the driver of a PNM Minister for 10 years; for 10 years, I drove a PNM Minister. I asked, I begged, I beseeched for a housing unit, I never get any. I waited now for the People’s Partnership to be in power and I get a house. [*Desk thumping*] The fella told me that, eh. And that is a fact.

So we have met and treated with people in HDC. Members opposite make recommendations but you give houses—sometime people feel you give out housing like you give out shoes or something, you know.

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Mr. Peters: They feel they do not have to pay for it, you know.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They tell people—there is a Member opposite and I will come to that next week—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Peters: Yes, tell them now.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: There is a Member opposite who told people in this country “doh pay for no government house, the PNM build that, it free”. *[Crosstalk]* Yeah, yeah, the NAR was in office. They say “doh pay for nothing the PNM build, that the house is free”. Mr. Speaker, I will bring my reference for that, I will bring my reference for that.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, 48(6). That is clearly imputing improper motives to a Member of this House.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, please.

Mr. Imbert: That is 48(6), Mr. Speaker. *[Crosstalk]* Who is the person on this side? He said somebody on this side.

Mr. Speaker: Well, he has not identified anybody.

Mr. Imbert: He said a Member on this side, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Member, Member, please, please—the Member for Port of Spain South—the Members are objecting and in the context of the Standing Order, it is a sweeping statement and Members feel offended. So I ask you to stay clear of that, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I will stay clear of that and I will bring the reference for you in a couple of days.

Mr. Peters: You can call the name.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I will bring it in a couple of days and we will give it. Mr. Speaker, I am making the point that as the housing stock increases and we signed off and complete the housing in Diego Martin, Port of Spain, St. James, on the corridor, La Horquetta and elsewhere, several Members who have their seats in that area and their recommendations are in, they will be facilitated. But you are distributing in San Fernando, you are distributing in Couva, you are distributing in Carlsen Field, you are distributing in Chaguanas. We give housing—it is not shoes you are giving away.

People, when they come for housing, they have to be processed, they have to go through a process with the TTMF, with the HDC, everybody has a file, you have

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to prove your income. There are people who come for housing, Mr. Speaker, MP recommends them. I say, nice, how are you paying for this house? Are you employed? No. So how are you paying? Well, I will get a job. I say, but you need a job first. So let us get a job and then you come for housing. People have the mindset that they do not have to pay, it is for free.

Then, the other problem is people come for house, they say I like this house, this beautiful nice house on the corner, with three bedrooms and an upstairs and downstairs. I say, nice. How are you paying for that? Well, I will get a job, I am not working right now. I say, but we can, given your income, you can get an apartment. "Nah, nah, nah, I doh want no apartment, I doh want no apartment." I want this upstairs/downstairs house on the corner. This is what we face, Mr. Speaker.

So when you distribute housing, there is a process done by the public officers. You are not embarrassing me, they are not insulting me, they are not saying, I am victimizing. As Minister of Housing and Urban Development, I deal with policy, that TTMF, 2 per cent, 5 per cent, we deal with that. Today, I was happy to announce that our 2 per cent programme, we have increased the monthly income for that. Under \$10,000, with one breadwinner in a family, with less than \$10,000, you access 2 per cent on your mortgage for housing.

Mr. Speaker, 5 per cent for a property. Land and building for \$1.2 million, at 5 per cent. Policy is what I do. We are now working with the private sector, so the private sector could build houses for the public sector, policy. The people at the HDC, they determine their distribution, they have their files, they have their listing and so on, and there are several windows, disabled people. We have a special distribution coming up in two to three weeks, only for differently-abled people, only for them. We have a next window for members of the protective services. [Crosstalk] And let me say, Mr. Speaker, that does not include my injury time for all of this disturbance I face here today.

Mr. Speaker, under this administration more police, fire, prison officers have received housing than under any administration in this period. [Desk thumping] They get more than the 10 per cent. There is a special window for persons who can prove, they have in writing that they can prove that they have applied for 15 years or more. People come to me, they bring a letter from the NHA, from Janouras Building in Port of Spain, in 1982, and the clerk who signed off is a clerk by the name of Hazel Manning, in the Ministry of Housing, they come with that. There is a special window, it is called, "It's been a long time coming". We

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gave a fella named Trevor Dell in central a house. The fella applied, the same year I was born, he applied for a house.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Victor Dell.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well he older than me, my age. But, Mr. Speaker, Dell, Mr. Dell, he had to wait, I was born the year he applied for housing. He had to wait until I become Minister of Housing and Urban Development, until they named a computer after him, before he could get a house. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Mr. Dell. We did that, there is a window for that.

Mr. Speaker, let me come to the fire victim people now. Everybody knows here, every MP here has fire victims. I want to tell you that. We just cannot take up all the houses and give people whose house burnt down. Then what will happen? I helped some people who in landslip, their houses falling down and so on, we helped. But everybody standing up now and saying somebody house burned down by me so they need housing. So what is that, well then all the houses will go to fire victims.

So again, we go through a process to look at the families, to look at their income, to look at their extended families to see what is happening, and the Ministry of the People and Social Development, we work very hard with them to give other type of support. Maybe it is rental, until they rebuild. But I want to tell you it is not every time you have a fire, you know, you watch the fire and say okay, call HDC, you want a house. It does not work that way. A building in Laventille burnt down, the whole building, those people, we have checked their income level and thing, they could not go and pay rent and so on. A building in Diego Martin the other day, 20 people or so, I think, twenty people. Pleasantville.

So, Mr. Speaker, in winding up, I want to tell my friends opposite that we have the same policy they had, it is that we are more transparent. Mr. Speaker, I should not have made any announcement. I should have just taken all the 4,300 houses and quietly talked to a few of “meh” partners here and say, “shoo, shoo, shoo, we have houses to give out, come, come, come, leh we give out in a corner quiet”. We could have done that. I went to the public and say, 100 homes per week. And MPs will make their recommendations in line with others, with other windows of policy. People get excited because they have hope and they do not want to wait for election. You go and tell somebody wait till after election for a house. You know what they will say, “if the PNM come in power, what go happen to us”. They have no faith.

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So, Mr. Speaker, these were some of the matters I wanted to respond to. A lot more could be said, but I know the time has expired. So I want to thank my colleagues on this side, certainly, for their support on this matter. I want to rest assured that we will proceed to approve with the support of my friends opposite. And, Mr. Speaker, with those words, I will beg to move. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Draft Order entitled “The Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 2015” be approved.

**NATIONAL TRUST OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
(AMDT.) BILL, 2015**

Senate Amendment

The Minister of National Diversity and Social Integration (Hon. Rodger Samuel): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion in my name:

Be it resolved that the Senate amendment to the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt.) Bill, 2015 listed in Appendix III, be now considered.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2.

Senate amendment read as follows:

In the proposed definition of “Minister” delete the words “heritage preservation” and substitute the words “the Trust”.

Mr. Samuel: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House agree with the Senate in the amendment to clause 2 of the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt.) Bill, 2015. I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: No, I think you need to give the House a little explanation so that they will understand the purpose of this.

Mr. Samuel: Mr. Speaker, there were some issues that were raised in the other place with regard to heritage, and as a result the agreement was to just amend it, just to mean “the Minister with responsibility for the National Trust”, rather than, “the Minister with responsibility for heritage preservation”. What we

were attempting to do in the first instance was to align this with the National Museum and Art Gallery Act which also said that “Minister” there means “Minister with responsibility for heritage preservation”. But seeing that folks in the other place had difficulty understanding what heritage was, and we debated for three hours with regard to the word heritage, [*Laughter*] the end result was to agree that it be amended to mean “Minister with responsibility for the National Trust”. I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

11.20 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I want to beg that this House do now adjourn— [*Interruption*] you want to— [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: I want to say something.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure.

Miss Mc Donald: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, just a small request. There is a question on the Order Paper for written response, question No. 66, from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. This response was due on February 26, 2015. Mr. Speaker, I hereby wish to invoke Standing Order 29(13) for a written response, please, in the quickest possible time.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, okay.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. At this time, I do beg to adjourn this House to Wednesday, March 25, 2015 at 1.30 p.m., and to serve notice on that day we will be dealing with Motion No. 6 under Government Business. Motion No. 6 that the House resolve to censure and condemn the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition, and express its lack of confidence in Dr. Keith Rowley as Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West. A Motion that we will debate on Wednesday, March 25 at 1.30 p.m. next Wednesday. Be careful what you ask for.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, there are three matters that qualify to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of the House filed by the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East. I will now call upon the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Chronic Water Shortage
(Constituency of Diego Martin North/East)**

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do No. 1 and No. 3 and defer No. 2 to Wednesday with your permission. No. 1, Mr. Speaker, the chronic shortage of pipe borne water in the constituency of Diego Martin North/East, particularly in the Maraval, Paramin, Morne Coco and Moka areas. Over the last two to three months, the residents of this part of my constituency, in particular Maraval, Morne Coco Road, Paramin, Moka, Haleland Park, have experienced a chronic shortage of pipe borne water.

As the MP for the area, I have been in constant communication with the Water and Sewerage Authority over this period as has my office staff communicating with WASA on an almost daily basis. Notwithstanding that, what has happened, while the Water and Sewerage Authority has made some effort to alleviate the problem, all that has occurred is that water has been shifted around from place to place within my constituency. So what WASA has done is, in order to alleviate the shortage of water in the Moka area, they have attached larger pumps to the wells on the Moka Golf Course, they have done a connection from one part of Moka to another part of Moka. All that has done is taken water that is used in the village of Maraval, in the hilly areas of Maraval, in the areas of Celestine Trace, Clovis Trace, Nicholas Street, Moraldo Street and so on, and all it has done, as they attempt to improve the supply in the Moka and Haleland Park areas, is to starve the village of Maraval of water. So as they improve the supply in one area, they take it from another area.

Mr. Speaker, the Government continuously boasts about improvement in water supply and water 24/07 and so on. In most parts of my constituency, that is more a myth than a reality. It is unfortunate that the senior Minister is not here—unfortunate—because I always find that the junior Minister attempts to deal with very serious matters in a very political way. I want a serious answer to this problem. There are persons from—*[Interruption]*

Miss Ramdial: You will get a serious answer.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please!

Mr. C. Imbert: “They cyar take talk, you know.” There are people from the area, that the Member for Caroni East lives in, who have been calling me within

the last week or two—this is the Fairways area in Maraval—to find out what is the problem with the water supply in Maraval because all of a sudden, the lower Maraval area is now suffering for water.

So all I am saying, in this age, in this modern era with this Government boasting about water supply, the solution to solving a water problem cannot be to starve one area of water to give another area water. The people of Maraval are all taxpayers. There has never been this sort of problem in the Maraval, Moka, Morne Coco, Saddle Hill area, and I would like the Government to tell us what do you intend to do about this problem in order to have a permanent solution to the chronic water shortage in the Maraval area of my constituency, and I would ask that whoever is responding to this matter, do not come here with any “anansi story”.

Mr. Sharma: Nonsense to say that.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I live in Maraval. I do not want to hear an “anansi story” about water supply in Maraval. [*Crosstalk*] My constituents have heard “anansi stories” about water for the last five years. [*Crosstalk*] For the last five years when my constituents attempt to find out what is going on, all they get are “anansi stories”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: They had water before?

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, they did—and I am asking, Mr. Speaker, that when there is a response here tonight, just a plea on my part, that we do not get another “anansi story”.

I am happy that after two months of daily interface with the Water and Sewerage Authority, with personal telephone calls from my staff and myself, with visits to the area, with personal interaction with WASA personnel for the last two months, I am happy that the water supply in Moka and Saddle Hill has improved. I am happy. But I am very unhappy that in order to improve that water supply, that other areas in Maraval are suffering from a shortage of water.

Before I take my seat, you know, you hear all sorts of things in this Parliament. Just a week ago, I was privy to a most disturbing conversation from a Member of this House. After my staff have been in communication with the Water and Sewerage Authority—and I want to give credit to the staff in my

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parliamentary office—operations department, with the distribution department of WASA on a daily basis for the last two months in order to seek relief for my constituents—I had to hear a Member of this House telling another Member of this House a Member on that side tell a Member on this side—that the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East has no interest in improving the water supply situation in his constituency for two months.

Mr. Speaker, if I have to come to this Parliament every week to ensure that my constituents get a proper water supply, I will do so because I see that as my duty as a parliamentary representative. Mr. Speaker. I hope what I am about to hear will not be yet another “anansi story”.

I thank you.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (Hon. Ramona Ramdial): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the past four and half years, WASA has been involved in a drive to develop its water infrastructure in order to provide all citizens in the country with a 24/7 water supply. The constituency of Diego Martin North/East has also benefited significantly from these works, and as a consequence 67 per cent of the population in this constituency now enjoy 24/7 water supply including, Mr. Speaker, parts of Maraval, lower Morne Coco, lower Bagatelle, St. Lucien Road—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Hon. R. Ramdial:—Boissiere Village and environs. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please!

Mr. Imbert: I have to hear this?

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. You could leave if you want.

Hon. R. Ramdial: You brought the Motion.

Mr. Speaker: You cannot be disturbing the Member. When you are speaking, you seek the protection of the Chair. You do not want anyone to disturb you. The hon. Minister is responding. You may feel emotional about it, but allow the Member to speak in silence.

Mr. Imbert: They need water. Every night they are calling.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I know, but allow the Member to speak in silence, please. Continue, please.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hour of the night has the Member a little bit emotional, so we will excuse him. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the laying of 2,000 metres of six-inch and 12-inch pipe along St. Lucien Road in December 2010 improved the supply to 24/7 in areas such as Blue Range, River Estate and Bagatelle Road.

The installation of new North Road booster in October 2010 assisted upper North Post Road to receive 24/3 supply where it was non-existent before. The installation of 850 metres of high pressure six-inch main along Upper Dundonald Hill in May 2014 increased supply to 24/7 on both and lower and upper levels from two to three days. The installation of 600 metres of four-inch pipe to Morne Roche, Paramin, in March 2014 increased supply to 24/2 where they had no water supply before. The installation of 950 metres of four-inch pipe from Morne Roche Road to Cameron, now being undertaken, will increase supply to at least two days per week where they had none before.

A new Moka View booster pump just commissioned on March 06, 2015, would supply water to upper Moka, Fairview Drive and The Orchard for at least two days per week until all Moka wells which were drilled in the early 60s are restored to the original pumping capacity. These works are anticipated to be completed by the end of March 2015. WASA also expects to lay seven kilometers of pipe from the Capriata and River Road intakes in Santa Cruz, and drill two wells in the lower Maraval area to increase supplies to the whole of Maraval. These works should be completed within the next six months.

So, Mr. Speaker, one can see that WASA has undertaken significant amount of works over the last four and a half years to supply water to the residents of the Diego Martin North/East constituency. However, Moka and Paramin which are mainly served by five wells have experienced some decrease in available supply as a result of a marked decrease in the pumping capacity of these wells. As indicated, this situation is expected to be improved by the proposed works to be undertaken.

Mr. Speaker, we have undertaken in the constituency of Diego Martin North/East 15 water projects so far to date, [*Desk thumping*] a total of 15 pipeline projects with a pipeline distance of 7.92 kilometers. The total number of beneficiaries of these 15 projects is 21,545 constituents of Diego Martin North/East, and it is at a total cost of \$12.12 million. So therefore, this emotional ranting that we heard earlier on has been justified by my answer.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

11.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, next Motion, please.

**Disregard of Maraval Residents
(Commercialization of the North Side of Long Circular Road)**

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just by the way, the Member for Caroni East has no water, eh, after all that “ole talk” and he lives in Maraval. *[Interruption]*

Miss Ramdial: “Ole talk?” That is facts.

Mr. Speaker: Please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, all right, but “he bathing with ah bucket”.

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

Mr. C. Imbert: The Member for Caroni East “bathing with ah bucket”.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Diego Martin North/East, you have the floor.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, let me deal with Motion No. 3. Let us move on to the disregard shown by the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development for the rights, comfort and convenience of the residents of Maraval through his support for the commercialization of the north side of Long Circular Road. Now, Mr. Speaker, on March 06, the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, in response to a matter that I had raised, made the following statement:

“How could you have full commercial use south of Long Circular Road and...an arbitrary line and a different policy for north?”

And he went on to say, Mr. Speaker, that essentially, the commercialization of the Long Circular Road area is fait accompli and that he met it so.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this statement on the part of the Minister, that how could you have an arbitrary line on Long Circular Road in Maraval and one side of the road is commercial and the other side is residential, this is the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development. All over the world—Mr. Speaker, before I—*[Crosstalk]* Why not? All over the world, streets are used to delineate zones, all over the world. One side of a street is zoned for residential, the other side of a street is zoned for commercial. How on earth could you divide a geographic area into residential, commercial, industrial and institutional use unless you use streets to delineate zones?

Mr. Speaker, even in the St. Clair area—let me use an example. In the St. Clair area, the authorities have made a decision that Hayes Street in St. Clair—for those of you who do not know, Hayes Street is the northern boundary of King George V Park. You have the Ministry of Education, you have Queen’s Royal College on Hayes Street, and the authorities including the Port of Spain City Council and the Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development have used Hayes Street to delineate commercial and residential development. So, south of Hayes Street, you would have the Queen’s Royal College, you would have the Ministry of Education; you have the King George V Park, you have nursing homes and so on, Mr. Speaker. And north of Hayes Street, on the northern side of Hayes Street, it has been agreed, that will be restricted to purely residential development. Town and Country Planning and the Port of Spain City Corporation, they have done a delineation of residential and commercial. There is no other way to do it. I have downloaded some examples.

I have an example here from the city of Dublin, Mr. Speaker, a map delineating residential and commercial. The red line is, inside of there is residential; outside of there is commercial. They used streets to delineate it. So when you have a Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development no less, coming into this House, and saying that it is arbitrary to designate the south side of Long Circular Road as commercial and the north side as residential, and all should be commercial because it is arbitrary to use a street as a delineation for residential and commercial zones, it betrays a complete ignorance of the fundamental tenets of Town and Country Planning, zoning and residential development.

You know what is the whole point of residential area, Mr. Speaker? I have looked again at some different cities and towns in the United States and I downloaded it. It just took me a couple of seconds. The Town of Dumfries in Virginia and they have a zoning, and, for example, they restricted one area to residential limited and this is a description. This district encompasses low density, single-family residential areas and should provide a suitable environment for families who desire quite spacious home sites with the amenities of suburban living without fear of encroachment or dissimilar uses.

You know what is happening in Long Circular Road? How I have to speak on behalf of my constituents? And all those in the UNC who feel that you could support the commercialization of residential areas in my constituency—*[Crosstalk]* It is my constituency! All those in the UNC, like the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development and aspirants who want to get defeated for

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the third time in Diego Martin North/East, let them come. All those who want to support commercialization and industrialization of residential communities in my community, let them come! They will find themselves confronted with the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East. Let them come, Mr. Speaker, because I intend to defend my constituents. [*Crosstalk*]

Let me read a letter written by a resident of Maraval, Mr. Speaker. A letter— [*Continuous crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, come on, I have the floor. Why are they getting on like that? Here is a letter written to Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development. [*Crosstalk*] I wrote this myself? “Ha, ha, ha, ha.” [*Laughter*] This is from a resident of Stephens Road in Maraval. [*Laughter*] You see, go ahead and joke. You see, I am the Member of Parliament and I know that the constituents of lower Maraval are angry about the Minister’s support for the commercialization of their peaceful residential neighbourhood. I know that they are angry and all those mocking pretenders who want to support commercialization, let them come.

But let me read a letter from a resident:

Dear Sen. Tewarie,

I read with sorrow rather than anger that Town and Country Planning had given conditional approval to the location of a school in our residential neighbourhood, adding a further nail in the coffin of democracy in our defined transparent society.

We bought our unpretentious house in Stephens Road over 20 years ago. The ambience could be described as leafy and sleepy, a side street unencumbered by the traffic woes of the main Long Circular and Saddle Roads, very conveniently placed to local amenities with our years of retirement in mind.

As the years passed, we spent much of our savings to extend the property with full approvals to meet anticipated family needs. The first blow to our peace was the unapproved expansion of the adjacent Boomerang Catering with its unceasing and all pervasive noise and cooking smells around us.

And this, Mr. Speaker, you know, there was a particular period in our history, 1996—2001—and I am not blaming any Member opposite. But the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development—the person in charge of Town and Country Planning—not the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development because it has moved from Ministry to Ministry from time to time—had a very unusual approach to Town and Country Planning approvals and that particular Minister had no qualms about approving 10- and 15-storey buildings in the

middle of a residential area surrounded by single-family homes, Mr. Speaker— [Crosstalk] 1996. That particular UNC Minister had no qualms about making the most outrageous decisions with respect to approvals and so on, and that was the beginning of the end in terms of many residential areas in Trinidad and Tobago. That 1996 to 2001 period.

Mr. Speaker: You have one more minute.

Mr. C. Imbert: If you want to know—I am almost finished—that was Mr. John Humphrey. I remember I had to defend some of the residents in the Bergerac Road and Champs Élysées area when Minister Humphrey approved a 15-storey residential complex just behind Hi Lo in Maraval, and I had to protest with my constituents to stop that development, so none of this is new to me.

And I urge Minister Tewarie, do not come into this Parliament and make these statements that the commercialization of peaceful residential areas is inevitable and it is arbitrary to delineate zones, Mr. Speaker. Do not say these things. You anger people who have put their life savings into property so that they could peacefully enjoy their property. I urge the Minister to reconsider that ill-advised statement that he made that the commercialization of Maraval is inevitable. It is going to destroy the property values, the peaceful enjoyment of property of many of my constituents, and I will do everything in my power to resist this kind of inappropriate, unfair and oppressive development condoned by the Minister.

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

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 11.44 p.m.