

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 26, 2020

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from Ms. Nicole Olivierre MP, Member for La Brea, who has requested leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Administrative Report and Interim Financial Statement of the National Investment Fund Holding Company Limited as at December 31, 2018. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
2. Administrative Report of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago for the fiscal year 2016 to 2017. [*The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia)*]
3. Response of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to the Twenty-Fifth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an Examination into the Development Programme for fiscal year 2018/2019 and Follow-up on the Ministerial Response to the Sixth Report on the Tobago House of Assembly. [*The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

(Presentation)

**Land and Physical Infrastructure
Flood Alleviation/Control Measures re Flooding**

UNREVISED

Mr. Rushton Paray (*Mayaro*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to present:

Tenth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Land and Physical Infrastructure on an Inquiry into Flood Alleviation and Control Measures for Major River Basins and Drainage Catchments in Trinidad and Tobago subjected to Major Flooding over the Past Years.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE REPORTS
(Presentation)**

Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie (*Caroni Central*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to present the following reports:

National Library and Information System of Trinidad and Tobago

Twenty-Ninth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on an Examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the National Library and Information System of Trinidad and Tobago (NALIS) for the financial years 2009 to 2011, and the Authority's Expenditure and Internal Controls for the years 2009 to 2018.

Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries

Thirtieth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on an Examination of the concerns raised in the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the Financial Years 2016, 2017 and 2018 with specific reference to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and follow up on the implementation of the recommendations in the Fourth, Fourteenth and Twentieth Reports of the Public Accounts Committee.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS
(Presentation)**

National Statistical Institute of Trinidad and Tobago Bill, 2018

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to present:

Third Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the National Statistical Institute of Trinidad and Tobago Bill, 2018, Fifth Session (2019/2020), Eleventh Parliament.

Cannabis Control Bill, 2019

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to present:

Third Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Cannabis Control Bill, 2019 in the Fifth Session, Eleventh Parliament.

URGENT QUESTIONS

HDQ Neutral Distribution in Schools (Safety Measures Implemented)

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the Minister of Education: Could the Minister outline what health and safety measures have been implemented to protect students and staff at schools when using the chemical “HDQ Neutral” being distributed by the Ministry of Education, as reported in the press today?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Minister of Education.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As part of the procurement process, the Ministry of Education consulted with our health, safety and environmental team who assured that all chemical products by reviewing the Material Safety Data Sheet, and any other supporting documents that are provided by the suppliers. These documents were verified to ensure that the information provided is accurate. HDQ Neutral is on the list of disinfectants that meets the Environmental Protection Agency’s criteria. The

Ministry of Education, out of an abundance of caution, has halted the use and distribution after consultation with the Ministry of Health and other providers. In the future, Ministry of Education will ensure that all chemicals to be used and distributed will be accompanied by the appropriate Material Safety Data Sheet. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minister, in the circumstances could you inform the House what was the value of the contract in the use of this material that was used in the disinfecting of schools?

Hon. A. Garcia: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not understand the question and even if I understood the question, that question does not apply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister of Education, could you assure all stakeholders, as it relates to the conduct of CAPE, CSEC and the SEA examinations, that the use of chemicals or cleaning agents and so on will not affect the conduct of these examination when students go in to the respective classrooms to write these exams, which are dawning upon us in July and August of 2020?

Hon. A. Garcia: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can assure this honourable House that the Ministry of Education will be vigilant at ensuring that any cleaning material that is used in an effort to sanitize our schools, is or meets the required standards, the required health standards. I can give you that assurance.

Galleons Passage Vessel

(Condition of)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramona Ramdial (*Couva North*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the Minister of Works and Transport: Given unconfirmed reports that the *Galleons*

Passage vessel is currently sailing in an unseaworthy condition due to malfunctioning bow door, could the Minister assure this House that he is giving this matter his urgent attention?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Leader of the House.

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is absolutely no truth to this statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minister, can you also confirm that the *T&T Spirit* is currently not sailing due to strike action by port workers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will not entertain that question at this time, it is not the subject matter. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Couva South, the remark reached my ear, retract please. The last remark. No, do it properly please, the last remark reached my ear.

Ms. Ramdial: You said Couva South, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is Couva North.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Pardon?

Ms. Ramdial: You said Couva South, it is Couva North.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, Couva North, just retract the last statement, please.

Ms. Ramdial: I retract, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Laventille West please, please.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Extension of Time)

National Statistical Institute of Trinidad and Tobago Bill, 2018

UNREVISED

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, having regard to the Third Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the National Statistical Institute of Trinidad and Tobago Bill, 2018, I beg to move that the committee be allowed an extension of two months in order to complete its work and submit a final report by August 31, 2020.

Question put and agreed to.

Cannabis Control Bill, 2019The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, having regard to the Third Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Cannabis Control Bill, 2019, I beg to move that the committee be allowed an extension of two months in order to complete its work and submit a final report by August 31, 2020. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

**SPEAKER BRIDGID ANNISSETTE-GEORGE
(CENSURE OF)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call on the Member for Oropouche East, and just a reminder, you have 30 minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East): Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity to raise a matter in the House today, a Motion standing in my name and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the following Motion in my name, and may I be permitted to read it.

Whereas pursuant to Standing Order 17, the Member for Oropouche East (the Member) sought leave on April 27, 2020 to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance;

And whereas the matter sought to be raised concerned an alleged sale of fuel to Venezuela involving Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited, allegedly in contravention of international sanctions;

And whereas the Speaker, in ruling that the matter did not qualify under Standing Order 17, failed to declare a possible conflict of interest;

And whereas on May 8, 2020, in the aftermath of this ruling the Speaker, under “Announcements”, rebuked and condemned the Member in the House, for reporting elsewhere on this matter;

And whereas the Speaker committed a breach of the established rules of conduct and conventions of this House;

And whereas the Speaker brought the high and noble Office of the Speaker into disrepute;

Be it resolved that this House censures the Speaker for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise of her office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, bringing a Motion like this brings no pleasure to myself or indeed any Member of the Opposition. May I begin by indicating that it is a Motion of censure. It is a substantive motion on the conduct, integrity and character of a Member of this House, albeit, the Presiding Officer, the hon. Speaker.

This is not a matter that the Members of the Opposition including myself take personal, it has absolutely nothing to do with the person and the personality of that person occupying the chair of Speaker. This matter reflects on the role of the Speaker, the role of the Speaker in promoting democratic principles, constitutional values and the rule of law. It is not a matter that deals with a personality. And therefore, I begin by saying it is not a matter that we are addressing from the point of view of personality, of gossip, of *mauvais langage*. It is a matter that we want to

deal with squarely on the basis of facts. And therefore, there are some facts that cannot be in dispute that I would like to put on the table.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by way of introduction as well, this position called “Speaker” is a very interesting position. Mr. Deputy Speaker, few people will know that the first Speaker to have that title was indeed Sir Thomas Hungerford in the British Parliament in 1377. He was the first in a line of identifiable Speakers. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for many years, it bothered some of us that why do you call the person the “Speaker”, if that person will not speak. And therefore, in our research we discovered— which is a matter that some people may find interesting— that the person and the office was called the “Speaker”, because that was the person who had to speak to the Monarch. And that was the person who had to convey to the Monarch, that the legislators, persons like ourselves, were in defiance of the Monarchy, were making laws and rules in defiance of the Monarchy. And therefore, the Speaker, from the origin of that office was a person who stood there to defend the rights, the freedom of expression, to defend democracy, and indeed to protect Members of the House of Commons.

So that is a very interesting point, in fact, the term used in the ancient time was “procurator”, meaning the agent, the agent of the court, the agent of the Parliament, and therefore the Speaker be—in fact, the Speaker was a very dangerous job. Some persons would resist that appointment. In fact, in the old traditions, they had to drag the person who took the office, they had to drag the person to the seat because the person resisted, because given the checkered history of the speakership, there are some times when Speakers died violent deaths, by way of execution, imprisonment, impeachment or even expelled. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that does not hold today, albeit to remind the national community that in 1994, a Speaker was placed under house arrest by a PNM Government in this

country. But we do not have those challenges today, but it was a dangerous occupation. And I say this to remind you that the role of the Speaker is to defend rights of Members. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, according to—I do not want to—let me serve notice one time in the limited time available to me, I am treating this as a Twenty20 and not a test match. So there will be no long run up and no extensive quotations and so on, because I want to plow through quickly some material. May's *Parliamentary Practice*, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 24th edition on page 220 had this to say about the Speaker.

“The chief characteristics attaching to the office of Speaker in the House of” — Representatives — “are authority and impartiality” — in the House of Commons; authority and impartiality — “As the symbol of the powers and privileges of the House, the Royal Mace is borne before...” — him — “when entering and leaving the Chamber.”

There can be no:

“Reflections upon the character or actions of the Speaker...”

Except, of course, as we know by a substantive motion.

“Confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition for the successful working of procedure, and many conventions exist which have as the object not only to ensure the impartiality of the Speaker but also to ensure that...” — this — “impartiality is generally recognised. The Speaker takes...” — part in no — “debate...” — in either House, or in either... — “the House or in” — any — “committee.”

The Speaker belongs to no party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought I would make those points to start, because you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is well accepted that the Speaker is not an

intervener in politics. The Speaker is there as an umpire. [*Desk thumping*] The Speaker is not an umpire who came with the home team. The ICC incidentally outlawed that a long time ago. So the Speaker is impartial and must therefore exercise that office with a higher standard than even ordinary Members. [*Desk thumping*] There is a higher standard of conduct than even ordinary Members in the exercise of those duties. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whatever might be said about Madam Speaker, I will leave other Members to reflect on other things but I have a Motion before me which I want to address, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It was on April 27th, I brought a motion to this House under Standing Order 17 seeking leave to move a Motion that involved a raging international scandal. In fact, my duty on that day was to table of Motion so that we can confront what was a raging scandal which has now gone out of control. Every night, some people monitor the Department of the Treasury in the United States to see who is sanctioning, which ship, which captain, which assets are now blocked, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I brought that with the objective of giving the Government an opportunity to speak, to affirm, to deny, to explain. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when that motion was brought to the Speaker on April 27th, it was already in the public domain. We had a news report from *Reuters* April 26th:

“Venezuela receives gasoline imports from shipping magnate amid fuel shortage”

And I just read quickly from a *Reuters* report of the 26th.

“The Alden”—which is the ship—“loaded last week in neighboring Trinidad and Tobago.”

The refinery data showed:

“It has not transmitted a signal with its location since April 22, according to the data.”

The Nasdaq had an article April 26th:

“Venezuela receive the gasoline imports from shipping magnate amid fuel shortage”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and again, reference is made to Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was in the international news, it was in the social media. We could find many examples that the Speaker ought to have known that this matter was a brewing scandal. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not submit that it was mere allegation, that it was speculation, that it was pre-emptive, presumptive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was a matter that was gaining the attention in the international community with far-reaching implications. But, Mr. Speaker, this debate is not the issue here, is not whether the Motion for urgent public importance should have been accepted or not, that is not the issue. I am not arguing for a moment that that motion should have been accepted or not. I am saying now, that when this matter went to the Speaker, the hon. Speaker ought to have looked at it, realized it was in the public domain, understood that it involved fuel trading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a matter of public record that spouse of the Speaker, in August 2019, was appointed chairman of Paria Trading. That is a matter of public record. We do not need the *Gazette*, we do not need the documents to show that. And that is a fact that no one could dispute.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Speaker looking at it at that moment ought to have called the Clerk and say, “Madam Clerk, this is a matter on my desk, please allow the Deputy Speaker to rule on this matter.” [*Desk thumping*] Because there is a perceived conflict of interest because it involved the spouse of Madam Speaker, [*Desk thumping*] which is a matter of fact. [*Desk thumping*] That is the first strike.

1.55 p.m.

When I arrived on the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was in awe, I was in shock when I stood here and I read what was an approved statement to read. It was approved by Madam Speaker to read, and I read it. I was in shock that the Speaker allowed herself to sit in the Chair to adjudicate and contemplate and consider this matter. [*Desk thumping*] I was in shock. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I came here expecting to see the person I am seeing in the Chair today; I did not. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was turned down and today I carry no argument whether that decision of Madam Speaker was right or wrong; I carry no argument. My argument is that that was point one in which the Speaker ought to have recused herself. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is enough law and my job here is not to quote all sort of cases, you know, this one versus that one, and so on, but just to let you know in a famous case, the Pinochet case involving Lord Hoffmann in England where the matter of a judge in his own cause arose, Lord Hoffmann in Pinochet too. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a statement from Lord Browne-Wilkinson that justice must not only be done but it must seem to be done and the slightest personal interest in it, either as a defendant or a prosecutor led to a conclusion that Lord Hoffmann in that matter should have recused himself.

He participated in an appeal involving the former Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet, in which he was trying to evade extradition, and so on, going to Spain, and the appeal in England was being heard, Lord Hoffmann heard it but did not disclose that his wife was indeed a member of a charity linked to Amnesty International that was an intervener or a party to that matter. And it was held—first time in history, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in memory, that seven Law Lords met and decided—seven Law Lords and we have their names; it is not necessary to call all their names, that, they decided that Lord Hoffmann was wrong, that he could not sit and adjudicate on a matter where his spouse was involved. It was said the

slightest personal interest would arise, and an informed observer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an informed observer, a fair-minded, informed observer can conclude that there was a real possibility that a decision-maker could have been biased. So, Madam Speaker on that day, and Madam Speaker, to remind you, is an attorney-at-law, a former Attorney General, a tutor at the Hugh Wooding Law School, and Madam Speaker ought at that point to have said, “I will have no part of this. The Mr. Deputy Speaker should deal with it.” It was turned down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the story continued. On the 28th I caused to be written a letter to the United States Ambassador on the 28th in which I wrote about this matter, the importance of this matter, and the importance in the context of possible attracting international economic sanctions, and so on. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the letter in my hand. Let me make the next point. This debate today has no issue with whether I was right or wrong to write the United States Ambassador; that is not the issue here today. Anyone, any Member here can write anybody they want. [*Desk thumping*] If you want to write Modi in India, the General Secretary of the United Nations, you want to write the President Secretary of any country or anybody, a Member, we exist with the constitutional right of freedom of expression, we can write anyone. And when I did this I was condemned in some circles and I accept it, I am thick-skinned.

You could tell me almost anything you want, and if you say it outside, as the Member for Diego Martin West will discover this afternoon, a letter is on his desk in which I am also taking legal action against him on a matter if you say something outside. [*Desk thumping*] So I do not fear if you say anything about me, I have recourse. I have recourse. I do not fear you, you could say anything about me. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will take on any one of them, any day, any time, any place; “we not fear”. [*Desk thumping*] But what I am saying is, I and any Member on this

side, any citizen has the right to write anyone.

When I came to the Parliament, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I come to the next issue now and I am following my own matter, the conflict, whereas—yes—under the disguise of an announcement, for the first time in our history, unparalleled in the Caribbean at least—we have done our research—do you know it was the first time in the history of this Parliament since 1962, since Matthew Ramcharan and Arnold Thomasos, and they occupied that Chair, that a Speaker used an agenda item called “Announcement” to rebuke, to condemn, a Member of Parliament?
[*Desk thumping*]

So the Speaker announced—made an announcement on that day pointing out that I made statements and communicated with foreign emissaries, and so on. At no time in that statement, which I have in my hand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did the Speaker indicate at no time that there was a conflict and the Speaker was conflicted; at no time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was a second strike, second strike. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I came here and I had to subject myself to hearing words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the hon. Speaker, hearing words in a statement under the guise of “Announcement” that speaks about my ignoble objectives, that spoke to the Member for Oropouche knowing better and being reckless, and so on, but made reference to the Member for Oropouche East taking matters from the Parliament outside to foreign emissaries. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a clear reference, I believe, to the letter.

I just want to read for the record the part of the letter to the US Mission that dealt with this matter, and I quote—I build the case that it was a serious matter and I did raise the matter, urgent public importance, and this is what I said:

Upon my so doing the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, refused to grant her permission for the matter to

be debated and aired in the Parliament.

That is a fact:

The Speaker indicated that this matter did not meet the high bar required for a Motion of urgent public importance.

That is a fact. Where did I bring the Speaker into disrepute? How? By saying that the Speaker refused the matter? No. By saying it did not meet the high bar? No. And I ended by saying:

This was most unfortunate in my respectful view.

I said no more, I said no less. A decision by a politician to write anybody is a political decision; it is a political decision [*Desk thumping*] and the Speaker ought not to engage herself in politics, hiding behind announcements to tarnish the reputation and image of any Member of the Opposition; she is there to defend my rights, not to undermine it. [*Desk thumping*] And when I heard that I was in shock, in awe that a Speaker could do this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and at that time, I want to remind you, I had no right of recourse. There was no due process to me. I could not respond to an announcement. I did respond in the press and indicated that it was out of order, which I indicate now. The Speaker had another option. The Speaker had another option. If I misconducted myself in the public—I did not in Parliament—if I did in the public you could have issued a press release in the public; you could have made a statement in the public, but you would not have been protected with parliamentary privilege and I could have taken legal action. But to say it in the House meant you were also using privilege to protect yourself in the event I decide to do what I did today against the Member for Diego Martin West.

So that was a second problem that whereas those statements were never made in the Parliament, the Speaker chose the Parliament to make condemning and

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defamatory statements against a Member of the Opposition, [*Desk thumping*] and that we condemn today as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] The Pinochet case is clear, the matter on the 8th of May, using a statement like that to condemn a Member, it is unheard of. This has happened before and I will tell you very briefly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happened. I do not want to waste time reading, but the Member for Diego Martin North/East knows about a situation in April 2008; there was a situation where three Members of Parliament at that time, the Member for Tabaquite, the Member for Princes Town and the Member for Oropouche East—I seem to be always involved—made statements about a Speaker. And I want to tell you, the statements, as I read it again they were worse; they were really not kind as I reflect—made statements about a sitting Speaker. When we came to the House we were met with a Motion of Privilege by the Member for Diego Martin North/East who then sat in the chair as Leader of Government Business.

The right approach—you see, if any Member goes out in the public and brings the Parliament into disrepute or odium and brings the Chair into disrepute and undermines the Standing Orders, a relevant Motion of Privilege is raised generally by the Leader of Government Business. Diego Martin North/East remembers that, the Speaker was referred to as being moronic, a tool of Patrick Manning. I thought it was a bit unkind, but the Member for Diego Martin North/East did that. A recent experience when there was an issue with “emailgate”—does anybody remember “emailgate”?—and it was proven that this thing was a hoax, this thing, it was a fallacy, a figment of their imagination. I moved a Motion to censure—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Member, one second. Again, you are broadening the debate. Stick to the recitals, please.

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Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say that there is a process if the Speaker feels aggrieved. If the Government felt aggrieved by anything I have done in the public domain, the Government knows what to do. They can move a Motion of Privilege as we have done over the years. I move on from that.

So I had no due process. And, you know, I want to make the point quickly, why do you raise matters like these? A member talking to me in my office this week asked, “Would people get water tomorrow? Would the murder rate be curtailed tomorrow? Would people get housing? Would our citizens get salary relief grant?” No. No. In fact, this is a censure Motion. The Speaker is not even required to resign if it is passed, in the highly and unlikely event it passed. There is no repercussion in terms of the Speaker and her job, but, you see, you cannot provide goods and services for citizens of a country if there is no respect for the rules of law, democratic principles and constitutional values; [*Desk thumping*] you cannot. Then everything fall down, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that is why we raised this matter today. So the Speaker was as complainant, judge, jury and executioner on May 08, 2020. [*Desk thumping*] That is the effect of that.

This happened in Guyana in 2018, if those of you follow news, the Speaker across there, today Guyana is a basket case in the Caribbean with a most bizarre electoral development. The Speaker attacked a Member of the Opposition in the newspaper, in the newspaper in Guyana when you could have done that in Parliament—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Member, again you are extending the debate. Stick to the recitals; this is the second time.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, coming back here—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, please.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, so the Member for Oropouche East

condemned in a most uncivil manner, in a raw and obscene manner when there was no provision in the agenda, the Standing Orders or in the Order Paper for a Speaker making statements, chose Announcements to do that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rules of conduct spells out clearly, we do not have to quote it, about certain circumstances in which you may be perceived as conflicted and you recuse yourself. Madam Speaker did not do that, on one occasion, on two occasions, indeed on three occasions could not do that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the office has been brought into disrepute by a failure to act properly and impartially. [*Desk thumping*]

Once you have seen the Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited being cited, that matter of the fuel sale, alleged fuel sale, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a raging issue. As I said, documents are now in the public domain, not in private anymore; documents are in the public domain showing that in this country we imported fuel from the same man we sold it to. We imported fuel from the same man we sold it to. Paria said they got money on the 15th of April when the facts show from the invoices that they received on the 26th of April; we have the invoices, the bills of lading. We have here all the documentation that Paria Fuel is involved in something suspicious, dark, clandestine, and it is a matter of fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this matter has not ended. It was raging on the 27th of April as it is raging today.

How can you explain a situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how can you explain a situation where according to the bills, the invoices provided, where we cannot account for US \$500,000, 50,000 barrels of gasoline cannot be accounted for when you look at invoices from point A to point B? So we bought fuel from one man and sell it to the same man, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a major issue. But again I come back to the point that that is not the critical issue here. The critical issue is,

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should the Speaker on that day, April 27th, should the Speaker recuse herself or not? And we are very clear that a recusal was the only alternative available to her in those circumstances. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is another matter related to that, in this fuel trade. Everyone—the national community is aware that Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited, the allegation—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yeah, again, Member, you would have brought up within the recital, and this is the third time because I am making notes, the third time you are referring to the same Paria Fuel. You would have dealt with that recital already, so again tie it in quickly and move on, because this is the third time you gone back to the Paria Fuel.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am following your line of argument, I would just go on to another related matter.

The other related matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there are other occasions when in this very matter there were opportunities to recuse herself. As I come to an end let me summarize now; one, when the Motion came on the 27th; two, in giving an announcement, as surreal as it was, there was no indication of a conflict of interest occurring, Mr. Deputy Speaker, absolutely none. Even after that there appears to be no apology, and today I call upon the Speaker to make a public apology for her conduct in this matter, [*Desk thumping*] and I call upon the House to condemn her. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of the Speaker brought the office into disrepute, the Speaker is also guided by the Integrity in Public Life Act. The Integrity in Public Life Act at section 24(1)(a) speaks to all persons under this Act conducting themselves in a fair and impartial manner. I submit to you that the Speaker did not conduct herself in a fair and impartial manner and is also in

violation of the Integrity in Public Life Act.

So today I tell the Speaker, having told us for five years to take a walk, the Speaker should take a walk, take a walk on this matter alone. [*Desk thumping*] And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in summarizing, the matter is alive in terms of the matter as set out. There can be no conclusion to this matter unless the Speaker responds to this matter in some form or fashion. The matter involving the trade, the allegations of this trade is ongoing. There are issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where today there is a huge hue and cry that in the Immigration Department, their computerized system has been taken off, so today everyone coming in this country cannot be recorded, they are doing it manually and hiding—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, member, again, you are broadening the debate, Immigration. Please move on.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And you have two more minutes.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are parallels in terms of the conduct of the Speaker. There are parallels where this has happened before, and I turn your attention not only to Guyana as I did before, but also to Jamaica where a sitting—and this is related to a Motion of censure, same as is here—there are situations across the Caribbean where this has happened before, where in Jamaica, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

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—where the conduct of a Speaker is brought into focus by the Parliament itself. Mr. Deputy Speaker—how much time I have?—one minute.

In closing, I want to take it from the beginning in closing to indicate that this

is not a personal matter. And let me indicate one time to those who are speaking opposite, this is not a substantive Motion in the Member for Oropouche East, so you know that this is not concerning my conduct or integrity; it is concerning the integrity of the person who sit on the Chair. [*Crosstalk*] And you can say whatever you want, it does not matter. There are certain facts we have established, and there are facts we have established. The law is very clear on this matter. The Speaker acted improperly outside of her terms, outside of what is contemplated in May's parliamentary procedure, outside of the Standing Orders in direct violation of established conventions, codes of conduct, both at the Parliament level and in the law as far as it relates to the Integrity in Public Life Act. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that that has come to the end and I thank you, and I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I second the Motion and reserve my right to speak.

Question proposed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West, the hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] Sir, you have 30 minutes as the responder.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is but a strange debate and a waste of Parliament's valuable time. [*Desk thumping*] The first thing we have to acknowledge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I come here to make a few observations on this futile Motion is that the mover is very careful to identify himself with the Motion and says very proudly that the Motion is standing in his name, and he went on to justify our being here for this purpose by making the assertion that a Speaker failed to declare a conflict and as a result of that he is free to fulminate, to accuse, and to bring a Motion to motivate. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a stretch, it is a

stretch. The Member has a problem that we all know, and the problem is he is fighting for his political survival. [*Desk thumping*] As all politicians do, the Member has to find a way to swim in swift currents hoping not to be washed away, and unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from where we sit on this side, all of us, we think it is disreputable and a waste of our valuable time that the Member chose to file this futile Motion [*Desk thumping*] to raise his profile wherever they screen themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the conflict, let us spend a moment examining this conflict; the Member filed a Motion, as was his right, the Speaker as by her authority is required to adjudicate on that Motion and determine whether the Motion is acceptable for business in this House. The Member could be offended after, but at the time when the adjudication was made, it was made by the Speaker. The Speaker ruled that the content of the Motion, for whatever the nature of the Motion, that the Motion did not qualify, and therefore there was no business before the House. If the Motion had qualified then one could have stretched it and say, “Well, okay, the Motion qualify”, and there is a Motion before the House, and in that Motion one can point to a conflict, if you are saying, and a conflict exists, but the Motion did not qualify. What the Member is doing is saying that the reason why the Motion did not qualify is because the Speaker did not want the Motion to qualify, and the Speaker ruled that the Motion [*Desk thumping*] did not qualify because the Speaker had a family member who has by “pumkin viniation” had a connection to some content of the Motion. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the basis on why we are here. And the reason why the Motion is brought today is because the Member for Oropouche East, who is not a frequent “associator” with veracity is asking us to agree with him that there was or is a conflict. In fact he says something continues, there is a conflict, and that Madam

Speaker protected herself by this abuse of her authority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to examine the facts to determine whether in fact there is this situation. Members of this House and their friends and their associates created a story in this country that a company owned by the people of Trinidad and Tobago violated American sanctions against Venezuela by our company selling fuel to Venezuela. That is the long and short of the allegation. It found its way into *Reuters*, got published in an American newspaper somewhere in the mid-west and landed in the Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago and since then they had been milking it like a cow. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been demonstrated beyond any repudiation that that allegation has no basis in fact. [*Desk thumping*] So if that is so, and I am not here ruling for the Speaker or determining or defending the Speaker's ruling, the Speaker's ruling was properly made, but the fact that he is alluding to and which you had to caution him today on numerous occasions not to drift off into Paria, that allegation which the UNC is the originator of, they who gave birth to that lie, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been shown that Paria has not done so by irrefutable evidence put out in the public domain, whole-page ads in the newspapers. Members of Parliament on the Government side responsible for Paria, we have demonstrated to the world, not that we are afraid of anybody, but that the fact is that Paria did not trade with Venezuela on that transaction. Paria's fuel documents went to Aruba, and those were properly made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they could say what they want, those are the facts. [*Desk thumping*] And with all the help, up, down and across, as we speak today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nobody has been able to demonstrate an iota of evidence to show that what Paria has said in its defence is not true. So if it is not true, if the foundation of the lie is not true, how could the arboreal top of it be true? It reach quite by the Speaker now, it reach by the Speaker. No fuel was sold by Paria, but

what we must debate is the Speaker's husband as Chairman of Paria is supposed to be guilty of something, the Speaker must see and accept that from the Member for Oropouche and recuse herself from the Chair. That is the summary of why we are here today.

So if there is no basis for it, if the Motion has not been approved, what is the Speaker supposed to recuse herself from? And worse, as we stretch the argument, the Speaker is not supposed to be in the debate. So if you want to get up here and say anything in a debate that has to do with any member of the Speaker's family, we expect her to run off the Chair before your sentence finish. That is what they are saying.

And given their propensity for untruths and for nasty statements being made, I would expect if we accept that argument that in any debate we can run the Speaker or you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, out of the Chair by simply making an assertion devoid of facts and loaded with malice and nastiness. [*Desk thumping*] And of course, let us examine the horns.

2.25 p.m.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4).

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, if you can give me injury time. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, Members! Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: They all need to be seen today. They all need to be selected. This is the B team, every one of them rejected and begging to come home back to the team—every one of them. [*Desk thumping*]

[*Mr. Charles and Dr. Moonilal rise*]

Dr. Moonilal: Forty-eight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members. Members.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The only one who is guaranteed a return—not one of them

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making it back. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, please, let us not extend the debate, again.

Hon. Member: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on 48(1).

Dr. Moonilal: You put 43 candidates to fight 41 seats. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, please! [*Interruption*] Caroni East, can I proceed now? So again, Hon. Prime Minister, let us move on.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: May I request that I get the time that I was—all that time was lost, right?

The Member makes a big case that one should recuse oneself when there is conflict. Could anybody in this Chamber assist me, because I do not think I am seeing well, that is the same Member from Oropouche East who was sitting on a committee where the Commissioner of Police came to give testimony before a committee of this House, and the substance of the testimony had to do—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Standing Order 48(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Expect more of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: [*Interruption*] Overruled I said, Member.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is another Standing Order, Sir, 48(6).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: 48(6), Member? Again, overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Expect more of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they all need to be seen and heard today. [*Desk thumping*]

We were talking about conflict. This is the same Member who just made that powerful case, according to him, about conflict, but he was sitting on a committee of this House, authorized by us, to receive testimony. The

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Commissioner of Police was called before that committee, and the Commissioner's testimony was about the conduct of the Member who the Commissioner was telling the committee had association with certain people who were being monitored for their criminal conduct, as he made common calls with them at a hotel in Port of Spain. [*Desk thumping*] Because that was the Commissioner's testimony, open to cross examination—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Standing Order 48(1), the relevance of his contribution.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: We are talking about conflict here.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It has nothing to do with the Motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, hold on, I need to rule, Sir. [*Interruption*] Again Member, you said it—overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and keep a track of my time please, Sir.

The Member was asked to remove himself because there was a conflict, because he was the subject of the testimony being given by the Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*] The Member flatly refused to comply. We had to convene in this House and by Motion expel him from the committee.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1). This is not about Oropouche East. [*Desk thumping*] This Motion is about the Speaker of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, hon. Prime Minister, tie in your point quickly and move on please.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is tied with a good cord. We are talking about acknowledgement of conflict by Members of this House, including the Speaker. Conflict was the substance of his debate. This Motion is about conflict on the part of the Speaker as alleged by him. I am saying to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he either knows or he does not know about conflict or he is

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just downright hypocritical. [*Interruption*] Because we in this House—

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4), 48(4). [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second, Mr. Prime Minister. Hold on, Mr. Prime Minister. Oropouche East, what aspect exactly are you referring to in 48(4)?

Dr. Moonilal: Because he is referring to a Member of the House as hypocritical and all that. It is improper, it is offensive and insulting. [*Interruption*] Standing Order 48(4) is about insulting language.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want clarity so that I can rule. “Hypocritical” you are referring to?

Dr. Moonilal: “Hypocritical” and referring to a Member on the opposite side as hypocritical, so that is insulting and offensive. He is not addressing Gabriel Faria here. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: I am not hearing the hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I give you the assurance that all my comments, I will try my level best to keep all my comments using only parliamentary language, and hypocritical as I am aware is of the highest parliamentary label.

Ms. Ramdial: That is hard for you to do. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Just to give you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, another aspect of the presentation. He was at pains to point out that this is not about the Speaker as a person, it is not about the Speaker as an individual, but if that is not so, then why is her husband the subject and the connection to your Motion? The Speaker as a person—it is because she is a person that she has a husband, and it is the husband’s chairmanship of Paria that brought you here today to say that Paria Fuel was sold

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and the Speaker should have known by newsreels all about, and to know to approve your Motion. You “cyar” have it both ways; it is either or.

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he goes on to get the sound bite today that Paria Trading money cannot be accounted for, and Paria bought from some person and sold to some person. Since the offices of Paria are not in this House to defend themselves, nor the board, let me on behalf of the people who work at Paria for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, tell this country that Paria Fuel Trading is a trading company, and buy and sell at will fuel products depending on the needs of this country and Paria’s trading business. So to buy from a market or a seller and to sell to that market or that seller, there is nothing wrong with that. That is how the fuel trading business goes. So what he said here today to get a sound bite, to implicate and to nasty the name of the company is typical UNC nastiness. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hinds: “Well putted!”

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Totally uncalled for, totally unnecessary. And of course, why are our colleagues on the other side so hell-bent on trying to label our company, our officers, our people, our Parliament as breaking sanctions? What is so much in it for you that you have to go so far?

Mr. Charles: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). He keeps repeating that we are asking for sanctions. We never did.

Hon. Members: But you are! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you, thank you. Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And to make his point and to further sully the Speaker’s name, the experienced Member of this House stands up today and tells the country that our Speaker violated the rules of this House, abused the Standing Orders, and used an agenda item to offend him in his personal

capacity. Saying that the Speaker chastised him and upbraided him under “Announcements”, and this has never happened before. Anybody following parliamentary procedure and knows anything about parliamentary procedure, as he would know—because he knows, he was the Leader of Government Business in this House when other Speakers would have done it. He would have seen the history of this Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, where Speaker Sinanan, Speaker Emmanuel Carter would have upbraided Members in this House for dishonourable conduct.

If he followed the British Parliament, he would have seen Speaker Bercow upbraiding Members of the Commons, including the current Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, upbraided by the Speaker for their conduct. So to come here today and try to tell our country that our Speaker did something so horrendously wrong to upbraid him. As a matter of fact, she was gentle on him, because his conduct was so disreputable that she should have used another method on him, but she was gentle on him. But to come here and give the impression that the Speaker spoke to and about him in violation of our Standing Orders, is yet another untruth being peddled by the Member for Oropouche East. Completely without facts, and completely attempting to misrepresent in this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the unkindest cut of all is to have the Speaker, who has so well-conducted herself in the five-year period that she has sat in this Chair, to have her character being called into question by the Member for Oropouche, that is the unkindest cut of all. [*Desk thumping*]

He spoke about Sir Thomas Hungerford. I can speak about Vidkun Quisling, because a lot of what he had to say has all its origins in the UNC’s attempt to speak untruths about Paria, and Trinidad and Tobago by extension, and to please others so as to hurt Trinidad and Tobago.

You know, you might ask who was Vidkun Quisling who gave his surname to a word in the English language. The word “Quisling” became a byword for collaborator or even traitor in several languages, reflecting the contempt with which Quisling’s conduct was regarded.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he spoke about Hungerford, I speak about Churchill. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Churchill was the first to use the name “Quisling” to mean “collaborator”, in his public address following the Nazi invasion of Norway in 1940. In a speech on June 12, 1941, Churchill addressed the allied delegates and he used a new word. He talked about a group of Quislings, and he talked about them who would carry the scorn of mankind down the centuries, and are hired to fall upon the conqueror to collaborate in his designs and to enforce his rule upon their fellow countrymen while grovelling to load themselves. [*Desk thumping*] We too have our Quislings. The world was at war and countries across Europe were falling to the Nazis—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1).

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—yet it was Norway’s own Vidkun Quisling who drew the ugliest—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: He had betrayed his King and country in a pitiful attempt to gain favour. We see this today as someone trying to gain favour. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Charles: Standing Order 48(4). There are no Quislings here, no enemy. [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member. Member, first of all, the rule is that your mask must be worn. That is the first thing. You gave your Standing Order, I will rule. No need to go into extra unless I ask for an explanation. Proceed.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Following a dismal growth for his party, the elections of

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1930, Quisling began to look abroad for support. We see them looking abroad for support, and of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Quisling saw an opportunity. My colleague from Oropouche East today sees an opportunity to tarnish the Speaker's name in an attempt to promote his own. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(6). The Prime Minister has said the Member for Oropouche East sees an opportunity—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What Standing Order?

Dr. Moonilal: Standing Order 48(6), “Improper Motive”. To promote myself by tarnishing the Speaker, that is what he is saying. “I not accepting dat.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Quisling was desperate according to Churchill. [*Desk thumping*] Today, we see a desperate Member in a desperate bid to save an ignoble career.

Dr. Moonilal: You should wash your mouth with—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: As he speaks of Hungerford and I speak of Churchill, Churchill said:

However, in the eyes of the allied nations across the world, Quisling was the ultimate traitor to this country, and his name entered and remained in infamy.

I will not attach that to any of my colleagues in this House, but I end by saying that this Motion falls flat. This motive is questionable, and I can say that the hon. Speaker who chaired these proceedings during this Parliament has done an outstanding job for which the people of this country will be grateful. [*Desk thumping*]

I can say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our Speaker in this House is an exemplar to whom every parent can point every girl child and say, “I want you to be like

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Bridgid Anisette-George”. [*Desk thumping*] And every and any attempt by my colleagues on the other side, by one or by all, will be defeated and be rejected by those of us on this side [*Desk thumping*] who are people who believe that there must be a level beneath which you will not sink in your desperation for a political entity in this country.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. You have 20 minutes.

Mr. David Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This afternoon I join this debate as the Opposition Chief Whip and also Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre, not only to support this Motion by the Member for Oropouche East, but I want to also say that I agree with this Motion because over the last five years we have been subjected to this Speaker on her failure to act properly and impartially in her exercise of her office. So if I read the recital, the last line on the Motion:

“Be it resolved that this House censures the Speaker for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise of her office.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I proceed in my debate I want to respond to some of the issues of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister made a statement. This Motion cannot be futile because it affects the execution of the democracy of the principles of Parliament. That is what we are here about; about saving the democracy of our Parliament and in this Chamber that we have been subjected to an erosion of the democracy by our Speaker for the last five years. I want to quote Standing Order 1. Standing Order 1 states:

“These Standing Orders contain rules for the conduct of the proceedings of the House and for the exercise of the powers possessed by the House. They

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are not intended to diminish or restrict the rights, privileges and immunities of the House and its Committees collectively or of its Members individually.”

Standing Order 1 gives us some hearing. The Opposition Members have been saying for the last five years, by this Speaker of the House our voice, our concerns for our constituents have been eroded by, time and time again by this Speaker. [Desk thumping]

Deputy Speaker, this Motion is timely and maybe long overdue, and maybe a little bit easy on the Speaker, because over the last five years, especially the last three years, I have been subjected—[Interruption]

Mr. Al-Rawi: I rise on Standing Order 48(1). This Motion is not on five years, it is on a specific matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will give you some leeway. Tie in your point, Member.

Mr. D. Lee: This Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is about the Speaker, for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise of her office. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, please, please.

Mr. D. Lee: That is the recital. I just want to remind this House what Oropouche East started off in his debate about Erskine May. The chief characteristics attaching to the office of the Speaker in the House of Commons are authority and impartiality. We have not been getting that. [Interruption]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, an announcement to everyone in the House. The procedure is that you must wear your mask, please. Proceed.

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I want to turn to Standing Order 48(1). Standing Order 48(1) states in our Standing Orders:

“...debate upon any motion, Bill or amendment shall be relevant to such

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motion, Bill or amendment, and a Member shall confine his observations to the subject under discussion.”

I think everyone here is well aware of 48(1), sometimes except the Speaker of this House, because we as an Opposition have been subjected—

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise squarely and confidently on Standing Order 48(1). I have had reference to the Standing Orders and to May’s. A Motion of censure must be tied to the Motion. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, again. Pointe-a-Pierre, tie in your point with regard to what you are trying to say. I am giving you the opportunity.

Mr. D. Lee: In the Motion the recital, if I could kindly so remind this House, is that: Be it resolved—and I will repeat this every time:

“*Be it resolved* that this House censures the Speaker for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise of her office.” [*Desk thumping*]

That is the major part of this Motion.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1), because the Motion is circumscribed by the entire Motion, as it must be read as a whole, and this is genuinely an abuse of the process.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: It is not a story you are telling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, hon. Member, overruled. But I want you to tie in your point quickly, hon. Member.

Mr. D. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand what the Attorney General is trying to do. Based on the Motion that the hon. Oropouche East posed here, it is all about impartiality and the bias that is shown by this Speaker towards the Opposition Members. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we brought this Motion.

Mr. Imbert: Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would draw your attention to the third and fourth recitals of the Motion—

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Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: What is the Standing Order?

Mr. Imbert:—which makes it crystal clear that the Motion is specific to what occurred on the 27th of April and on the 8th of May. That is it; 48(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, again. From the start of the debate I clearly identified that there are six recitals specifically in order to deal with. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I have said I am giving you some leeway to tie in your point. Yes, Standing Orders have been raised with regard to objections, but I am giving you the opportunity to tie in your point, but there are six recitals that I am clearly going to be guided by.

Mr. D. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand what is happening here this afternoon, really and truly. And if you look at one of the recitals:

“*Whereas* the Speaker brought the high and noble Office of the Speaker into disrepute;” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, I do not want to be going back and forth. I would like to make a ruling, but amidst all of that, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, there are six clear recitals to be guided by. I understand the point you are making with regard to “Be it resolved” in the last line, but I am giving you the opportunity to tie in the point that you are trying to make over the five-year period, and come to the particular recital that we have to deal with. Again, I do not want to go back and forth, make your decision and we will proceed please.

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the Prime Minister had opened up the debate when he talked about the Speaker over the past five years. [*Desk thumping*] He talked about the Speaker’s conduct over the past five years. [*Desk thumping*] The Prime Minister stated that in his debate, so I am trying to show—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again and again, hon. Member, I am still giving you the opportunity, just like I gave the Prime Minister with regard to the opening up of

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the debate, but I would like you to tie it in, just like I did with the other Members.

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So if the Prime Minister talked about the conduct of the Speaker of the House in the last five years, I have to respond to the Prime Minister, because I do not agree with what the Prime Minister has said, because over the past—[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, this is the last time. I am saying to you, Member, I am giving you the opportunity but tie in your point. I am giving you the opportunity. I am not debarring you from the opportunity, Member.

Mr. D. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we talked about the Speaker has not been partial to our speakers here over the last few months, it is about how the Speaker conducts herself to the Opposition. We are saying enough is enough, and we are saying that the abuse and the interpretation of the Standing Orders by her on the Opposition is a blatant abuse of the Standing Orders, on the Opposition.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1). I must, in light of what the Member has just said, raise that Standing Order because the conduct that the Member seeks to rely on for relevance in the recital that he is referring to comes after four separate recitals pinned to a date. The hon. Member has just confirmed that he is well outside that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The Deputy Speaker is allowing him to make a story.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again Member, we have a clear guideline before us of the six recitals. Yes, criticizing of the Speaker within these six recitals, we cannot go beyond those particular periods. So if you are making a general statement about the five years, all well and good, but you have to be pinpointed on the six recitals that we are dealing with, hon. Member. So how are we going to go about it? Because I cannot be toing and froing along this line, time is going.

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Mr. D. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, let me just go to a Standing Order from my point of view, “Right of Reply”. Standing Order 46—I want to show the reasoning that the Opposition is not being allowed a right of reply based on Standing Order 46 in this House. [*Desk thumping*] Even today we are not being able to have a right of reply, even in our debate today. Standing Order 46 states:

“The mover of a motion may reply after all the other Members present have had an opportunity of addressing the House and before the question is put, and after such reply no other Member may speak, except as provided in paragraph (2) of this Standing Order.”

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1), because I cannot raise sensibility—this hon. Member is not the person to reply. He is not the mover of the Motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again Member, last opportunity to tie in the point. You cannot go outside of the parameters of the six recitals. You make reference and you tie in the point. Up to now I have not overruled. I am giving you the opportunity.

Mr. D. Lee: I am gracious. Let me go to Paria Fuel Trading, if they want to go to Paria Fuel Trading. On May 19th—as the Prime Minister talked about Paria Fuel Trading—there was a press release by Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited. On March 28, 2020, and I want to read this press release into the *Hansard*.

2.55 p.m.

“On March 28th 2020, ES Euro Shipping S.A. ‘Euro Shipping’, a company registered and based in Geneva Switzerland approached Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited ‘PARIA’ to purchase gasoline with an initial destination to St. Eustatius, and which was subsequently changed to Aruba. Euro Shipping was advised by Management of the available products and the

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required due diligence process. In furtherance of the due diligence process the following information was provided to Management:”

Because we are talking about Paria Fuel Trading Company inside and the Prime Minister referred to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I go on:

“On or around April 14th2020, Paria was advised by one of the Independent Contractors retained to provide services to the vessel while in Trinidad, that the nomination to provide said service was requested by a company with Venezuelan...”—connections.

“As a consequence of this information, Paria contacted Euro Shipping and specifically advised that Paria cannot transact business with any Venezuelan Companies, and that its products cannot be shipped to Venezuela. Euro Shipping advised on April 15th, 2020, that the fuel was not destined to Venezuela.

On April 15th 2020, payment was transferred to Deutsch Bank to Paria’s Bank account at the Royal Bank of Canada.

On April 21st 2020, loading was completed and the vessel left here in Trinidad and Tobago.”

I want to ask the directors of Paria Fuel Trading Company—

Mr. Al- Rawi: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. D. Lee:—are they going—

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1). This has absolutely no relevance to the matter put squarely and narrowly by Oropouche East.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the Prime Minister made a song and a cry about Paria Fuel Trading Company, that is

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part of the Motion:

“*And whereas* the matter sought to be raised concerned an alleged sale of fuel to Venezuela involving Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited, allegedly in contravention of international sanctions;”

And I want to state here, the Opposition MPs and the Opposition is not calling for sanctions on this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I want to make that clear, because the Prime Minister is giving the impression that we are calling on sanctions on this country, we are not. We are calling on sanctions on high officials of this country who were involved in this deal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion is really about the Speaker’s conduct in this Motion and not excusing herself from adjudicating on the Motion of the definite matter that the Oropouche East Member brought in the House in April and it has been a—throughout the period of this Eleventh Parliament of sitting, we have seen the Speaker abuse the Opposition Members by flagrantly abusing the Standing Orders on us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we are saying—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, again, specifically to the recitals, please, not over the period of time.

Mr. D. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going over the period of time. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been subjected to the wrath of this Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, whether true or not, Sir, hon. Member, we are not dealing with that today. We are dealing specifically with the recitals identified. So retract that statement, please.

Mr. D. Lee: I retract, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the Member for Oropouche East brought this Motion here today as a Private Member’s Motion, it was to address the concerns that the Opposition Members have and the way we have been treated by the Speaker of this House. [*Desk thumping*]

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Mr. Al-Rawi: Standing Order—

Mr. D. Lee: And we are saying—

Mr. Al-Rawi: I rise on Standing Order 48(1). [*Crosstalk*] It could not be that we are here to decide how the Speaker has treated them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Member, please. Please, stick within the parameters.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also rise on Standing Order 48(6), “the wrath of the Speaker”, imputing improper motives. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, we are seeing the abuse of Standing Orders by the Government Members [*Desk thumping*] on the Opposition. This has happened and we are saying that enough is enough. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion— because I understand what is happening here this afternoon, they really do not want us to talk about the Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, as the Speaker, I probably should take offence of that statement at this time, because I have given you ample opportunity in order to be part of this debate, so be specific when you are making the comments, please.

Mr. D. Lee: I apologize to you because every time you have presided in that seat, you have been fair to the Opposition Members [*Desk thumping*] and I think really and truly, you should be the Speaker of this House because you have exercised decorum, true impartiality—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, again, let us stick to the particular recitals, please.

Mr. D. Lee: In conclusion, as Opposition Chief Whip and Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre, I want to say, I support this Motion brought by our Member for Oropouche East [*Desk thumping*] and call on this House to censure the Speaker for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise of her office over today

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and yesterday and in the future. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

The Minister of Public Utilities and Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we gather today to discuss this censure Motion against a very distinguished and learned and dignified Speaker who has served this House particularly well from the first day she sat in the chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion speaks specifically to the 27th of April and the 8th of May, and I would like to begin my short contribution by assuring this House that on neither of those days did the Speaker allow a Member for Tobago to make spurious and damning allegations against any other Member. On neither of those two days did the Speaker—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 48(1), Standing Order 48(1).

Hon. F. Hinds:—order the removal of the Leader of the Opposition from the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, hold on, hold on. I know you have now started. Right? I am giving you a little preamble in order to see where you are going to, and so tie it in quickly.

Hon. F. Hinds: I am speaking about those two days and I am saying the Speaker did none of those things. On neither of those two days, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did the Speaker make a statement that was untrue about the Judiciary. On neither of those two days, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did the—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 48(1). Standing Order 48(1).

Hon. F. Hinds:—Speaker find herself—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not understand— [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Member, one second. [*Crosstalk*] Member! Yes.

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Let me hear you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am standing on 48(1). I do not understand what the Member is speaking about. We are dealing with the censure of the current Speaker of the House. I do not understand—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Right. Again, likewise, Member, and this is why I mentioned to him, tie it in and let us get to the relevance. Right? So I am giving you a couple of seconds again.

Hon. F. Hinds: The Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla understands little.
[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, Members.

Mr. Indarsingh: 48(4).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would like you to retract that statement, please. I would like you to retract the statement.

Hon. F. Hinds: The Member said she did not understand. [*Crosstalk*] I retract it. I retract it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Both the Member for Oropouche East, the mover of this Motion and my friend from Pointe-a-Pierre, spoke at length about standards and conduct. The Member for Oropouche East is well recorded as shouting in this Parliament, “Why don’t you hush your stink mouth.” [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: I remember that!

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, hon. Member, I will like you to retract the statement and move on—

Hon. F. Hinds: I retract that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker:—to the relevance of the Motion.

Hon. F. Hinds: I retract that.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: It does not fit in this debate.

Hon. F. Hinds: The Member, as has been stated in an earlier contribution in this debate, had to be removed from a joint select committee on national security because of standards and conduct. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Charles: Standing Order 48(1), relevance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: That Member tried to face down a Privileges Committee of this House, and dissatisfied with the findings of that Privileges Committee, took this Parliament to the court and was kicked out of the court. [*Desk thumping*] In other words, his action failed. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: With respect—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hold on. Hold on, two persons are on their legs. Who do I recognize?

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48 (1), the Member for Oropouche East is not the subject of this substantive Motion. [*Desk thumping*] This is a substantive Motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, hon. Member, again, the Member may have brought the Motion, but the content and the subject is relevant to the six recitals. Right? So let us get to those six recitals and any other thing that may have probably been brought up in the debate. Proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds: Obligated. We were just talking about standards and conduct. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it happened that on the 8th of May, 2020, the Speaker made an announcement in this Parliament in relation to a Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance and in so doing was forced to, quite properly, rebuke and chastise the Member for Oropouche East for what the Speaker considered to be dishonourable and disrespectful conduct in challenging her ruling outside of this House, Mr.

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Deputy Speaker.

The Speaker could have gone further, because Members are all aware that to challenge the Speaker's character can be seen as punishable, a punishable breach of privilege of this House, so he was spared. This Motion, I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is part of the throwing of his normal tantrum because he did not get his way, and the Speaker stood solidly—

Mrs. Newallo- Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Hon. F. Hinds:—in defence of the Standing Orders of this House.

Mrs. Newallo- Hosein: Standing Order 48(6).

Hon. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Standing Order 48(6). The Member is implying—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second, one second. Member for Laventille West.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The Member—I am standing on 48(6), the Member is implying that because a Motion was denied that he is throwing a tantrum. This is furthest from the truth. We are dealing with a matter of where the Speaker did not recuse herself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: All over the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Speakers have been known to chastise Members whose conduct interfered with the dignity of the House, [*Desk thumping*] and Speakers have the right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under our Standing Orders, to have exclusive cognizance over the proceedings of this House, of all Houses of Parliament and assemblies. So the basis of the Motion before this House started off quite fragile. He was solidly and rightly chastised by the Speaker of this House and that is what displeased the Member for Oropouche East, nothing else, and that is what this debate is all about. What are the facts of the matter?

The Member attempted to raise a matter of Definite Urgent and Public Importance on the 27th of April of this year under Standing Order 17. The Speaker, as we all know, plays no role in deciding about the validity, the rightness or the wrongness of the Motion at that point. All the Speaker does is to determine whether the Motion qualifies or does not qualify, and on that occasion like—in fact, that Speaker had to deal with 88 such motions since she has been sitting in that chair in this term, and most of them have been rejected. I have been a Member of this House since 1995 with a little hiatus, and I have seen and I have filed Motions under Standing Order 17 or similar.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, again, specific time period, not over your—
Okay.

Hon. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Speaker determined that the matter did not qualify. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this had to do with a question of Paria Fuel Trading Company as we know, and I want to record for this House that the Speaker permitted 12 questions to be answered and all were answered by the Government in relation to that matter; 12. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am standing on—

Hon. F. Hinds: So to suggest—

Mrs. Newallo- Hosein:—48(1). What is the relevance of questions being answered in the House have to do with this particular Motion here that we are dealing with—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hold on, Members.

Mrs. Newallo- Hosein:—concerning the Speaker recusing herself? And that is what I am asking; 48(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you. And I will still answer the Member for

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Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Direct to the Chair.

Hon. F. Hinds: Yes. Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The conduct that is being questioned on the part of the Speaker is that she did not allow the Members an opportunity to express themselves in relation to that matter; 12 questions she permitted, and they were all answered, so that is not correct.

The Speaker returned to the Parliament on 8th of May and pointed out all of the elements in accordance with May's and our Standing Orders of such a Motion, and demonstrated comprehensively, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why the Motion did not qualify. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when Members file such Motions, in all of the Parliaments of the past, including some I have filed and they do not succeed, you either file it under another Standing Order or you go home, you get a few moments in the sun and you go home, not the Member for Oropouche East. What he did was to embark upon a campaign on social media, print media and morning shows, crying tears and misrepresenting the facts and complaining that the Speaker had denied him an opportunity to be heard, most distastefully I might add.

And as the Member for Diego Martin West pointed out, at that stage when the Speaker rejected the Motion under Standing Order 17, there was no Motion because it was not debated, it did not exist, it was rejected. So to claim beyond that, bias is really a non-starter. It is a trick, it is a ruse to fool those who are unwary and those outside of this Parliament who do not understand.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am standing on Order 48(6). The Member cannot determine what were the thoughts on our side, and therefore, it is wrong for him to stand [*Desk thumping*] and impute improper motives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. And what was worse, not only did the

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Member campaign on the Speaker's good name on social media and in the print media—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Standing Order—

Hon. F. Hinds:—and on the talk radio, electronic—

Mrs. Newallo- Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand on Standing Order 48(6).

Hon. F. Hinds: Just sit down.

Hon. Member: "Eh eh!"

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I will not make—

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. Lee: Withdraw that. Withdraw that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker. Standing Order—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You can have your seat. You can have your seat. You can have your seat.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker confers with Clerk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Standing Order, Member?

Mr. Karim: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am standing on Standing Order 48(4), the Member was offensive to my colleague from Cumuto/Manzanilla. [*Desk thumping*] He should withdraw that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, I would like you to retract and just apologize on that statement.

Hon. F. Hinds: I apologize. The Member can stand as often as she wishes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No.

Hon. F. Hinds: I withdraw that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Lovely.

Hon. F. Hinds: The Member for Oropouche East went further than his escapades against the Speaker in public. He wrote a letter to the Ambassador of the United

States, a letter in which he, and I have a copy of it before us, a letter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in which he said and I quote:

It is for that reason that the first available opportunity on May 27, 2020 on behalf of the parliamentary Opposition, I sought to raise this issue for debate as a matter of urgent public importance pursuant to our Parliament's Standing Orders so that the Government could be called upon to respond and account to the population by way of denial, affirmation, explanation or excuse as it saw fit.

I believed that raising the matter in this manner was in keeping with the spirit and intent of the democratic tradition of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

This is a letter to the US Ambassador which is why the Member Diego Martin West was reminded of Quisling, properly so. His letter continued in the last three paragraphs, eh, these are the last two. It continued:

Upon my doing so, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the hon. Bridgid Annisette-George refused to grant her permission for the matter to be debated and aired in the Parliament. The Speaker indicated that this matter did not meet the high bar required for a Motion of urgent public importance. This was most unfortunate in my respectful view.

The Member continued in that letter:

In the circumstances...—he is telling the US Ambassador—I considered it appropriate that I should present you, Mr. Ambassador, with a copy of the proceedings from the Parliament as recorded in *Hansard*, the official public record for May 27, 2020 for your record and contemplation as you see it.

Quisling. This is a Member of our House who went to court against this Parliament, now writing the US Ambassador, complaining about the proceedings

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in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. They cannot avoid that, that is the reality, but when your moral compass, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is skewed, you do not know right from wrong, up from down, you lose it altogether; twisted, and coming to tell us today about standards and conduct, which is why I take offence in the protection of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and more specifically, the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when things like that happen, when that happened, he was roasted, rounded upon by the public. I heard them, I read them, I saw them. They condemned the Member for Oropouche East. Trade unions, a former Speaker of this House, he got a sound public chastisement and disciplining, and he also tried to explain what happened. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: And wetting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Oropouche East, just for the records, let us just expunge that statement nah. Yeah. Just expunge it.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

[Member rises from his seat]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. No. I did not—I said expunge it from the record.

Dr. Moonilal: Statements. Oh, I thought you meant me.

Hon. F. Hinds: Indiscipline by that Member is well known to us. Indiscipline is well known to us. I told you of his behaviour in that regard before.

On the point of bias or conflict of interest, I would like for this Parliament to take note of the fact that we have a Public Administration and Appropriations Committee of the House which looks after those matters in relation to Ministries and entities of the State, and when HDC, which the same—

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1).

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: 48(1).

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Hon. F. Hinds:—which the same chairman of Paria Fuel—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hold on, hold on, hold on.

Mr. Lee: HDC has nothing to do with this Motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Two seconds.

Hon. F. Hinds: The chairman of Paria Fuel Trading Company is the same person who chaired the HDC, and when the HDC came before the committee of which I just spoke, the Speaker who chairs it, recused herself. Why did I say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? To demonstrate that the Speaker was all times acutely aware of the conflict of interest. And on that day when the Speaker had to rule on the Motion under Standing Order 17, it, like everything else, would have loomed in her mind, but she found, as indeed we on this side do, absolutely no conflict of interest to be impugned or complained about, none.

And the Member for Oropouche East cited some cases and I can cite a dozen of them, I have about four of them on my desk as I speak, dealing with the wider concept of conflict of interest in the law generally, but when it comes to parliamentary affairs, we are guided May's, we are guided by McGee of New Zealand, we are guided Odgers of Canada, and we have Speakers understanding of what is a conflict of interest, and let me give you an example of conflict of interest, if you will permit me.

We had a joint select committee of this Parliament on national security and the Member was a Member of that Committee, and the police Commissioner came and told us and others, that the Member was discovered—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand—

Hon. F. Hinds:—to be involved with criminals in this country.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—on 48(1). [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second, one second.

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 48(1), Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Relevance? Overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: I am dealing with conflict of interest.

Mr. Charles: 55(1)(b), the Prime Minister mentioned that.

Hon. F. Hinds: That is all right.

Mr. Lee: 55(1)(b), repetition. It is tedious.

Mr. Young: The whole Motion is about conflict.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hold on, one second. And again— [*Crosstalk*] Hold on, Member. Again, your—anyway, I will just deal with the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. Chief Whip, tedious repetition, it would have been mentioned just once, so for now, overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. I was interpreting this business of conflict of interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Two more minutes, Member.

Hon. F. Hinds: And, of course, the Member would not understand it then, refused to recuse himself from that committee. We had to come back to this larger House and move a Motion to have the Member thrown off that committee on national security because he did not understand that he became the subject of the enquiry while he was an enquirer, but he talks about the Speaker today as judge, jury and executioner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion filed by the Member is shameless or let me put it this way, it is as shameless as it is shameful. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it ought properly to be rejected by every single Member of this House. And I would like to close where I began by saying, in my own estimation, as the Member of Parliament for Laventille West, with experience in this Parliament and in the Senate since 1995, the Speaker of this House has always conducted herself with

great aplomb and dignity and professionalism, and on those bases, the Member for Oropouche East is, in my view, quite out of step, quite out of timing to challenge the impeccable record of that Speaker when his own record does not stand close.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion must be rejected as indeed I reject the conduct and behaviour of the [*Desk thumping*] Member for Oropouche East for all time, including the presentation of the futile Motion before us here today. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize Member for Naparima. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Rodney Charles (Naparima): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have 20 minutes, Member.

Mr. R. Charles: Twenty minutes. Thank you, Sir. Let me start by saying that I support the Motion brought by my colleague the Member for Oropouche East and eloquently supported by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. [*Desk thumping*] It is timely, it is relevant, and it is long overdue [*Desk thumping*] and I take the last part of the recitals:

“*Be it resolved* that this House censure the Speaker for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise of her office.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps it is important for me to educate the Prime Minister on what essentially is the concept of conflict of interest. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I refer to the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago the Integrity in Public Life Act, Chap. 22:01 updated on the 31st of December, 2016, clause 29 deals with the conflict of interest, and it states:

“(1) For the purposes of this Act, a conflict of interest is deemed to arise if a person in public life or any person exercising a public function were to make or participate in...”

Let me read that again:

“...make or participate in the making of a decision in the execution of his office and at the same time...”—ought to know—“that in the making of the decision, there is an opportunity either directly or indirectly to further his...interests or that of a member of his family or of any other person.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, very clear at the point at which that was presented to the Speaker, the Speaker ought to know or reasonably should have known that there was a conflict of interest. So whether— if the Speaker said that the Motion did not qualify, the mere act of participating in that decision was an exercise in conflict of interest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard terms— I listened to the Prime Minister and he made terms and I wish to tell him, he used the word “collaborator”, and the only collaborator in this Parliament is him who collaborates with Maduro, [*Desk thumping*] somebody who has been on an international watch list; none of us on this side—any collaboration. And I want to make the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the word that the Prime Minister uses equates with treason, and treason you have to consort with the enemy.

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And I want to ask the question today: Is the United States an enemy of Trinidad and Tobago? Let us know. Because you cannot have your cake and eat it. Your children cannot live in the United States and you call them the enemy.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1), please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again Member, stick within the recitals, right. You would have made your statements but again stick within the recitals please.

Mr. R. Charles: Yes. And the last point on that, you cannot go for medical treatment in the United States.

Hon. Member: “Ay, ay, ay.”

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Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Standing Order 48(4), please.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Definitely that one. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Specifically to enemies—

Mr. R. Charles: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could you use a different word, please.

Mr. R. Charles: Okay. If you consort with people who do not—countries which do not have the interest of your—countries in treason, it is countries where your country is at war with. We are as far as I know—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Standing Order 48(4).

Mr. R. Charles:—we are not at war with the United States. But I will move on, I will move on.

Why was this Motion moved? The Member for Oropouche East sought leave to discuss the matter of use of institutional or infrastructural capacity in the energy sector to facilitate a gasoline trade with Venezuela. The Speaker of the House adjudicated. Now, we have arguments as to whether or not she should have recused herself but so be it. She adjudicated on the matter and was not satisfied that it qualified under Standing Order 17.

The Speaker further stated that the apparent misuse and abuse of Standing Order 17, and it was clear and I quote here that there was:

“...difficulty grasping the meaning of the term ‘definite...’”

And she said:

“For a matter to be...definite”—it—“must...be specific, but its facts must be settled”—it—“must be certain, not hypothetical or...presumptive.”

And the question we ask ourselves on this side, was the Speaker’s adjudication on that Standing Order representative of a total objective view of the MP for Oropouche East’s request. Because you say it must not be hypothetical, it must be

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factual. So what are the settled facts in the Motion that was brought—in the Standing Order that was brought by the Member for Oropouche East?

Fact 1, the sale of fuel by Paria Fuel Trading with a Swiss-based company with known ties to US sanctioned Venezuelan President, Maduro. This was a fact. It was definite and I take my source from *Newsday* May 08, 2020. Another fact, it was made to a questionable organization, the shipment. That is a fact. And the third fact, the shipment of fuel was assigned to Aruba. They cannot deny that. They cannot deny that the Aruban authorities indicated that the shipment never reached that country; *Guardian*, 19th May, 2020. There was concern that the shipment might have ended up in Venezuela; another fact. If correct, then the sale of that fuel exposed a major state-owned entity and persons involved in that company and/or persons in Trinidad and Tobago and/or the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, exposed them to sanctions. And I want to correct a statement, if sanctions are placed on anybody in Trinidad and Tobago, it is not us, it is them, who acted and acted in a way that brought our country—exposed our country to the possibility of sanction.

I am making the point that when the Speaker said that it did not qualify under Standing Order 17, the matter was definite, the matter brought by the Member for Oropouche East was urgent and it was of national importance. So why are we, so why are we, why was it turned down and can we not form the opinion that it was turned down for reasons other than the fact that it was definite and I am using the definition of the Speaker.

It was reported in Loop, Tuesday, Loop June 11, 2020, that:

“A United States official...said that it is critical that businesses in Trinidad”—and I quote—“track and comply with US sanctions” imposed on Venezuela to the full extent possible.”

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Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, following the denial of the Motion the Speaker gave a long speech on what she labelled a continuous misuse and abuse of Standing Order 17, and that deals with definite matters of urgent public importance. And the Speaker listed Standing Order 16, matters on the adjournment of the House and a Private Members' Motion under Standing Order 33(3) as alternative routes.

However, however, these alternative routes raised matters of concern to us. Firstly, Standing Order 16, the total time for debate is 40 minutes with each Member getting 10 minutes to present. So here my colleague is presenting a matter that could impact on the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago and our potential exposure to sanctions and we are told with a straight face to go to Standing Order 16, which in my view, is sending us down a rabbit hole. So this possibly cannot be sufficient time to effectively discuss urgent matters. The second, Private Members' Motions are heard once a month on Private Members' Day. And these Motions can only be placed on the Order Paper 12 days before and still the Speaker is the sole judge of whether a Motion is approved for debate under Standing Order 40.

So whereas adjournment under Standing Order 17, definite matter of urgent importance, a Member may rise in place and seek leave to debate and secondly needs only 90 minutes' notice before the sitting of the House, the Speaker's ruling thus far on Standing Order 17 leaves little room for anything at all to be discussed. We have been flabbergasted, we have brought COVID, we have brought crime, we have brought the sanctions and over, over—

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again. Member, I will give you the opportunity as you now started it to tie it in please, crime, COVID, and so on; just tie it in to the six recitals.

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Mr. R. Charles: Thank you and I was speaking to— The Speaker may be very well fortified but she may have a conflict of interest in the shutting down of the Oropouche East MP. And I now do go to the principle of conflict of interest. I read before about how it is interpreted by the laws. Individual, if it is conflicted, he or she has to immediately recuse himself or herself from any consideration whatsoever of the matter beforehand.

The UK Parliament, the House of Commons Staff Handbook on “Honesty and Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest”, it forbids employees, workers, persons who are involved in the House of Commons from being involved in a situation where that conflict of interest can arise. And in upholding the code of conduct, they have established a commissioner of parliamentary standards. It is so important in the British Parliament from which we draw sustenance. They have a commissioner of parliamentary standards where every action is analyzed, not on the legality, but on the ethics, whether it is right or wrong by governing principles. And the House may impose sanctions on any officer of the House when it is considered necessary.

But we go to *Robert’s Rules of Order*, Parliamentary Procedure, Robert’s Rules. And he says:

“Recusal normally occurs when a director has a conflict of interest or prejudice concerning a...matter.”

Could anyone tell me if my spouse is involved in an organization, it comes to Parliament, my duty is to declare interest. That was not done.

Erskine May, *Treatise on Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 25th edition, 2019. It states and I quote:

“Where a member of the committee, particularly the Chair, has a financial interest which is directly affected by a particular inquiry, or considers that a

personal interest may reflect upon the work of the committee or its subsequent report, they should stand aside from the committee proceedings relating to it.”

This is May’s, this is the bible of parliamentary procedure saying once you have an interest, and if you are married too and you have a joint account unless for whatever reason the United States freezes that account your account is frozen. And therefore you are conflicted and May is telling us, telling us, you ought to recognize that and stand aside. So it is well established procedure among Parliaments throughout the world.

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption, this is seen as corruption in the global arena, the UN Convention Against Corruption. Article 8.5 obliges parties:

“...to establish measures and systems”—for—“public officials to make declaration to appropriate authorities regarding...”—any—“benefits”—or—“conflict of interest...with respect to their functions as public officials.”

We cannot go with a straight face to any organization in the world and tell them what occurred in Trinidad and Tobago on April the 27th was not a conflict of interest. We cannot go to the UN and say it was not corruption. I could give examples. In New Mexico the Speaker recused himself from taking part in the consideration of a Bill that would prohibit the sale of medical marijuana because he was involved in respect as a lawyer representing a firm that was making arguments or lobbying in favour of the sale of medical marijuana. So he recused himself.

In Trinidad and Tobago, if we are to believe the Attorney General and the Minister of National Security, they allegedly, and I choose my words carefully, they allegedly saw it fit to recuse themselves during deliberations of Cabinet in

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which they had a personal interest. Now, we will find out when we get into power, when we get into office, whether the Cabinet Note reflects that. And I say this and I hope they do not do what is necessary to hide that bit of information.

I want to tell the Prime Minister something. He made a statement that all of us on this side are the B-team and “we singing for our suppers”. I do not need Parliament to talk and articulate the views of my constituents. He is a geologist, he has studied the ages of rocks. I draw sustenance from the “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee”. I do not need a parliament, none of us on this side need a parliament, because we in our professional capacity can serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago with dignity and honour. [*Desk thumping*] And I thank my leader for giving me five years. If I do not get five more years, so what? So what, ladies and gentlemen?

I want to make the point. I want to make the point that we on this side, it was my colleague who attempted to make the point that we on this side feel hard done by the Speaker of this House. You could tell me I should not say so, but this is how I feel. I want to quote something. I had, Rodney Charles sitting in this House, and since this could be the last, I crave your indulgence. The Madam Speaker said and I quote:

“And I am going to give you this warning.”

This is Rodney Charles, the Member for Naparima.

“There is a particular penchant to bringing particular incident which has reached a particular place...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, relevance to this particular debate.

Mr. R. Charles: It is relevant in the context—let me give you the recital if you so wish, Sir. And I am not even going to the last. It is, and not “Be it resolved”. I am saying:

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“*And whereas* the Speaker brought the high and noble Office of the Speaker into disrepute;”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With regard to the particular matter, Member.

Mr. R. Charles: And a further recital, you told me tie it to the recital:

“...the Speaker committed a breach of established rules of conduct and conventions...”

“Conventions” mean practices, it does not mean action in front of us. When we talk about what are the conventions of parliamentary procedure by May’s, we are talking about a series of activities that constitute a behavioural pattern. And I am just seeking that and it is three recitals I have quoted. I was told “I am not going to allow freedom of speech”. I was told that in this Parliament. My constitutional right, freedom of speech, was abridged and as far as I know, and I did A-Levels British Constitution, the Constitution is the supreme law of the land, and any law or Standing Order that is ultra vires, the Constitution is ultra vires and inconsequential to the extent that it goes against the Constitution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you have two more minutes.

Mr. R. Charles: I have freedom of speech, but hear it—worse. And Member, I quote the Speaker:

“...watch your demeanor, please.

Member for Naparima, watch your demeanor, watch your demeanor please...”

[*Interruption*]

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1). None of that, that event did not occur on the 27th nor on the 8th of May. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And again, it is the same point I was trying to make, Member. So—[*Interruption*] Okay. Proceed.

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Mr. R. Charles: I want to make the point, and this is a personal view, the Speaker of the House of Representatives—and I want to do this for posterity—should be a creature of the House and not a beneficiary of political patronage from the executive of Trinidad and Tobago. And in that regard he or she should be elected by a three-fifths majority of the House and failing that the President should appoint subject to the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition and/or the Prime Minister. In that way we will not have a Speaker as a creature of the House who will act always to preserve the integrity of the House and impartiality and independence of the legislative branch of the Government which is a co-equal branch of the Government.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the Motion. I feel we are hard done by the Speaker. We feel she should have recused herself and it was improper, notwithstanding any arguments made, improper for her to remain and adjudicate on the matter brought by the Member for Oropouche East. I thank you.

The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have come here today [*Crosstalk*] to debate at Private Members' Day an ill-founded, unprepared Motion by the Member for Oropouche East. And I join with the Member for Diego Martin West in his observations that the Member for Oropouche East is politically irrelevant, desperate, and has people begging for him, he has people begging for him left, right and centre. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have—

Dr. Moonilal: 48(6). I mean, why they cannot spend time on the Motion than me. I mean, what is it with me?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Member. [*Crosstalk*] Member, I will give him a

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couple of seconds just to tie in where he is going.

Hon. S. Young: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is quite ironic than in his moving of the Motion, the Member for Oropouche East, after putting this Motion forward, which is a frontal attack on the Speaker as he—90 per cent of his contribution went on to say he was doing the moonwalk and saying this is not about individuals, this is not about me, this is—and he went on to proclaim to the world at large through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have thick skin, I can handle anything, tell me anything. The whole population has looked on here today and seeing it is the exact opposite, right.

In five years of sitting here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have heard from that Member for Oropouche East is consistently in my view, abuse of parliamentary privilege; consistently. This Motion here today is founded in an allegation and accusation of conflict of interest and we will deal with frontally. But it has to be put on the *Hansard* that the Member for Oropouche East's style is one that must be condemned, the worst type of example for a parliamentarian, for any parliamentarian. [*Desk thumping*] The Member for Oropouche East's contributions are consistently putrid, immature and quite frankly despicable.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4). [*Crosstalk*] What is this? This is my life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, I would like you to move on with regard to the thing. I think you would have—

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The thick skin seems to be quite thin today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Hon. S. Young: But you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion that the Member has moved here today, this Motion that the Member for Oropouche East has

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decided to take today and to bring here as a response to a dressing down that he got for behaviour that was a dark day in this House. The Member for Oropouche East attacks Members all the time and today he has used this Motion to attack the Speaker.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand on 48(6). Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand on 48(6). This is not about the Member for Oropouche East. This is not about that and therefore it is incorrect and improper for the hon. Minister to indicate that because of the Member not getting his way that he is behaving in this manner and this is absolutely incorrect. [*Crosstalk*] This is on the matter of—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you, Member. [*Desk thumping*] Overruled, but again—

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard the Member for Oropouche East talk about integrity. He used that word frontally in his contribution talking and challenging the integrity of the Speaker. It is our submission that the Member for Oropouche East has no locus to talk about integrity as he lacks integrity. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Lee: No, no, no. 48(4) and (6).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would like you to retract that statement. Say it otherwise. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: And apologize.

Hon. S. Young: Retract. I am not apol—retracted. I retract the statement that the Member for Oropouche East has no integrity. Retracted. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hold on. Retract the statement. You do not need to say anything else Member, thanks.

Hon. S. Young: Retracted, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What we have also seen here today is the typical UNC backtrack and moonwalk. The UNC through the Member

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for Oropouche East and the absent for, this must be about the third or the fourth sitting, of the Member for Siparia, led a frontal attack on the population of Trinidad and Tobago. And the population of Trinidad and Tobago has already judged them. The Member for Oropouche East is the one who started this malicious rumour about Paria Trading and is trying to continue it and then call for US sanctions—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(6).

Hon. S. Young:—on Trinidad and Tobago. And no amount—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand on 48(6). [*Crosstalk*] The Member—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, okay, fine, I got you. Overruled.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you. You see, no amount of backtracking can rescue the UNC because they are on record and the population came out and said that their calls for US sanctions on—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4).

Hon. Member: Nobody called for sanctions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. S. Young: And no matter how much the UNC tries to rewrite history, the population of Trinidad and Tobago is clear—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I stand on 48(4), Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. S. Young:—that the UNC called for sanctions on Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: History is history. We cannot rewrite history, [*Laughter*] Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is what it is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4). The Minister should withdraw his remark to my colleague, the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. [*Crosstalk*]

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just one second, one second, one second. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: I heard it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All right, one second. [*Crosstalk*] Hold on one second. [*Crosstalk*] Hello, Member, please I am on my legs, please. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Member, you would probably have to be specific. I am not clear.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I will because Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are not hearing in this Chamber this evening then this is an abuse of what is taking place. [*Desk thumping*] And—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, Mr. Deputy—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, I ask you to be specific. That is all I asked.

Mr. Indarsingh: I heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Minister of National Security tell my colleague, the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, that she cannot write her name and I want an apology from the Minister of National Security to my colleague.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, was the statement made? Please apologize.

Hon. S. Young: That is withdrawn, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So as I was saying, and it seems to have gotten all of them or most of them on the other side hot under the collar, the facts are that the UNC, no other than the Member for Oropouche East and the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Siparia, at the outset of this whole farce, at the outset of this whole, what they wanted to call an allegation, but all a trumped plan by the UNC about Paria fuel traders trading, selling fuel to Venezuela, of which there is absolutely no evidence. The documents do not support it, nothing supports it. From the outset the UNC called for sanctions on the people of Trinidad and Tobago and for Trinidad and Tobago. No matter how they try to backtrack, no matter how the Member for Oropouche—

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Ms. Ramdial: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(6). We did not call for sanctions. Please correct him! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. S. Young: So the UNC who continue to call for sanctions on Trinidad and Tobago, the Member for Naparima, like a little jack in the box, jumping up every five seconds—

Hon. Member: 48(6). He did not call for sanctions. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4). The Minister of National Security continues to use insulting language to my colleagues in this House. [*Desk thumping*] How can the Minister of National Security refer to my colleague, the MP for Naparima like a little jack in the box?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member.

Mr. Indarsingh: We have to put a stop to this. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Member. Okay, Member.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am not prepared to sit here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and allow what is [*Desk thumping*] taking place here. [*Continuous desk thumping*] This is not about insulting people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Member, have your seat please. Proceed.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to get back to the Motion that is—

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stood up on Standing Order 48(4) and I would like a ruling on that please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, back to the Motion. This Motion brought by the Member for Oropouche

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East who now has a history for five years; on every single occasion he has contributed in this House he sought to mislead the population and the Member is the epitome of being a stranger to the truth.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand on Order 48(6) and 48(4). It is imputing improper motive against the Member for Oropouche East. It is the right of every Member in this House to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Okay. Right. [*Desk thumping*] Member, let us be specific, no five-year period, we are talking about with regard to that particular recital.

Hon. S. Young: So with respect to this Motion, this Motion is another attempt to mislead the population, to mislead the population in particular with respect to a Speaker who has served this country impeccably and as a great exemplar to the women of this country as to what leadership as a Speaker should be like.

The Member for Oropouche East spoke about conflict of interest. He spoke about integrity, and I want to deal precisely with that here this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is an individual who comes here to talk about integrity but is in police reports having left Parliament to go to the Hyatt to pay for drinks with known criminals.

Hon. Member: Standing Order 48(1) and 48(4). He brings unproven information to this Parliament all the time and gets away with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, hon. Member, that has been dealt with three times and I would like you to move on to your point.

Hon. S. Young:—[*Inaudible*]—those particular allegations, but guided. It has also been put in black and white and reported that this Member has questionable links with known criminals and he wants to bring a Motion here on conflict today?

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(6). [*Crosstalk*]

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Dr. Moonilal: What is happening here?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Who do I recognize? Go ahead. 48(6).

Mr. Indarsingh: 48(6), Mr. Deputy Speaker. What is happening in this House here this evening? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Member, again, the Motion is not directly with regard to the hon. Member. So let us get to the actual recitals and synchronize.

Hon. S. Young: But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Couva South just made a comment that should also be retracted and then the Member for Oropouche East in his typical style bawling he has gone crazy. The Member for Couva South made a comment to the effect of, he is out of control or something like that. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like those dealt with before I proceed please. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: I withdraw it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please, please, please.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I made no such remarks.
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Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, I am not recognizing you yet.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not recognizing you yet, Sir.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am telling you I made no—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not recognizing you— Oropouche East, I am not recognizing you yet, Sir.

Dr. Moonilal: I would like to make a statement—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not recognizing you as yet. Again, hon. Members, once what statements are made reach the ear of the Chair, I will so act accordingly. Rest assured. If it does not reach my ear and you all want to be specific on the

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matter, I am not in a position to go down that road. Right? Once it is that scenario we have actually dealt with. So once the quorum is maintained, I will be able to act accordingly on each particular situation.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this ill-conceived Motion ends with the request for a resolution:

“Be it resolved that this House censures the Speaker for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise of her office.”

I want to deal with that phrase of acting “properly and impartially in the exercise of...office”. Once again, the author of this particular Motion is a defendant before the courts. He is a defendant before the courts for acting improperly, allegations of corruption made against him whilst he was a Government Minister.

Mr. Lee: (1), (4) and (6). Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion is not about Oropouche East.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Tie in your point quickly, Member.

Hon. S. Young: Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again, the point being made is that asking for the censure of the Speaker for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise her office, I was referring to the phrase “to act properly and impartially in the exercise of...office” and [*Desk thumping*] drawing a specific reference to Oropouche East, the author of this Motion, and reminding the population that he is a defendant in an EMBD matter—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand up on 48(6).

Hon. S. Young:—with allegations of corruption as a Government Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I stand up on 48(6). This has nothing to do with the debate. I do not know if we should speak about Christiana Sankar. It does not have anything to do with the Member for—[*Interruption*]

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Fair enough. Okay. Overruled.

Hon. S. Young: Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is always interesting when the truth is told with respect to the Opposition, how they react, and I just put on the record that the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla is falling into that trap of others on the other side of always trying to bring people's family and make believe family into the debate.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand on 48(6). I feel like an abused woman here [*Desk thumping*] and yesterday we passed a Bill in this House about emotional and psychological abuse. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you. [*Crosstalk*] Overruled. Proceed.

Hon. S. Young: Absolutely no mention—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Hinds: Kamla abused you.

Hon. S. Young:—of—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please, Members.

Hon. S. Young: [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, and that is how they are.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, please!

Dr. Moonilal: He is saying “Kamla abused you”, what do you mean by that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members! [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And on improper motives, 48—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members! Members, please! Hold on. Hold on. Hold on. Proceed.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, those on this side who have done all that they can—and the population has judged us—for the protection of Trinidad and Tobago, stand here unanimously in support of the Speaker of the House and have only good things to say, and say that she has acted with propriety and upheld that Chair that you sit in

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and this Motion is doomed to fail, and the author himself is one who has many questions to answer. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (*Caroni East*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I consider it very important for me to join in discussions in today's sitting of the House on Friday, June 26th, on this Private Members' Business and this Motion brought by the Member for Oropouche East which I fully support in its entirety. [*Desk thumping*] All the limbs of the Motion are true and correct, and a resolution at the end is very damning to the integrity of the Speaker. The limbs of this Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first is that the Member sought leave on April 27, 2020, to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance, and that has been dealt with by many of my colleagues. The second is the alleged sale of fuel to Venezuela involving Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited allegedly in contravention of international sanctions. We want to reemphasize that the United National Congress did not call for any sanctions whatsoever as far as this is concerned. [*Desk thumping*] The facts are out in the open. The facts have shown that the Government has been unable to conclude and to say clearly where that shipment of fuel went to, knowing fully well that it went to Venezuela, and Mr. Ruperti will be probably speaking shortly on that matter to explain and much more will come on that. The third limb, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the Speaker in ruling that the matter did not qualify under Standing Order 17, failed to declare a possible conflict of interest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Speaker had an opportunity when that Motion of urgent public importance was brought to her, she could have told the Clerk of the House, "Look, I am conflicted here, and therefore, I cannot go and discuss or debate, or whether to let this Motion go through or not"; the second, she could

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have come here and said, “Well, look, I am conflicted in this manner, and therefore, I recuse myself”; and the third opportunity is, when she made the statement of what you called “Announcements”—that is the third opportunity—the hon. Speaker would have had to recuse herself and say that she was conflicted, her interest was conflicted. But on these three occasions she failed to do that, and therefore, she stands guilty of an egregious decision and what could be construed as misconduct.

The fourth limb of this Motion is in the aftermath of this ruling, the Speaker under “Announcements” rebuked and condemned the Member of the House, in the House, for reporting elsewhere—I will come back to that—but the fifth and sixth limbs are particularly important. The fifth, it is the Member’s opinion that the Speaker committed a breach of the established rules of conduct and conventions of this House; and the sixth is that the Speaker brought the high and noble office into disrepute.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a voluminous document illustrating and showing very clearly on a number of occasions where we thought—and in the minds of the ordinary man as the lawyers would say, Member for St. Augustine and others, it is the ordinary man who has to give the appearance of bias or no bias. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to refer to a number of times when we, in this House, and the ordinary man would have thought that there was bias and some degree of prejudice from the hon. Speaker. On the parliamentary sitting on Monday 13 February, 2017, it was a discussion on FATCA—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, again, I think we have set that template already. It is not 13th of February, 15th of March as the case may be. We are dealing specifically with these timelines as guided here on the definite Motion, not those other—

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Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am trying to illustrate, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, but you see, I do not want you to identify any series of dates, hon. Member.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right, if you do not want me to do dates—all right. The hon. Speaker did not allow Standing Order 44(8) to be raised by the MP, Roodal Moonilal. *Hansard*, page 87—

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1). The Member is quoting an event from a date outside of the terms of the Motion before us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Member, we are not dealing with a period outside of the purview that we are dealing with here today. So the idea of quoting those dates with regard to what transpired with questions, with answers, and so on, I am not allowing you to go down that road.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I ask your thinking on this? The fifth limb of this Motion, it is the Member's opinion that the Speaker committed a breach of the established rules of conduct and conventions of this House; and the sixth limb is, the Speaker brought the high and noble office into disrepute, and I am giving examples of these [*Desk thumping*] to show our point. I will just guide the Chair on the times when these we thought were examples of breaching of these fifth and sixth limbs of the Motion. We must justify why we say the fifth and sixth limbs, and I am justifying it for you how many times we have been put out of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, remember it must be justified in relation to the period that we are dealing with here in April of 2020. I am not allowing—we said that from the beginning of the debate and I am not going to allow it to happen at this time.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You are stating, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the time period

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you want me to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. no. I am not stating that, but it is clearly identified in the Motion that we are dealing with here.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion has a limb on it. It is the Members' opinion that:

“...the Speaker committed a breach of the established rules of conduct and conventions of this House;”

And the resolution which says that the:

“...House censures the Speaker for her failure to act properly and impartially in the exercise of her office.”

And I am bringing these examples as showing that the Speaker has—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Fair enough. Fair enough. And to be specific—and this would be the last occasion—

“*Whereas* pursuant to Standing Order 17, the Member for Oropouche East (the Member) sought leave on April 27, 2020 to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a Definite Matter of Urgent...Importance;”

—and that is specifically the area and the gist of this particular debate here today, not outside of those purviews.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Okay. So you want me to show where the Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, not to show, I need you to be clear— I just need to be clear on what we are dealing with, Member.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right. I wanted to ensure that the listening public and the viewing public knew what were the issues that confronted us as an Opposition on a regular basis over the last four and a half to nearly five years which caused us to bring this Motion in addition to what the Member for Oropouche East has put in,

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because we were denied on too many occasions the ability to say what we wanted to say in this Parliament [*Desk thumping*] and this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not—I do not want anyone to think that this is a Motion focused on the personality of the Speaker.

It is the Office that the Speaker holds, and Motions of no confidence and censorship are well noted in Commonwealth countries and even in non-Commonwealth countries, and examples like the BBC on Tuesday 19 May, 2009, Michael Martin said—he was the Speaker—“I will relinquish the Office of Speaker on Sunday 21 June, 2009”, and he said he apologized for his role in the events, but gave no indication about when he would stand down, only to be challenged by a succession of MPs who asked for a debate on a Motion of no confidence in him. So when the Member for Oropouche East brought this Motion, it is at the end of a frustrated four and a half to five years, when so many of us have been put out of this House, including myself, on numerous occasions when we lost total confidence in the conduct of the Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Caroni East, to remind you again the Motion moved by Oropouche East is specifically on a particular aspect that we are dealing with. Not four and a half years, not five years, hon. Member. It is specific.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Okay. I move now to the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let me remind you that I am bringing it to your attention, Member.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And that indicates what, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am just reminding you that it is three times. Right? So proceed.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I want to differ from you on your interpretation of this Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am sorry to say that. You have been a person

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of integrity and you are a person of integrity, but I differ from you on this, but I will—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, again, do not bring me into the debate at this time also.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will deal with the limb which speaks about the “Announcements”. When the Speaker came here we thought it was a pamphlet that she was reading from but it was an announcement, and from the ordinary man’s interpretation of that announcement, it was an expression of a dictatorship from the highest office in the land. We considered it to be inflammatory and—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you would please me, Standing Order 48(6), “dictatorship”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could you rephrase that please? Retract and rephrase.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Well, it was an expression of high authoritarianism by the Office of the Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] We considered it inflammatory, autocratic—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(6) again please.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—one that will be—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hold on one second, Member.

Mr. Deyalsingh: I respectfully raise again, Standing Order 48(6). Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on that announcement there was an unwarranted attack of our elected Member which was most tragic. The Speaker issued a pamphlet as an announcement to distract from her compromised position. It can be considered as intemperate language which she used. The Speaker cannot use the provision of “Announcements” to make political statements, and we on this

side denounced the arbitrary and repressive tirade of this hon. Speaker at that time. We saw totalitarianism, explosion, and absence of balance and objectivity.

The Speaker said, “We must not use allegations” in terms of when she wanted to define what was matter of urgent and definite, and public importance. So, when the Member for Oropouche East raised the matter of the gas deal, when United States were putting sanctions across countries around the world who were dealing with Venezuela, that matter was not urgent, it was not definite? It was definitely. And when I raised even a matter that I considered sometime in the past too, on the COVID business, the Speaker said it was not, but the Speaker was trying to get at the Member for Oropouche East and myself by saying that the matters that we bring on a regular basis of definite matters of urgent public importance are not definite, are not urgent, and are not of public importance. But we beg to differ from her on that, and this is why the Member for Oropouche East found disfavour with her statement when she refused to allow that debate to go on.

We considered that matter was urgent, reflecting a crisis in the relationship between the United States, Trinidad and Tobago, and the other 40 countries with the United States on the Venezuelan issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Erskine May in a parliamentarian’s authority, originally written by British constitutional theorist and Clerk of the House, Thomas Erskine May, originally published in 1844, a 496-page book with the rules and practice, *A Treatise upon the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*. The primary role of the Speaker is to provide over proceedings in the Chamber including committees of the whole and freedom of speech is a privilege, and we [*Desk thumping*] have been deprived on numerous occasions of our ability to speak because we have been interfered with, we are repetitious, there is tedious repetition, you are irrelevant, and on a regular basis the time speaking for us had been shortened, curtailed and

we were put out of the House when we differed from the rulings of the Speaker.

The ordinary man on the street, when they look at Parliament—350,000 people voted for us—they say, “What is happening in Parliament”? [*Desk thumping*] “Why are you all being abused in Parliament?” And their thinking is that the abuse has come from the highest position in Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] The pinnacle of what is supposed to be a democratic society and a Parliament with values, and the values must be upheld. But we thought that the values were compromised at the highest level [*Desk thumping*] and this is what every speaker here this afternoon feels very hurt and pained of the way that we were treated over the last four and half years with Members put out on a regular basis. Member Indarsingh—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member! Member, again, four and half years, we are not referring to that specific period.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right. I hear you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am referring to, these were issues that led to this substantive Motion coming here today. [*Desk thumping*]

It is a culmination of suppression of the voices of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*] It is a culmination of what has been handing down to us, make us feel belittled as people who represent 350,000 people in this House [*Desk thumping*] and that cannot be accepted, and that must not be accepted, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does not matter where we are—the rest of the world, you have 53 Commonwealth countries and you could scarcely see any of the Commonwealth countries doing that. Australia had 18 times where they voted a motion of no confidence or censorship on Speakers and Deputy Speakers starting from 1944 to 2010, and these motions of censorship, Mr. Deputy Speaker, raised the issue of no confidence in the Speaker in the discharge of his or her duties. “He has acted in a partisan way

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by displaying bias against Members of Her Majesty's Opposition.”

We are the Opposition under the British Commonwealth system, the Westminster system, and we are the alternate Government and we should have been given the opportunity to be heard. [*Desk thumping*] How many Members on the other side had been put out by the Speaker? How many Members were stopped from speaking at particular times?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, hon. Member, that is not what we are discussing today. You have two more minutes, Member.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree with the Motion, the last limb of the Motion. The Speaker must be censured. [*Desk thumping*] During and throughout her tenure, the Speaker has not and did not make the effort necessary needed to show impartiality or independence of the office.

There was authoritarianism that came to the forefront which we did not envisage as an Opposition because we voted for the Speaker. We did not contest against the Speaker's nomination. We supported the Speaker because we knew that the role of a Speaker must be neutral, independent, and the role of the Speaker was established under the Westminster system. I want to say that the Speaker has demeaned her office and lost the respect of the majority of the Trinidad and Tobago citizens [*Desk thumping*] and as we speak about censuring, we are expressing severe disapproval in a formal method this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So we say that the Speaker stands to be censured by virtue of this Motion. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just as an aside, the last speaker referred to his side as “Her Majesty's loyal Opposition”. I am not surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because that hon. Member has a habit writing to the Queen when he has an issue with this

Parliament and other places. So I understand the colonial mind-set of my good friend, the hon. Member. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if one looks at the Motion before the House, the Motion starts off with a reference to an attempt to seek leave on the part of the Member for Oropouche East on the 27th of April, 2020:

“...to move an adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance;”

The Motion then goes on to speak about:

“...an alleged sale of fuel... allegedly in contravention of international Sanctions;”

Then it complains about the Speaker making a:

“ruling that the matter did not qualify under Standing Order 17...”

The Motion goes on to make a further complaint that sometime later—this event occurred on April 27th—on the 8th of May, approximately two weeks later, the hon. Speaker rebuked the Member for reporting elsewhere on the matter, and then everything else, Mr. Deputy Speaker, flows from that because these are the alleged offences complained of.

And therefore, Members on the other side have tried to stretch the boundaries of the matter before the House, but they have not succeeded in so doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This matter is all about what occurred on the 27th of April when the hon. Speaker declined to agree that a matter raised by the Member for Oropouche East qualified as a definite matter of urgent public importance, and then as a secondary complaint the Member for Oropouche East complains about the hon. Speaker rebuking him.

Now, in his presentation, the Member for Oropouche East referred to a case, the Pinochet case—well-known case when people are studying the whole concept of bias—and referred to the conduct of a particular judge who is dealing with that

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case, Lord Hoffmann, whose wife had been an intervener in a matter relating to the former President of a South American country—Argentina I believe, or Chile—Mr. Pinochet, and the Member for Oropouche East, he used that to attempt to prove his point that the Speaker had an interest in this matter, and therefore, the hon. Speaker should have recused herself, but there is more to it than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I go to the fourth recital which the Members opposite are avoiding, and those few who tried to deal with the fourth recital, have misled this House, misled the public, and therefore, it comes to me to educate the public, and those Members opposite who are desirous of education or capable of, exactly what occurred on the 8th of May.

On the 8th of May, the Member for Oropouche East was rebuked by the Speaker for reporting elsewhere on the fact that his attempt to have the alleged sale of fuel debated as a matter of urgent public importance. So let us see exactly where these reports elsewhere that occur in this Motion, and I refer you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the *AZP News* dated May the 1st, 2020, and it is a report on a letter written by the Member for Oropouche East to the US Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. And in that letter the Member for Oropouche East complains that he tried to raise a matter in this Parliament but was refused permission by the Speaker, and then he goes on to introduce into his letter that this matter could lead to the imposition of economic sanctions on the country of Trinidad and Tobago.

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So this Anansi story, this fantasy, these fabricated tales from Members on the other side, that they never introduced the concept of economic sanctions on the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, are just nonsense. [*Desk thumping*] It was the Member for Oropouche East, in writing to the ambassador, and this is what

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disturbs me. Why would a Member of the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament write the representative of a foreign power—it has nothing to do with this Parliament or the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as it is—and introduced the concept of economic sanctions against the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago? It is little wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is not just a perception in the public, we are talking about perception of bias and so on, it is not just a perception in the public, it is a belief in the public that the Member for Oropouche East is guilty of treason. Not my belief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a belief in the public. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(6), clearly imputing improper motives. He is suggesting that the Member has committed treason. So please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Member, “treason”. I would like you to expunge it from your—

Hon. C. Imbert: Most certainly. Certainly, that is simply a belief in the public, not mine.

But let me move on now to the substantive matter and you know when people go and do a law degree by some strange means and do not attend the requisite classes and then are somehow called to the Bar and then do not practice, that is how they fall into error, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] That is how they fall into error, because let us look at what May’s parliamentary procedure has to say. And before I go on to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Basically three minutes, we would break for tea and then you have an additional 10 minutes when we return.

Hon. C. Imbert: Do we have to break for tea, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Three minutes and we break Sir—hon. Member.

Hon. C. Imbert: All right, then. I better get in what I need to say in that three minutes then. If one looks at—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 44(10).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me look at what May's has to say about the discretion of the Speaker having heard an application for an emergency debate. The Speaker has wide discretion and must consider a number of matters. The Speaker must consider whether the matter is national in scope or whether it is of regional interest—it does not qualify if it is—or whether it is related to a specific group or industry, it does not qualify if it is. The Speaker has to determine whether it is definite, whether it is urgent, and whether it is of public importance. These are all the considerations that the Speaker has to apply when determining whether a matter should qualify.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is far more relevant and defeats this whole notion of bias is that—and I am reading now from rulings of the New Zealand Speaker, rulings of the Speaker 2017 edition. What is of far more importance—and I am reading from page 189 of that document:

- “3. Every statement in a letter seeking to debate a matter of urgent public importance must be authenticated in the same way as statements in a notice of motion.
4. If applications for an urgent debate that are accompanied by authenticating material they will be declined on that ground.”

So on the very Motion, the Member for Oropouche East fell into error because he referred to the alleged sale of fuel and the alleged breach of sanctions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, therefore, he did not authenticate his material and therefore the matter

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failed even before the Speaker could bring into any considerations of discretion with respect to specificity and how definite it was and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member. At this time, the sitting is suspended for tea. We return at 5.00 p.m. where you will have your 10 minutes addition.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for St Ann's East.

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As always, it is a privilege to be able to contribute in this honourable House and even more so on this matter that it is before us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in looking at this Motion, I recognize that the Member for Oropouche East is raising that the Speaker failed to declare a possible conflict of interest, also that the Speaker rebuked and condemned the Member for reporting elsewhere on that matter. I also note that the Member for Oropouche East is contending that the Speaker committed a breach of the established rules of conduct and conventions of this House, that the Speaker in doing so brought the high and noble Office of the Speaker into disrepute and is asking that the House censures the Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to comment briefly on these matters especially as someone who feels very honoured and privileged to have served for the first time in this honourable House. On entering the halls of the Parliament, it was not in this esteemed Chamber, but it certainly was a Chamber that was esteemed by the very fact that the Parliament was being held there. As a young Member, I looked very eagerly to understanding culture of the Parliament and of course in doing so, one looks at not just the Members that are experienced on one side but you also

look on the other side at Members who are experienced because as a young Member, it is important to learn the culture and understand what is expected, what is not expected, what is parliamentary, what is not parliamentary, and it is something that we have to take very seriously, a responsibility, because we are an example to the young people of this nation.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when a Member chooses to behave in ways that really brings into question the parliamentary behavior and how honourable this House is, it gives one pause. Now, I note that the Speaker made a ruling and that was not acceptable to the person that may have raised the Motion at the time and I understand that when you are in a position of authority and you make a decision, then not everyone can be pleased with it. However, we are Members of an honourable House and therefore when rulings are taken in this Parliament, it is honourable for us, as exemplars to this country, to abide by those rulings and to behave in ways that do not bring the House into odium and disrepute.

The hon. Speaker, I am certain, understood the gravitas of what was done outside of this honourable House when a Member—and that Member being the Member for Oropouche East—took umbrage with the decision that was made in this House. And not only did the Member take umbrage, he chose to go outside of this House and make statements that clearly were not meant to hold the honour of this House out to the population, and in so doing, that was an undermining of the very foundation of this House and therefore, the Speaker, in her wisdom, must have defended this House and it was important that she did so because we stand here and represent the country, and when we do that, we must understand that it is an awesome responsibility and what we say in and out of this House matters to those who are listening, to the young people that we are grooming to take our place when the time comes.

Therefore, when a Member steps out of this House and says things that can be really disreputable to the honourable proceedings of this House, it is incumbent that someone steps up, takes notice, and calls it for what it is. And that is exactly what the Speaker did on May 8th, because it was important for her to note the breach and to make an example of the Member that did so, so that no one else would dare to disrespect this House in the way that it was disrespected and that is what we have to understand. Because if we undermine our very principles by which we are governed, then how is it that we expect our country to run in the way that it must?—and if we as parliamentarians and lawmakers are the ones committing the act, then it is even worse.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in doing what was done in this House, what the Speaker did was actually the opposite of what this Motion imputes. What the Speaker did was to ensure that the honour of the House is maintained and that was very important and as a young parliamentarian looking on at the culture of the Parliament, looking on at what is parliamentary, what is unparliamentary, I applaud the Speaker for the move that she made to maintain the honour of this House. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at this Motion and see that the Speaker is accused of bringing the high and noble office of the Speaker into disrepute and I contrast that with the mover of the Motion and what I have seen and been appalled at as a young Member of Parliament in this House, what passed for parliamentary behaviour on at least two significant occasions, this very Member who is now accusing the Speaker of bringing the House into disrepute, this very Member for Oropouche East is one Member that can be looked at by the entire population as having done exactly what he is accusing the Speaker of doing and I do not understand—[*Interruption*]

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Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(6), imputing improper motives to a Member of the House. There is no substantive Motion before this House dealing with anybody else except the Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Tie in your point quickly, Member.

Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Yes, I am tying in my point—thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—by saying that exactly what the Speaker is being accused of is what I have seen pass before me and is recorded on the *Hansard* by the mover of this Motion.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(6). Again, the Member continues to impute improper motives. There is no substantive Motion against the Member for Oropouche East here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Move on, please.

Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: And so, one must be, as a young parliamentarian, wondering, therefore, what exactly constitutes parliamentary, what exactly constitutes keeping the order of this House and therefore looking at who is speaking about disrepute, bringing the House into disrepute, one must consider, therefore, the actions of both the Speaker as well as the person who moves the Motion, because they are both important in comparing and contrasting what is before us in this Motion.

And if we speak then about censuring the Speaker and considering that the Speaker, in her statement that is now being accused of being a breach of the established rules of conduct and conventions, if we consider that what was put before us on that day was put before us in an attempt to ensure, to maintain the dignity of this House, then it is clear that if there is someone that is bringing the House into disrepute, it is certainly not the Speaker of the House, as a matter of fact, the very opposite is what is being done by the Speaker. And in that sense, Mr.

Deputy Speaker, I want to completely reject this Motion and I want to completely reject it from the point of view of a young parliamentarian who is looking on at more experienced Members and expects that they will all, like the Speaker, in doing what she did on that day, uphold the reputation of this House, always act with dignity and honour because we are expected to do so, we are elected to do so, and therefore when we accuse the Speaker of bringing the House into disrepute, we must be careful that it is not us ourselves who are doing this very thing that we are accusing the Speaker of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, today I am disappointed because what I saw in all of the speakers from the opposite side coming forward really are grouses that seem to be long held and in local parlance “yuh mind this grouse” and this day seems to be a day where everyone on the opposite side wants to come out and say what problem they had and they did not get to speak and who get to speak and it all sounds so puerile and it all makes me feel very sad as a young parliamentarian because this is not what is expected.

When we have difficulty with decisions—and that has happened on both sides and I have seen it on both sides—the modus operandi must not be to bring a Motion and then accuse the Speaker of everything that they wanted to say before they brought this Motion. It seems very childish, it seems very puerile, and it is a disappointment and a complete waste of parliamentary time and I do hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that as we recover from this, the population will take it out of their minds because it really serves not to bring us into any honourable position with the population but it serves really to show the population that whereas we should be spending our time discussing more important things, we are spending our time discussing grouses because we feel as though we were mistreated and that is a sad thing. And I know that our young population, many have expressed to me,

especially about this Motion that they are not pleased to see us spend our time like this. I have heard nothing that has substantiated any reasonable claim to uphold this Motion and therefore I completely renounce it and I uphold the actions of the Speaker as being honourable and one that always defends the dignity of this House.

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

Mr. Prakash Ramadhar (*St. Augustine*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I always enjoy hearing my learned friend from St. Ann's East but certainly, she has fallen into the trap of ethos of the PNM which is cold, c-o-l-d. First, they conflate the issues, then they obfuscate the issues, they then label their target and then demonize. This debate, although brought in the name of the Member for Oropouche East, really has little to do with the personality of Member for Oropouche East. It has everything, I agree, with the dignity and fairness of this House. This ought to be the home of democracy where we appreciate the majority but certainly respect the rights of the minority and this is really where the tyre hits the road.

To have heard my friends on the other side say that this Motion is doomed to failure, that is nothing new. In-built in this structure is the majority of the Government and therefore, if there be a vote on any issue, the majority is 21, they have that number. But I am of the view that a battle is not worth fighting only because and only when you think you can win, a battle is fought sometimes for the dignity and for the purpose for which the message must go. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I equally take absolutely no pleasure, in fact, I had not even intended to speak in this Parliament on this matter but I grew up learning that advantage should never be sustained. I have sensed that in this election period which began in 2010 because there was an unrelenting propaganda that

anything other than the PNM was not worthy and that only what they did was good, sanctimonious holy and holy hypocritical and that is why I have decided to speak on this matter.

Let us refocus ourselves. At issue here on this Motion is this point. First of all, whether the Speaker ought to have recused herself when the matter of Paria became known to her that a motion of definite matter of urgent public importance was being brought and whether the Speaker should give permission. And you know, we keep hearing about the discretion of the Speaker and the Speaker has wide discretion. You know what is true here? The Speaker does not have wide discretion on these matters, the Speaker has absolute discretion and it refers and references that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, I am not saying that lightly or to cast any aspersion on the good lady. This is not what I am about here, but I have heard the sometimes eloquent Member for Diego Martin West speak about the Member, and in relation to that Motion, had not authenticated documentary evidence or whatever it is that was required for the Speaker to apply her discretion. That is obfuscation. Because the essence is the moment that document came into the hand or into knowledge of the Speaker where Paria—and correct me if I am wrong—the Chairman of which is the spouse of the Speaker, that is the moment of finality because you cannot look beyond and in the law, we have something called pecuniary interest and if it is that the chairman of Paria, a commercial entity, is dealing with sale of fuel or purchase of fuel and I am sure that he must have some pecuniary benefit in it, a salary, a stipend, whatever and if one cohabitates as a spouse as spouses would in this country, then there is the real issue of pecuniary interest and therefore, the stage is well set at a much higher level for the issue of apparent bias and the honourable

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Speaker—and we are all human with all due respect—erred horribly in pursuing even to look at the document beyond name Paria. [*Desk thumping*] That is the first hurdle that my learned friends have not attempted to even approach because they cannot cross it, with all due respect.

But there is more. The issue at hand was whether this should have qualified as a matter of definite matter of urgent public importance. When was the date for this?—27th of April, 2020. Nothing is in a vacuum here. We live in a very small country. With the ravages of COVID-19 that had so many afraid, scared, masked to unmasked, we were told that we had to protect this nation from the demonic plague called COVID-19 that wreaked havoc in other places with thousands and now hundreds of thousands of deaths throughout the length and breadth and indeed, it was visited upon us that Minister of Health, I believe it is eight deaths we had. [*Crosstalk*] Eight. So let us understand how this matter of the Paria sale or the supposed, alleged Paria sale to Venezuela arose and why it become a matter of urgency, a matter of importance and certainly a matter of public interest, rabid public interest. Timelines are important. I am a lawyer and therefore I deal with the facts and the evidence.

What was known to the population and certainly I imagine the very erudite Member for Oropouche East, this country learnt, not when it happened but subsequent to the 26th of March, 2020, to the horror of many who have friends in Venezuela and certainly to all those who want “ah neighbor” whose leadership is beyond reproach, that the Department of Justice in the United States issued indictments against 14 very high-ranking including the President of Venezuela, indictments for narco trafficking. This is rigid, this is potent, this is explosive. Understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are dealing with the 26th of March.

We learnt sometime after that notwithstanding the closure of our airspace at

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midnight on the—Minister of National Security, it was the 21st or the 22nd of March? The closure of our air space. [*Crosstalk*] Thank you so much. But it was ripped open to deliver on to us a private jet with the personalities of the Vice-President Delcy and a group. And it was painful for me to have heard my Prime Minister and my friend, the Minister of National Security, parade their points of view as to what this opening of the border was for. We learnt very feebly that it was about discussing COVID-19. I, with all due respect, found that a bit difficult, not just to bite into, but certainly to digest.

It gets far worse. Stumbling along, we were given the versions as to who, [*Laughter*] who re-opened our borders to accommodate. A group of men accompanying—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, excuse, remember the debate is not totally on what you are saying there so tie in the point and bring it back to the recitals please.

Mr. P. Ramadhhar: I appreciate that one does not yet or could not yet see the relevance but let me show you how relevant this is. Because we got versions of who accompanied the Vice-President of Venezuela. It turns out however that in that group was a very high-ranking Member of the Government involved with energy who became the head of the leading oil company in Venezuela. Remember what happened, 26th we have indictments, I would imagine the severity of examination of all the names of all those who are coming to ensure that these are not persons under indictment coming into Trinidad and Tobago on the 27th. Guess what? On the 28th, an advance was made to Paria to purchase fuel. Look at the timeline.

And I say in the courts of Trinidad and Tobago, there is something we call circumstantial evidence and in the minds of many, not averse to the Government, but to the minds of those who care about this country who are patriotic became

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very worried, I am included in that number, as to the real purpose and there was—about grave concerns that oil had been sold to Venezuela, and as a result of which, a country that was already under sanction and the President and senior members now under indictment for narco trafficking and therefore the source of funds for that—and I know my friend from San Fernando West was so grateful that he was not part of that meeting with Delcy and others. So grateful because he has gone internationally with FATCA and so to deal with the issue of narco trafficking and money laundering and questions were raised in the public domain as to whether moneys from narco trafficking might be used to pay for the oil from Trinidad and Tobago. These are the serious things that many were concerned about but it became worse.

Because already in the public domain and in the international media there was word of sanction and I asked my friends, because you hear it said repeatedly, and though I am not a member of the United National Congress, I am a member of the society of Trinidad and Tobago, and I myself want answers because I was appalled when I was told that the UNC called for sanctions and I believed it for a moment and I said, where was that? I have not seen a bit of paper, I have not heard a voice from the United National Congress calling for sanctions. What I heard was Members on the other side reinterpreting, obfuscating, conflating, labelling and demonizing again and it has become almost a given truth that the United National Congress called for sanctions.

If it is true, I want no part of you. But I have not found one stitch of evidence to say that you called for sanctions, indeed.

5.25 p.m.

The Acting Prime Minister on many occasions, Diego Martin West, attempted to speak to this matter and referenced the letter for the Member for

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Oropouche East, where he says, it could lead to sanctions, a letter, whether advisably or not, to the Ambassador of the United States. You believe, you believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the United States did not know more than any one of us here in Trinidad and Tobago knew already? [*Desk thumping*] So let us get real. You think a letter to the Ambassador gave him any further information? What I suspect—because I am not one to always look at the worst interpretation of a person’s action—what might have been, and maybe he should say so publicly, is that the Member for Oropouche East wanted the Americans to know: “Listen, if there was any kind of nastiness going on with trading with a sanctioned narco-trafficking Government, the Opposition had no part of it. And that with an impending election, if they are to be sanctions, hold your hand, because whoever may have acted upon it, would not have acted with the authority, consent of the people of Trinidad and Tobago”, and that is the way I saw it.

But coming back to this issue that the Speaker has absolute discretion, whether to allow that debate to go forward. It is wrong for anybody to have absolute power. And the way forward, if I may suggest humbly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are a good and noble man, we have been friends for years in the past, and I look forward to friendship in the future. I look forward to a country where we could find and fix things. I do not believe that we could endure as we have in the past. When we were Government, they accused the Speaker to be biased for us and against the PNM and now, whether there is evidence or not, there will always be the allegation but on this issue, the Speaker had no right to decide whether she should allow the debate or not. [*Desk thumping*]

Could I suggest, for the record, in terms of constitutional reform, Attorney General, that to respect the democracy, that is the rights of the minority, you could have an evil-minded and a very biased Speaker who would shut down every

attempt to debate an issue that is not favourable to the leading Government, who, with all due respect, appoints the Speaker because they have the majority. So that it should be in our future in this Parliament that where every Member of the Opposition says: “I want this matter debated”, then that must override the discretion of any Speaker. Pause for a moment and think about that.

If every Member of the Opposition says: “I want a matter debated”, then no Speaker should say: “I will not allow you to speak on this matter”. That is the way that we strengthen democracy. Because nothing is wrong with debate. Debate is healthy; it is important. We learn from it. We strengthen ourselves. There is great disrespect for our institutions. And this institution, my learned friends today at tea, some said was possibly one of the worst experiences we have had, where attacks went back and forth. But I want to say that we can be opponents but we do not have to be enemies. If you love this country, then let us fix it.

But it went even further than that. In this very Parliament, I am hearing names being called of Members on my side as being traitors. It was in the public domain where the Leader of the Opposition was accused of being a traitor. Do you know how corrosive, how deadly dangerous, especially in an environment where elections are close, to spark in the minds of lesser beings, the belief that that is true? And potentially lead away from the very peaceful elections we have had in the past? And for the easy and “dulcetic” transfer of power after an election is announced, the winner being, and we see what is happening in Guyana? Trait— I know “meh” friend, my MP for St. Joseph, will never ascribe to that; to damage the democracy by throwing out terms. Traitor? A traitor in the past, in fact, under our law, the penalty is death.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, tie it in, tie it in, please.

Mr. P Ramadhhar: “Ohhh”, I tie it with the noose that is required to show the

importance of what I am saying and the relevance of this. Because if we continue to believe that one side has the ability to point fingers to accuse the other of corruption unrelentingly, of now being a traitor internationally, then the democracy itself is under attack and this here is the bastion of democracy and we must protect it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say, whether you like the Member for Oropouche East or not, thank you for bringing this matter. [*Desk thumping*] I was not attracted to it to begin with, but as I heard the debate proceed, I realized it was important, because there is no greater sin than to allow power to accrue without challenge, and democracy requires that we question everything and hold up to the light, whether you have overreached, and if you do not do these things because you are afraid—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Two more minutes.

Mr. P. Ramadhar: Thank you so much. You are afraid for the odium that may be poured upon you and certainly was poured upon the Member Oropouche East, and he took it like a man, unafraid. He must have known the consequence and the bullets that would have been put into his direction, but he did it. And therefore, you know that statement that “fungus grows in the dark and the best form of disinfectant is light”, whether you agree or you do not agree with either position in support of the Motion or not, light has been put on an issue that needs fixing in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the last minute that I have, let me just say I myself—the learned Prime Minister said many have to be heard because they do not know what their future is. I am one. I will always be heard. Long before I was in Government, long before I was in politics and I assure you, whether I am here or not, I will be heard because I love this country, like many of my colleagues on both

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sides and we want the best for our nation. And therefore, if this might be my last speech here, I cannot say, but what I tell you comes truly from what I believe without any animosity, anger or any ill-will to anyone. What I speak for is our continuous improvement. So I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank all my colleagues and I hope that we understand that the nation looks upon us for the direction that we will go in, good or bad. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for St. Augustine, when he began his contribution, he stated quite emphatically that it was not his intention to address this House this afternoon. I think it would have done him so much better if he had kept his seat, because what he said over the last 20 minutes amounted to almost nothing. [*Desk thumping*] Usually, the Member for St. Augustine is quite eloquent [*Crosstalk*] but today—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please—

Hon. A. Garcia:—it was just rambling and rambling and rambling, without any substance. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second. Members, please, please. I would like to hear the discourse of the Member.

Hon. A. Garcia: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have examined this Motion carefully and I have found absolutely nothing in this Motion that would cause any one of us on this side any great concern. Because the Motion really lacks substance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the mover of the Motion, in my mind, really underlines the fact that exists that he has an inability and a problem in thinking logically.

Mr. Charles: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), entirely irrelevant to the Motion at hand and it is ad hominem in its—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please, please. Again, Member, I will give you the

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opportunity to tie in your point.

Hon. A. Garcia: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is strange that my good friend from Naparima, with whom I shared a hostel for two years, could stand and talk such things that do not make sense. Anyway, let me get back to the main Motion that we are looking at today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Parliament operates in accordance with rules, rules that guide us along while we debate Motions that come before us. The Speaker, as has been said on many occasions, has the responsibility to ensure that the debate or debates are carried out, are conducted in an orderly fashion.

When a Member runs afoul of the Speaker, that Speaker has every right to chastise that Member. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not here this afternoon to defend the Speaker. I am sure the hon. Speaker is capable, fully capable, of defending herself. But what I wish to do is to draw to the attention of this House, the many inconsistencies that are connected with this Motion. I am amazed, in reading the recitals, that a simple act of the Speaker, an act that is in accordance with her duties and responsibilities, would be seen by a Member to bring this House into disrepute. I just cannot understand it.

We have to be careful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we are making pronouncements, when we are debating Motions, to ensure that when we speak, we speak on behalf of the persons that we represent. But not only do we speak on behalf of the persons we represent, but we also speak to the entire country. And in this instance, we speak to the entire country of Trinidad and Tobago. And therefore, whatever we say must be well put forward. It must contain substance. It must not lack truth and thought and proper thoughts because out there we might have a number of persons listening—

Mr. Lee: Standing Order 48(1), Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can the Minister get to the

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Motion, please?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. A. Garcia: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know the strategy that has been employed by the Opposition this evening is to seek to interrupt the speakers, but that strategy will not work. Mr. Pointe-a-Pierre, it will not work. It has failed and will continue to fail. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Lee: Standing Order 48 (1), 48(1), Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1).

Hon. A. Garcia: And continue 48(2) also.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please, please proceed.

Hon. A. Garcia: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am confused by the arguments that have been put forward by the Member for Oropouche East this afternoon in this presentation. The arguments lacked coherence. The arguments lacked substance and there was an absence of the logical sequence of thoughts. I could not understand, for the life of me, what was the common thread behind his arguments.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 53(1), please.

Hon. A. Garcia: And 52(2) and 53(3).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. A. Garcia: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will not be perturbed by these interruptions. As I said before, I know this is the strategy that has been employed. The mover of the Motion, Member for Oropouche East, in his presentation, said that he would take on anyone at any time. I want to assure the Member for Oropouche East that I am willing and ready to take him on. [*Desk thumping*] Because he is accustomed to throwing tantrums, and this afternoon was a classic of tantrum throwing. He behaves like a little child who has lost his toy and therefore, he cannot find it. [*Crosstalk*]

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Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4), come on. For a Minister of Education to be talking like this? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, hold on, hold on. Chief Whip, I just want clarity on your Standing Order. What?

Mr. Lee: He is calling my Member childish. Come on.

Hon. A. Garcia: I think in these circumstances that should be a compliment.
[*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. Members. Again, hon. Member, withdraw and rephrase. Withdraw and rephrase.

Hon. A. Garcia: I withdraw. I withdraw. But the arguments that he presented this afternoon are childlike. I would not say childish, are childlike, because they lack, as I said, coherence. There is an absence of any proper thinking behind his arguments and it really appeared to me, that here was a gentleman with a bruised ego; a gentleman talking where his ego was severely bruised.

In addition to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion really is an election gimmick by the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*] It is intended for all purposes to salvage a lot of the lost ground that this Opposition has suffered and I am sure—

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). I do not see that under any “whereas” here.

Hon. A. Garcia: I am sure the Member for Oropouche East will have an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, please, please continue. Overruled.

Hon. A. Garcia: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This afternoon, in this House, we were treated with some theatrics; theatrics by several Members of the Opposition in their failed attempt to bring some semblance of meaning to this Motion. This Motion, I am sure, will fail definitely. This Motion does have the

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support of this Government, and this Motion is doomed to failure. I thank you very much.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] Thank you, but he recognized me first.

Hon. Members: No, no, no.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hello, let me, let me. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: San Fernando East stood up.

Dr. R. Moonilal: No, no, no. I stood up. The man recognized me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please—

[*Mr. Deputy Speaker confers with Clerk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Oropouche East. [*Crosstalk*] I have ruled.

Dr. R. Moonilal: He challenging the Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hello, Member, please, I have ruled.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is, of course, a pleasure to be back to the podium the second time for the day, to wind up the debate on this matter.

I want to begin by thanking all my colleagues on my side of the House, [*Desk thumping*] on this side of the House, for the very deep, considerate and well-thought-of contributions from the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, the Member for Naparima, the Member for St. Augustine, who else?

Hon. Member: Caroni East.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Caroni East. I was leaving Caroni East— but the other colleagues, I think, that would have been it this evening. The Member Caroni for East, who walked out of his own recuperation after surgery on his knee, to come and deliver a very powerful contribution this afternoon, [*Desk thumping*] I want to thank him sincerely, and all colleagues on this side of the House for their

contribution and their support to this very important Motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a Motion that deals with the Speaker of the House of Representatives and not the Government policy. I want to make it very clear. This is a matter that is called a substantive Motion. It deals with the conduct of the Chair. It is not a Motion that is critical of Government policy. And there is a reason why I am putting that on the record very early o'clock. No part of this Motion is critical of Government policy. It raises questions in a substantive Motion on the conduct of a Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the first time in life, 19 years I have been here, and I have been described as throwing a tantrum. Before today, I probably could not even spell the word. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I throw no tantrums, I throw no teacups, I throw no water. I am not a person like that. I have listened to all my colleagues, and Members opposite spoke with a lot of love. The Prime Minister, no less a person than the Prime Minister responded to my earlier intervention. And the Prime Minister spent a considerable amount of time dealing with a gentleman by the name of something. I cannot pronounce the name and I have never heard it before. But I suspect he was some traitor of some kind, and I do not know the name, but the Prime Minister was engaging him.

The Member for St. Augustine, may I also thank him as well, for his very, very deep and considerate thoughts on this matter. [*Desk thumping*] And he asked the defining question. No one opposite could have crossed the first obstacle to defend the decision of the Speaker not to refer this matter to the Deputy Speaker.

This matter had absolutely nothing to do with whether my Motion on the 27th of April qualified or not. And colleagues opposite were spending a lot of time talking about the Motion of the 27th. It did not matter. Even if it did not qualify, that was not the issue. The issue was that the Speaker ought not to have

entertained it because it touched and concerned a company, a commercial entity headed by her spouse. That is all the issue was. It was not whether that Motion had merit. The Prime Minister stood up here, and I have his note, and said categorically that Paria never “sell no fuel’ to Venezuela. The Minister of National Security continued. He was like Mini-Me to the Member for Diego Martin West. He continued that, that the Opposition concocted and fabricated and created this whole thing.

But you know, the Motion of the 27th, the Speaker could not have undertaken an investigation by the 27th. I put it to you neither the Government. So how you knew on the 27th it was not true, and not authenticated, and so on. But you see, the Prime Minister let the story out of his mouth when he said categorically that Paria was not involved in selling fuel to Venezuela. He said that categorically. To this day, it is a matter of public record that the Government has accepted that there was a clause in a contract against the resale of fuel to Venezuela. And that clause could have been violated. We have called on the Prime Minister to ask the Attorney General to investigate that. The Prime Minister said: “No, we are not investigating that”, full stop; matter of public record.

And the Prime Minister defended Paria. But I will go one step further. You see, this entire debate today, suddenly it became about me. I mean, I think no speaker opposite failed to say something about the Member for Oropouche East. You would think I was selling fuel to Venezuela.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister started. And I want to deal with one thing immediately, and let me deal with it and get it out the way, because I knew— Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know them. If you give me mud and water, I could make them. I knew what they were coming with today. So when I talk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I knew they were coming after to say this man cannot speak about

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nothing about conflict of interest because they throw him out of a JSC, because the Commissioner of Police say this man connected to criminals. Mr. Speaker, I am quoting what the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about. They went on record today again. And I am not going to throw any tantrum there neither. They put on record, again, that the Member for Oropouche East cannot talk. How you could talk? The House had to throw you out of a JSC.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just have two letters to respond to that because it was raised in this debate by no less a person than the Prime Minister and Minister of National Security. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the aftermath of being pelt out of a JSC by this House, by a majority of the PNM, my lawyer Israel Khan wrote to Commissioner Gary Griffith, March 02, 2020, and I am responding here to the direct attack I face today from National Security Minister and Prime Minister. The letter dated March 02, said:

Re: Statement of Mr. Stuart Young in the press 2020

I am Counsel for Dr. Roodal Moonilal. He is an attorney, as well as serving Opposition Member.

In January and February 2020, there have been several newspaper articles quoting statements made by Mr. Stuart Young. He has made allegations and some specific allegations. In particular, the Minister has stated that he has received information linking Members of the Opposition to criminal elements, of which Dr. Moonilal is presently a Member. The Minister is reported to have said I have been provided with information by arms of national security. I have read them, suggesting not only was I told, but National Security Council was told by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service that in their opinion, instructions was given— [*Interruption*]

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am responding to a charge against me in this debate.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member is putting forward legal battles and legal challenges in this House and is using the House to do that. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing is before the court at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second. One second, Member. Hon. Member, simple question: is this matter before the court?

Dr. R. Moonilal: No, this matter is not before the court, Sir. Nothing related to this is before any court. Thank you and you can—and I go by—stand by that.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is reading a legal letter. He is using this sitting to advance his case, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: I came under an accusation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second, one second.

[*Mr. Deputy Speaker confers with Clerk*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: What is this? But you can make allegations against me but, I cannot defend myself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, overruled.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the letter from Mr. Khan goes on:

The Minister's general statements have been followed by specific statements alleging that Dr. Moonilal is involved in such a link to criminal elements.

And it continues— I do not want to quote the entire letter. But the long and short is the letter continues to say that:

This is a part of a political campaign where the Minister of National Security continues to repeat these outlandish, preposterous and absurd allegations...

And so on, which was done today. So I stop that letter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on March 13, 2020, I received a letter from the

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Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Office of the Commissioner of Police—well, I did not receive the letter, let me correct that:

Mr. Israel B. Raja Khan, Senior Counsel

In reply to Mr. Khan's letter:

Dear Mr. Raja Khan,

Police investigations into hon. Roodal Moonilal

Reference is made to a letter dated March, 02, 2020—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, again you are going to quote verbatim from a particular letter?

Dr. R. Moonilal: It is a four-line letter, Sir.

Please be informed that the Head of the Special Investigative Unit has indicated that based on the information that they have at this time, your client, the hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal, MP, is not a suspect of any ongoing police investigation in relation to any gang-related offences in violation of the existing criminal law.

Signed by the Acting Commissioner at the time.

Irwin Hacksaw

Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the police—[*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, what Standing Order?

Mr. Mitchell: a point of order.

Mr. Hinds: Point of order. [*Crosstalk*] The letter said at this time and the investigations are continuing.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am moving on, because they spent a lot of time on that, failing to say that the report that came to Parliament was an incomplete report, where the Commissioner of Police was not allowed to finish a

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sentence. It was the first time in life that a report came to a Parliament that was incomplete, where somebody is giving evidence and they could not even finish giving the evidence. A report came, Prime Minister and Government “hold” on to that. But when the Commissioner of Police says, at this time, there is absolutely nothing to do with Dr. Moonilal, Member for Oropouche East, they cannot take it. But I will move on because that is not my main point here.

Mr. Hinds: Point of order—

Dr. R. Moonilal: My next point, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Hinds: Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Member quoted a letter. The letter says “at this time” and the investigations into gang-related activities are continuing. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, okay.

5.55 p.m.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me proceed because the Member for Laventille West cannot tell this House he knows what investigation is taking place. [*Interruption*] How you know?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members.

Dr. R. Moonilal: How do you know?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Listen.

Dr. R. Moonilal: How you know?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hello.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is your Standing Order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members. Okay, on both sides, Caroni East, Laventille West, please, I am not allowing those outbursts. I am on my legs Members, and you all are walking. Caroni East, I am on my legs. No more outbursts like those please. Okay, Oropouche East.

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Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me proceed. Members of the Government opposite on several occasions described the Opposition's raising of the matter of the fuel sale from Paria. They responded to that today in this debate by stating that that was a fallacy, it was a fantasy, we created it, we manufactured it, et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister began by that. Now the Prime Minister had no duty today to say anything else or to—anyway, leave that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have in my hands certain documents here which I would just want to make reference to one or two of the documents. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will surprise members of the national community that we have the evidence, it is in my hand now, that Paria Trading imported fuel coming out of a place in Italy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, coming out of Italy—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, we went over that already for the day. This is, you would be, hold on, you would make it now the eighth person that would be speaking on that particular aspect.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, unless I missed it, I tried not to stay away from the debate today, but anyone quoted the final invoice from Trafigura final invoice dated 06 April, 2020?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, but Member, it is in relation to the particular aspect that we are dealing with, the purchase of the fuel.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is the point I am trying to make. This will be the ninth time today this would be coming up, based on Standing Order 48(1) that it would be.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay, sure, fine. But Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I add that no one would give the details that I am about to give. Because I could not anticipate

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in my opening that Members would have defended Paria Trading that way, so I did not give the details. I am here now with the details.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, proceed.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Can I proceed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure, thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a load in Augusta, Italy, of fuel sent to Paria. It was sent by Trafigura, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and paid for by that company to the tune of US \$7.9 million. This was on 06 April, 2020. Mr. Deputy Speaker, having bought this fuel, Paria Fuel Trading paid, or they should have paid, US \$7.9 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is more than coincidental that having bought fuel on the 6th of April, later on the 14th, fuel is then sold to a company related to Trafigura. It is a father and son company. Fuel is then sold to that company that is initially headed to St. Eustatius in the Caribbean, then goes to Aruba, then the Aruba Government says they did not have the fuel on land, they did not take it on land. And the fuel then moves to Venezuela. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are banking transactions between RCB, Republic Bank Limited, FCB, Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited, and I will not quote that in detail either, and a Deutsch bank, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, as I mentioned to you earlier, this has been dealt with extensively in the debate so far. Kindly proceed.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, those facts and details will come out at another time. The Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke of the concept of economic sanctions and sought in a classic way to defend the Government's position. The Government is arguing at all material times that the Opposition recommends sanctions and promote sanctions. When the Member for Diego Martin North/East got caught because he could not find in that letter any

line that recommended or promoted sanctions, he then changed his tune. He said “it was the concept of economic sanctions that was introduced”, as if the United States Department of the Treasury does not know anything about the concept of economic sanctions. And the Member for St. Augustine corrected him by indicating that our role and function was to indicate to the American authorities and the world, whether it is the European Union or not, we do not support the Government with that mad-cap plan they have. We did not support the Government with any alleged sale of fuel to Venezuela. [*Desk thumping*] That is all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is all.

And the Paria issue, the door is not closed because you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been told that, we read in the international press that investigations into the violations of economic sanctions continue, they continue. So that matter is certainly not closed. The Member for St. Ann’s East told us—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you have two more minutes.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure, well I will forget St. Ann’s East. Well, the Member for Arima, all I could say to him is “Goodbye, I will miss you.” [*Interruption*] Yes, a penny for his thoughts, I thought. Mr. Deputy Speaker, today, in the two minutes left, let me say that when I came to the Parliament I knew the slings and arrows would come, I knew that. I knew it would come from everyone. I was prepared for that, that is not to me a big problem, but I wanted the Government to answer the central question, that on that day of April the 27th, when this matter came to the desk of the substantive Speaker, did she have a duty or not to recuse herself? [*Desk thumping*] That was the question and that will always be the question.

The Government argued today and I think the Prime Minister said, he said, “That was never an issue because we never sell fuel to Venezuela”. The Speaker in her note, I do not want to quote, I do not have time to quote, but in her

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“Announcement”, that famous “Announcement”, and this is not somebody who is responding to an announcement because you feel, you know, hurt or something. I mean, we are not hurt, we are responding to it on democratic principles, the rule of law, and values.

The Member did not tell us that on the 27th of April, no one, including the Prime Minister, could have said with certainty what happened with that transaction. So the Speaker could not have known anything. She could not have known. So in turning down the Motion she did not know. But again, I want to make the point, the point is not whether the Motion was turned down or not. The point is that the person in the Chair did not recuse herself and committed a breach and brought the House into disrepute, and brought the noble Office of the Speaker into disrepute. And I repeat, this is about the Speaker, it is not condemning Government policy.

I thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I beg to move, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Question put.

The House divided: Noes 17 Ayes 14

NOES

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Mitchell, Hon. R.

Leonce, A.

(Censure of Speaker)

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Garcia, Hon. A.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Dillon, Hon. Maj. Gen. E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Francis, Hon. Dr. L.

Olivierre, Ms. N.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A

Cuffie, M.

AYES

Lee, D.

Charles, R.

Rambachan, Dr. S.

Karim, F.

Tewarie, Dr. B.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Gopeesingh, Dr. T.

Khan, Dr. F.

Indarsingh, R.

Ramadhar, G.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Ramdial, Ms. R.

Paray, R.

Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.

Motion negatived.

KABIR ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD (INC’N.) (AMDT.) BILL, 2019

UNREVISED

Question put and agreed to: That a Bill to amend the Kabir Association of Trinidad (Incorporation) Ordinance, 1932, be now read a second time.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

House in committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday 01 July, 2020, at 1.30 p.m. in the afternoon. On that day it is the Government's intention to debate the Miscellaneous Amendments (No. 2) Bill. Thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.12 p.m.