

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, August 4, 1992

SENATE

Tuesday, August 4, 1992

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave to Sen. Muntaz Hosein to be absent from sittings of the Senate during the period August 1 to August 22. I have also granted leave to Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams to be absent from today's sitting. Both Senators are out of the country.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: I have been advised that His Excellency the President has appointed Mr. David Nigel Cowie to be a temporary Senator during the absence of Sen. Muntaz Hosein with effect from August 3, 1992.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
(OMBUDSMAN'S REPORTS)**

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received a letter dated July 28 from the Speaker of the House of Representatives, which reads as follows:

"I wish to inform you that at a sitting held on Friday, 24th July, 1992, the House of Representatives agreed to the following resolution which was moved by the Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance:

Be it resolved:

That the House consider that it is expedient that a committee of both Houses be appointed to consider all reports submitted to Parliament by the Ombudsman.

The above Resolution is accordingly forwarded for the conference of the Senate."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. David Nigel Cowie took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1991 and on other audit activities conducted during the year. [*The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Lenny Saith)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Export Credit Insurance Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*Hon. L. Saith*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Telecommunications Authority Board
(Appointment)**

25. Sen. Roi Kwabene asked the Minister of Information:

- (a) Would the hon. Minister indicate what steps have been taken to appoint the Telecommunications Authority Board?
- (b) Has the said Authority functioned as is provided for under the Telecommunications Authority Act of 1991?

The Minister of Planning and Development (Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Mr. President, the Government are currently reviewing the Telecommunications Act, namely, Act No. 40 of 1991, which was assented to by the President on November 18, 1991 but has not yet been proclaimed. This review is being undertaken to ensure that the legislation is in conformity with the present Government's policy. The Government are also considering the legal steps necessary for the proclamation of the Act. As soon as these exercises are completed, action will be taken in respect of:

- (i) the proclamation of the Act; and
- (ii) the appointment of the board of management of the Authority.

Since the Telecommunications Authority Act. No. 40 of 1991 has not yet been proclaimed, the Telecommunications Authority has not yet come into existence.

Sen. Kwabene: Mr. President, would the hon. Minister indicate to this Senate whether he has any knowledge with regard to the fact that once this Act is not proclaimed, our relationship with the International Telecommunications Union and the standards by which—

Mr. President: Senator, this is question time. Statements are not allowed. If you have a supplementary question, pose it in the form of a question, please.

Sen. Kwabene: Mr. President, the supplementary question, is whether the Minister is aware of the relationship between the ITU and this Act, with regard to the fact that it needs to be proclaimed in order that we may adhere to international standard?

Hon. Dr. L. Saith: Mr. President, the fact that the Act is not proclaimed does not mean that our relationship with the ITU is not in order or that regulations are not being adhered to.

Sen. Daly: Mr. President, would the hon. Minister indicate whether a broadcast code is being considered as part of the review of the Telecommunications Act?

Hon. Dr. L. Saith: Mr. President, the exercise at the moment is solely to review the Telecommunications Act, in order to ensure that it meets with our policy. If it does, then it will be proclaimed, and following that will be the broadcast policy about which the Senator spoke.

Workmen's Compensation Ordinance (Revision of)

32. Sen. Wade Mark asked the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives:

- (a) Could the Minister state whether there are plans to upgrade and revise the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance?
- (b) If the response to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state when these plans are to be effected?

The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives (Hon. Kenneth Collis) Mr. President, the answer is yes to the first part of the question.

The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives notes that by virtue of our election manifesto of 1991, Government are committed to a comprehensive review of labour laws after consultation with labour and employers' organizations.

The Workmen's Compensation Ordinance is part of our labour laws and will be included in the comprehensive review.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, could the Minister indicate what time-frame the Government have set for reviewing the Workmen's Compensation Act in the context of this comprehensive labour review that he mentioned?

Hon. K. Collis: Mr. President, in consultation with the social partners of Government—that is, labour and business—that will be decided.

1.40 p.m.

Sen. Mark: Could the Minister of Labour state whether there are plans to upgrade and revise the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance? Could he also indicate when the social partners are to be called into the picture so that we could speed up this particular exercise? Does the Government have a time-frame for calling the social partners into this whole arrangement?

Hon. K. Collis: Mr. President, a verbal approach has been made already. A note is before Cabinet to set up the tripartite arrangement.

Water and Sewerage Authority (Retrenchment)

33. Sen. Wade Mark asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

- (a) Could the Minister state whether the Government intends to retrench daily and monthly rated employees of the Water and Sewerage Authority as a result of World Bank conditionalities?
- (b) If the response to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister indicate when this retrenchment will take place and how many workers are to be involved?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall): Mr. President, the Water and Sewerage Authority is looking at its operations to ensure that it becomes a more efficient utility in keeping with the World Bank conditionalities. At this time, no decision has been taken to retrench daily and monthly-paid workers of the Water and Sewerage Authority.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities state whether the Government is going to retrench workers at the Water and Sewerage Authority; whether the Government has taken a decision on that matter?

Hon. M. Marshall: I am sorry. I was quite specific in what I said a while ago but I shall repeat it. At this time, no decision has been taken to retrench daily and monthly-paid workers of the Water and Sewerage Authority. What we are seeking to do is to make that utility efficient. I was quite specific on that. Down the road we can talk about that. At this time, no decision has been taken.

**Public Utilities
(Divestment of)**

34. Sen. Wade Mark asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

Could the Minister indicate whether the Government intends to divest, privatize or demonopolize the various public utilities and precisely when this process will commence?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall): Mr. President, the Minister of Public Utilities wishes to advise this honourable Senate that while at present the Government have taken no decision to divest or demonopolize the various public utilities, the monopoly position of the public utilities is at the moment engaging the attention of the Government.

Sen. W. Mark: Could the hon. Minister indicate whether down the road the Government has any intention of demonopolizing or privatizing the public utilities? Further, could the hon. Minister indicate whether the Government's intention is to abolish the Public Utilities Commission?

Hon. M. Marshall: Mr. President, at it relates to the latter, the question of abolishing the Public Utilities Commission, is the substance of another question which I think is on this Order Paper and when we arrive at that I will respond. I do not think it is proper for me to respond to that question at this time. As it relates to the other issue that he has raised—the question of down the road—I am living for today and I am talking about today. Who knows? Probably, down the road someone else in his opinion will be asking that question. It is difficult for me to respond to the kinds of futuristic questions he is asking. I want to repeat again that at this time the Government have taken no decision to divest or demonopolize the various public utilities.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I certainly have to follow up this. Could the hon. Minister indicate whether the Government has, in fact, received any proposals from any private interests to take over the various public utilities in Trinidad and Tobago; whether it is WASA, T&TEC or PTSC at this time?

Hon. M. Marshall: Mr. President, every day all sorts of offers would come in; people come in and they want to take over this or that or to make a proposal here or there. There are most likely a number of offers all over the place. Whether Government will accede to those offers is another matter. I would not wish to prejudge that. We get those things all the time. That is normal. People want to take over—not now, even in the past, all the time.

On the question that is before us, our position is quite clear. I have repeated it twice. I would want to hold on that, Mr. President. Yes, there are most likely all sorts of offers for all sorts of things—state enterprises. Whether Government is going to do that is another matter. Whenever that is going to take place—if it is going to be done at all—we will certainly make that information available to the national community.

Sen. W. Mark: Could the hon. Minister indicate whether the Government have any intention of privatizing the Public Transport Service Corporation?

Hon. M. Marshall: Mr. President, I do not know why my friend is trying to trap me, which is not possible. As Minister, I am not aware that there is any intention to privatize PTSC at this time.

Loans to Caricom Countries

40. Sen. John Rooks asked the Minister of Finance the following question:

Would the Minister advise what loans have been made to other Caricom countries:

- a. The amount and date of the loan(s);
- b. The terms of the loan(s);
- c. The status of the loan (s) to date;
- d. What steps have been taken for the recovery of the loan(s) if delinquent?

1.50 p.m.

The Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. President, I rise to respond on behalf of the Minister of Finance who, unfortunately was delayed and unable to attend Senate session to reply to these questions.

The reply to question No. 40 is as follows:

COUNTRY	ORIGINAL AMT. US \$M	DATES OF ISSUE	TERMS OF LOANS	AMT. TO DATE US \$M	STATUS OF LOAN
GUYANA				452.60	
Consolidated CBTT	20.0	1974—75	20 year loan with 10 year moratorium. Interest rate 4.67%.	357.2	Cabinet approved committee set up to devise ways of reducing debt.
Oil facility	205.0 70.9	1985 1982	20-year loan with 10-year moratorium on principal repayment. Interest 3%.	95.4	”
	2.4	1983			
JAMAICA				30.40	
Bilateral arrears	53.4 12.2	1990 1991	Repayment US \$2.0 monthly. Part interest at 8% part 6-month LIBOR. Interest 6-month LIBOR.	29.6	Payments are being made.
Rescheduled interest	2.6	Accumulated over 1984—85	Repayment in 10 semi-annual instalments ending August 1993. Interest 6-month LIBOR.	0.8	Payments are up to date.

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COUNTRY	ORIGINAL AMT. US \$M	DATES OF ISSUE	TERMS OF LOANS	AMT. TO DATE US \$M	STATUS OF LOAN
BARBADOS				33.60	
BOP	5.0	1977	Interest 6-month LIBOR.	5.0	Interest payments are up to date.
Bond Support	5.6	1990	10-year loan, 3-year moratorium on principal repayment. Interest at 6-month US LIBOR & ½ % Discussions are underway.	5.6	”
Bilateral arrears	23.2	1991	Discussions held in 1992.	21.1	Discussions are underway.
Oil facility	1.6	1982		1.9	Discussions held in 1992.
	0.1	1983			
ANTIGUA				3.511	
	0.300	1975	To be repaid over 35 years with moratorium of 10 years in interest 2 ½ % per annum.		Last payment received in 1988.
	4.28	1979	Repaid semi-annually with effect from 15.06.84. Interest 4% per annum.		-
	10.417	1983—85	Various terms and conditions.		-

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COUNTRY	ORIGINAL AMT. US \$M	DATES OF ISSUE	TERMS OF LOANS	AMT. TO DATE US \$M	STATUS OF LOAN
ST. LUCIA				1.119	
Securities	4.005	1982	Return of 9% per annum.		No interest paid to date.
Others	.500	1968	Repayable at par on 31.12.82.		”
ST. VINCENT				1.08	
Other Loans	4.594	1979	No terms, suggested proposal 4%.		-
DOMINICA				.831	
Securities	.700	1985	Purchase of Dominica Treasury Bills.	.831	No interest paid to date.
Others	2.830	1981—83	Loan for 30 years with moratorium of 5 years. Interest 5% per annum.		No repayments to date.
ST. KITTS				.718	
Securities	0.510	1985	No terms.		No interest paid to date.
Others	3.638	1981	Loans for 20 years with moratorium of 5 years.		Last payment November 1991.

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COUNTRY	ORIGINAL AMT. US \$M	DATES OF ISSUE	TERMS OF LOANS	AMT. TO DATE US \$M	STATUS OF LOAN
BELIZE	0.250	1975	Repayable over 35 years with 10 years moratorium on capital payments.	3.65	
GRENADA Securities	0.700	1974	Grenada Treasury Bills 6 ½ % 1976/81 bonds 7 ½ % 1982/83 bonds.		Bonds not redeemed to date.
TOTAL				524.89	

1.50 p.m.

Sen. Rooks: Mr. President, may I ask the Minister what interest rate our Government are paying for their borrowing? For these 3 and 4 per cent loans we are hearing interest payments which seem rather light at this stage. May I also request that the Minister give us a printed copy of what he has just read out, because it is quite a lot to absorb at one time?

Hon. B. Kuei Tung: You would be able to detect from my response, that these loans have been issued in many cases over 15 to 20 years ago, when, interest rates were negotiated between the debtor countries and ourselves.

I understand clearly the point that the hon. Senator is making. In terms of Government borrowing today, we have to be sensitive to the fact that interest rates today are somewhat different in terms of the quantum, compared to the rates at which we have been able to lend debtor countries.

In my view, it would be difficult at this time to renegotiate these loans at current interest rates, although obviously, that is a position that the Government is presently taking. I would make a copy of this available to the hon. Senator.

Sen. Rooks: May I suggest not just for me. I think the whole Senate should have it. I request that this be done.

If I heard correctly, some of these loans were made in 1990 which are still getting only 3 and 4 per cent interest. Is this correct?

Hon. B. Kuei Tung: The 1990 bonds support, for argument sake, with Barbados was US LIBOR plus 1/2 per cent. Similarly in 1990—91 was LIBOR basically. Some of them have been as low as 8 per cent in 1991, but generally the 1990—91 loans have been an accumulation or consolidation of smaller loans. And at that time it was not felt that it was right to invoke the current interest, but we did get an increase in the interest rate from the original terms of those loans. I would be happy to make this available to the Senator.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
(OMBUDSMAN'S REPORTS)**

The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Mr. President, I beg to move the following motion standing in my name.

Be it resolved:

That this Senate consider that it is expedient that a committee of both Houses be appointed to consider all reports submitted to Parliament by the Ombudsman.

Question put and agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Mr. President, I seek leave of the Senate to proceed at this stage with bill No. 1 under “Private Business, Bills Second Reading” on the Order Paper.

Leave granted.

2.00 p.m.

**POLO GROUND HINDU ORGANIZATION
(INC'N) BILL**

Question put and agreed to, That a bill to provide for the incorporation of the Polo Ground Hindu Organization, Preysal, and for matters incidental thereto, be now read a second time.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

Senate in committee.

Clauses 1 to 9 ordered to stand part of the bill.

Preamble ordered to stand part of the bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the bill be reported to the Senate.

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

ORDER OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Mr. President, I beg to move,

That a bill to give effect to the Agreement instituting the Order of the Caribbean Community, be now read a second time.

Before I go on, I should like to take this opportunity to say how very delighted I am to speak in this honourable Senate, in the company of such distinguished Senators.

I expect that this bill will find easy passage here. When last it was looked at, it had a relatively calm passage, except for one contentious period late in the afternoon; of course, at that point, the fractiousness—if one might use that word—arose when I had to deal somewhat vigorously with rather insensitive innuendoes. However, we would not deal with that at this point.

Mr. President: I was just about to tell you, that I think we are dealing with something that did not take place in this Senate.

Hon. R. Maraj: I am sorry, Mr. President. I am sure that if I were to appear here a little more often, I would become more acquainted with the culture and tradition of this place.

I think it important that I do give a bit of background to this whole business of the Order of the Caribbean Community.

At the Eighth meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community in 1987, on the suggestion of the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, a proposal was put forward for the award of the Common Caricom Citizenship to nationals of Caricom Member States, who had made outstanding contributions to the development of the region.

The suggestion received general support and, subsequently, arising out of that discussion, on the agenda item—Common Caricom Citizenship for Outstanding Caricom Nationals—the Attorneys-General of the region at their first meeting in 1987 agreed that the award of common Caricom citizenship should carry with it certain rights and privileges, which, really, is the essence of this bill that we are debating here today—the rights and privileges to be awarded to the people of the Caricom region, who achieve common Caricom citizenship. The Attorneys-General mandated the Caricom Secretariat, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat, to examine the proposals of those rights and privileges, which we are dealing with today.

At the Tenth meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, the Heads approved, in principle, a draft inter-governmental agreement establishing the Order of the Caribbean Community proposed by the region's Attorneys-General. So that after the Attorneys-General had made their proposals, the Heads of Government agreed with them. These proposals, which were placed before and agreed to at the second meeting of the Attorneys-General in April, 1988, included among them, one that an appropriately designated honour should be conferred on Caricom nationals, who had made outstanding contributions to the economic and social development of the region.

The conferring of that honour would carry with it certain things; for example, the title of the Order of the Caribbean Community, and the recipients would receive the prefix "Honourable" next to their names. I am sure that they will be

joining distinguished company by being called “Honourable”; though they have the advantage of having this title last their entire life, while for some of us it might be a fleeting privilege.

The proposal also had to do with the determination of the maximum number of persons upon whom the title would be bestowed at any one time and at the last Caricom Heads of Government Conference that exact number was determined. I think it was 15, but I stand subject to correction.

2.10 p.m.

The question rank of the honour was also dealt with. It was decided that a committee of distinguished persons should be convened to consider and make recommendations on the nominations received; and that the award should carry certain rights and privileges, which I have told you about. It also decided upon the insignia and that an inter-governmental agreement would be made for the purpose entered into by Caricom governments.

Now, on the initiative of the Trinidad and Tobago Government—and this is still by way of background—a proposal was accepted at the Twelfth meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government in July, 1991. To give this title to three outstanding Caricom people: Mr. William Demas, Mr. Derrick Walcott and Sir Shridath Ramphal.

As you are aware, Mr. President, at the last Heads of Government Conference in Port of Spain, these three distinguished Caribbean citizens did receive the honour and are, today, members of the Order of the Caribbean Community.

I think that it should be commonly accepted that any civilization that wants to progress and to set standards for the future for the younger generation, any civilization that wants to encourage excellence, to set mileposts to which we could all try to reach, there is the need to recognize achievement, and this is the context within which the Order of the Caribbean Community is set.

I see no problem with this honourable Senate accepting this bill. I just want to mention some of the conditions and privileges that will be afforded to members of the Order of the Caribbean Community.

As I said before, they will be styled “honourable” and the suffix OCC will be placed after their names. They will wear a decoration on appropriate occasions, the insignia, which will be struck in gold, and the ribbon of the Order. They would

reside and engage in gainful occupation in any member state, and acquire and dispose of property in the same manner in all respects as citizens of any member state. I think the legal ramifications of this aspect of the Order of the Caribbean Community need to be looked into and this bill purports to do this.

Recipients, as well as, will be issued a travel document designed to facilitate travel within the Caribbean Community which would enjoy in every member state a like status, like a diplomatic passport issued by and on behalf of the government of any such state.

The bill also seeks to ensure that the spouse of a member of the Order and those children of a member, who have not obtained the age of 18 years, shall be accorded the privilege set out in paragraph 1(d), that is, to be issued with a travel document, and so forth, and that the members of the Order shall be appropriately ranked in order of their precedence at state and official functions while in a member state as may be decided by that member state. These are some of the highlights of the privileges that these members of the Order of the Caribbean Community will have and will enjoy whilst they are members of the Order.

That, essentially, is the background of the bill. That is what we are seeking to effect by the passage of this bill and I take this opportunity to ask for the support of hon. Senators in this regard. I thank you, Mr. President.

Question proposed.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I want to begin by welcoming you back to this august Chamber on behalf of the Opposition Benches, and to indicate that while you were away—you have already established a very reputable tradition and it was very difficult to break, and the hon. Vice-President, did perform well in the circumstances. We give kudo where kudos are due, so we welcome you back, Mr. President.

We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, a person who has been in the theatre business for several years. Even in this opening, you could see the theatrics and he has not lost any of this training, I would say.

Hon. R. Maraj: Mr. President, let me just say this: I hope that during my stay in this Senate I would not be subjected to any mundane references to my former profession. Thank you.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, in fact, I was seeking to praise the hon. Minister of External Affairs, but he seems to think I am seeking to condemn him. I am not.

We have before us a very important bill which proposes to give effect to an inter-governmental agreement, assented to at the Heads of Government Conference at Grand Anse in 1989. It creates an Order of the Caribbean Community.

It is proposed by this agreement to confer high honour upon nationals of Caribbean member states that are recongized as having made significant contributions towards the development of the Caribbean region. The privilege to be accorded to the members of this Order, include freedom of travel, property ownership and the disposal of same, as well as other benefits.

The question that we need to address here as we look at this bill is, why bring this bill for our approval at this late hour when these Caribbean citizens have already been honoured? The act has already been committed and the Senate is now being asked to grant its approval. Is this Parliament merely to be used as a rubber stamp in matters as important as the one we are debating? Maybe the hon. Minister can tell us which other Caricom regime has introduced this legislation and how many states have approved this very legislation.

Caricom nations have a history of agreeing to disagree on matters critical to the integration process and, not implementing most agreements in the final analysis. We have several examples, including:

The Common External Tariff; agreed upon, still to be implemented. In fact, from the evidence, it appears that it will never be implemented.

—The Caricom Enterprises Regime:

—The Rules of Origin.

These are important areas that have been agreed upon but yet to date have not been implemented by several Caricom states. These particular matters have been agreed upon at various Heads of Government meetings.

This bill illustrates the PNM's blatant disregard for this Parliament. They are seeking authority to have a matter approved, to have a bill implemented after the decision is taken and after people have been honoured. It is not only the PNM, it is part of a psychology in the entire region where governments take a private

approach to the people's business, where they are seeking, virtually, by their inaction and their lack of regard, to privatize regional matters. A small regional clique sits down and makes decisions without the people's representatives involved and seeks their approval after the event.

We cannot speak on this bill without making reference to the institution called Caricom, because Caricom, as you know, has been going through all sorts of crises. In fact, from what we are witnessing today, we do not know if, after the next special meeting of Heads of Government, there will still be a Caricom.

It was precisely to deal with this arrogance and disrespect for the people through their Opposition parties, that what was described as a "round-table discussion" of Heads of Opposition parties, took place some time ago at the Valley Vue Hotel. This initiative mounted by the Leader of the Opposition, Basdeo Panday, was dubbed "The Port of Spain Declaration". At the end of the meeting several important recommendations were advanced.

We are talking about Caricom here and we are talking about the lack of sensitivity and serious commitment to the process of integration and to the area of people involvement. At that particular round table, several matters were advanced. One of the things that we said at the end of that meeting is that, as a matter of urgency, the Caricom Heads of Government should establish machinery for a solid and unified regional approach to negotiations with external financial lending agencies and institutions in the formulation of structural adjustment programmes, debt management programmes and in the development of relationships with emerging economic trading blocs.

The reality is that Opposition parties in the region represent millions of people. What has happened under Caricom is that the views of the Opposition forces are not being given the kind of consideration that is deserved. It is against this background that certain recommendations were advanced.

The second recommendation advanced after this round-table discussion of Opposition leaders in the region,—

Mr. President: I just want to say that you are walking a very tight rope. I do not mind a general reference to Caricom, but I do not want a report of a summit on all aspects, on all the decisions that Caricom has made or is likely to be encouraged to make. This is a bill that really has a specific purpose and whereas a general reference to general principles can be made, there may be another

Order of the Caribbean Community Bill
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opportunity somewhere else to bring in the very detailed summary of the proceedings of that very important conference which should be made public. But I do not think that this is going to be the forum for it.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I know that you always guide me when I am slipping. The reality is that I cannot see a debate on the OCC taking place in this Senate without reference being made to Caricom. I am saying that Caricom is an integral part of what we are talking about. It is as a result of Caricom, Sir, that the OCC was, in fact, agreed upon.

I am seeking to put into some perspective the need for us to pay more attention to the integration process and I am coming to the issue of that particular matter. But I am putting my presentation in some perspective so that Members of this honourable Senate would be able to understand the thinking of organizations in the region that have an interest in the process of integration.

Mr. President, what I was attempting to do was to put into some order some of the principles and recommendations that were agreed upon. You have sought to tailor that particular approach at this time and I should like with your leave, Sir, to ask you for some patience in this matter, because I believe it is very important for us to put this thing in some perspective.

About ten recommendations were made—I would not want to burden you with all of those recommendations—based on your guidance—but one of the things that we said at the end of that meeting was that the West Indian Commission Report should be debated in the national Parliaments and in public fora, which would include participation by Opposition parties and non-governmental organizations, with a view to arriving at a national and regional consensus.

We also looked at the issue of free and fair elections in Guyana. We looked at the issue of Haiti in this document, the whole question of broadening the regional approach to integration and a number of other areas that were, in fact, agreed upon.

Mr. President: You are not dealing only with Caricom, you are going beyond Caricom.

Sen. W. Mark: I am just giving you a summary, Sir.

All of these recommendations that I have sought to advance briefly, point to the fact that the people of the Caribbean are not involved in this institution of Caricom. That is where I am leading.

Were the Caribbean people through their representatives consulted on these awards and to whom these awards should be given? Maybe we would have got more persons; maybe the people who were awarded would not have been in receipt of those honours at this time. I am not saying that some of them do not deserve it, but what I am saying is that what the Minister failed to tell this Senate is what criteria were used. He spoke about all the benefits that these awardees are now going to be entitled to, but what he failed to tell us in this Senate is precisely what the criteria were. The masses of people were not involved in this matter.

I am saying that when the Minister winds up, he should tell this honourable Senate what were the bases or the criteria used in actually awarding those persons this high honour of the Order of the Caribbean Community.

If Caricom continues to be privatized by Caricom Heads, then it is quite possible that under this arrangement only their friends and their relatives would be able to receive these awards and, therefore, what could happen is that genuine people who have made great contributions to this region would be overlooked. This is why we need to get a clear appreciation from the Minister as to the criteria that are being used to have these people selected and granted these awards in the final analysis.

Before looking at the recipients of the OCC, I think it is important to reflect, as I said, on this institution we call Caricom and the whole integration process. Mr. President, you would know that integration has been going on since 1948 in the region, with the failed West Indian Federation experiment, which collapsed in 1962. In fact, since the 19th century, we have been making efforts at integration in the region. We are no nearer to genuine integration, after 50, 60 years in some instances.

There are some dominant economic forces pushing for Caribbean economic integration. One can find those forces throughout the region. Whether they are merchants, exporters of primary commodities, whether you are talking about hoteliers or transnational corporations based here in the region, they are all pushing for economic integration so that a market could be established for their produce.

Further, what is taking place in the region today, as we speak about the OCC, is a situation in which, what I want to call, the IFIs, the International Financial Institutions, led by the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank are now virtually calling the shots as far as Government policies are concerned in this region.

The failure of Caricom to date is its not exercising continued and decisive control over the region's affairs. We are talking about Caricom and we are giving awards to people who have made contributions, supposedly, to the integration process. What we want to establish is that while all these efforts are laudable, what is happening to Caricom? This is what we have to address here. We are saying that these international financial institutions which continue to exercise decisive control over our economic destiny, are not interested in integration, and those very institutions are now in charge of the entire region. Whether you go to Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica or Trinidad they are all in control of our economic management systems.

We on this side are saying, what these international institutions are concerned about, is the opening up of our markets, so that we can import from these developed countries. What are these awards going to do, to deal with this situation?

Mr. President: I think you are going a little too much into the economic side. The awards are merely a recognition of the contribution that certain people have made to the region in general. To bring in the international, economic institutions that are seeking to divide and so forth—I feel you can leave that for another time.

Your organization has the network and ability to get all those points over in some appropriate motion or otherwise. Let us try to stick a little closer to the pros and cons of the bill before us dealing with the OCC.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I should like to advance that it is extremely difficult for us on this side to deal with the OCC, without looking at this institution called Caricom. Once we are talking about the OCC, we are talking about Caricom, and once we are talking about Caricom, we are talking about economics and politics.

I cannot speak on this particular bill referring only to the Orders or the awards. I think that it is stifling my contribution and I really believe that, as you would probably witness later on. Sir, many people are going to deal with it. But if you insist that what we do is simply confine ourselves to the OCC, I am saying that it is going to be difficult. However, I will try in the circumstances. But I beg to indicate to you, Sir, that it is extremely difficult to deal with that particular matter without looking at the whole of Caricom and the integration process.

Honours are bestowed here on persons whose history and contributions seem to be somewhat tainted. On our side, we do not want to engage in any casting of aspersions on people's character. What we do want to point out is that we have to be very careful in the region when awards are being made, when honour is being bestowed, that we need to pay close attention to the personalities involved.

Because whilst we do not have a difficulty with some of the personalities involved, we cannot escape the responsibility, as an Opposition party, to point out that it does not make sense to simply rubber-stamp a bill in which, when you examine carefully some of the personalities involved in the exercise, characters are questionable. I believe it is impossible to expect the Opposition to focus on a bill that provides the highest honour to persons in this region without thoroughly examining those person's contributions to the region.

2.40 p.m.

As I said, we on this side do not want to cast aspersions on people but we do have a problem with one of those persons who have been granted this award. We feel that in the history of our region and in the interest of our generations to come—we cannot understand why, for instance, this particular individual—the former Attorney General of Guyana—has in fact, been granted this award. We, as a democratic people, have to reflect on whether in our selection we had some oversights; whether we feel convinced that what we have done is the correct thing, and could stand the searching lights of history. We do not like to be hypocrites. We do not engage in double standards. As I said, we want to be very cautious in this matter. We do not want to appear to be trying to rub people's names in the mud. That is not our objective here. What we are saying is that if you are granting awards to personalities in this region, you must check their backgrounds carefully; because at the end of the day, if their backgrounds are not checked carefully, we could end up embarrassing the entire region.

Therefore, I feel that the Minister of External Affairs would have to explain to this Senate, whether a thorough investigation was conducted in the case of this particular individual, Sir Shridath Surendranath Ramphal. We should like to find that out.

Mr. President, I am not dealing with propaganda, I am dealing with historical facts. I am not attempting to drag anyone's name in the mud. I am dealing with the truth in terms of what is taking place and what has taken place. We cannot run away from the reality that if you are bestowing the highest honour on individuals

to travel up and down this region, to own property and to dispose of same, in the region, as well as other benefits, you need to carefully check out these people.

The records would show that several notorious pieces of legislation were, in fact, passed in that country with this particular gentleman sitting in the driver's seat when those laws were passed. Those laws, that I wish to refer to, are the National Registration Act of 1967 and the Representation of the People Modification Act of 1968.

Mr. President: Senator, I appreciate the point you are making, but, at the same time we have to be careful about criticizing actions of friendly governments, or the internal affairs of neighbouring countries.

A law, to my knowledge, cannot be passed without the support of the majority of Members of Parliament of a particular country. An individual does not rule by decree. I think we have to be careful in making statements that are critical of the actions of the parliaments of friendly Caricom countries. You should avoid that.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I am not criticizing any parliament. I want to make that very clear. We are dealing with an individual. If we are to support this legislation, it is only fair, right and proper for us to clear the record. The Minister is here and he would have the responsibility of clearing the air.

We do not desire interference in the internal affairs of another country. We are being asked to give approval to a bill involving persons that we want some clarification on. This is why I am trying not to get involved in the matter deeply. I am trying to avoid that, but, at the same time, I think that the Minister of External Affairs owes it to this Senate to let us have some clarification on the matter. I think that it is important that we deal with this matter.

As I said, I do not want to get involved in this matter much longer. What I can tell you, is that, it took foreigners outside this region to attempt to bring some sanity to processes involving people's rights and freedoms in another place, and we are Caricom. We are talking about integration, we are talking about a single market, we are talking about the free movement of goods, capital, labour and services, and within our own region we have many unfortunate developments taking place, and we sit silently without trying to provide any kind of assistance.

There are important people in the region who we feel could have been looked at. What about our labour heroes? The labour movement is responsible for democratizing the political landscape in this region. It was the united labour

movement throughout the Caribbean that laid the foundation for independence, for political rights, that brought black judges on the benches, and Commissioners of Police. They are saying that they are looking at granting awards and honours.

Why not, for instance, look at our labour heroes, even posthumously? Why not do so? What about people like Hubert Crichton of Guyana? You have people like Sir Frank Walcott, who is dying right now, in Barbados—he is suffering from diabetes, I understand. What about Marrayshow? Why can we not honour these heroes of the region, even posthumously?

These are matters that I should like the hon. Minister to look at. We feel that these people have made serious contributions. What about Uriah “Buzz” Butler, Arthur Cipriani, and these people?

Hon. Senator: Eric Williams.

Sen. W. Mark: Eric Williams was not a labour man, he was anti-labour.

We are dealing with an issue of awards and we must have a broad perspective. This is why I keep emphasizing, that the Minister give us some appreciation of the criteria that were used in selecting these people who have now been granted these awards.

2.50 p.m.

We want to sound a warning. In the future let us have in the various parliaments of the region a list of nominees so that the parliaments and the people of the region can have an input before the final decision is taken. We do not know; you do not know; I do not know if the Minister is aware of who are the people that sat. Who are they? How many of them? Are they from all the territories which form part of Caricom? How did they arrive at these three distinguished citizens of the region being granted these awards? We do not know. There is no evidence, no information, on this matter.

We feel that we have an input to make. As parliamentarians in the Senate, we should like to be considered. We believe that if such an approach is taken, we would be able to arrive at a consensus and would not be debating here, the pros and cons whether, for instance, X person or Y person should be awarded, or this person should have been granted a great honour, the OCC.

What we are saying is that we need to have a greater input from our parliaments in the region. We need also to thoroughly scrutinize all those persons

who are being granted this award. I grant these awards, in a neo-colonial world where, most developing countries are being rapidly thrown into a syndrome and a cycle of dependency and underdevelopment, where a virtual re-colonization process is taking place, we must be careful that we do not create a small elitist group in the region. We want to avoid that. In the broadest sense of the word, we should ensure that democracy is practised as it ought to be. We believe that the people of the region, at all times, ought to be involved in this particular process.

One of the things that disturb us in terms of the awards is that you have almost an inheritance clause in this matter. You are granted this honour and you have, for instance, this arrangement being passed on. It is not to say that it is "X" person who made this great contribution to the region and that person is awarded. What happens, is that the award continues. The impression I have—I may be wrong, but the Minister could correct me—is it a fact that the properties which are bought by those persons in the region would be vested ultimately in the families? This is the elitist concept I am dealing with.

I am saying that, for instance, people are going to be granted privileges. They are to be given special benefits, and therefore, this is an area we have some concern about, because there is a strong possibility that as the number of these persons increases, what we could be doing in 10 year's time, is building up a new aristocracy in the region. We feel that is an area which the Minister should look at. We should re-visit this whole question of privileges to ensure that it is not abused and not misused.

Mr. President, I indicated to you earlier that we are happy to, at least, or would hope that, that West Indian Commission Report on Caricom, would be brought to this Senate and thoroughly debated soon. We feel that this is a very important report and Parliament should have an opportunity to debate it, particularly, bearing in mind, that we have a special summit coming up very shortly in October and decisions are going to be taken by Heads of Government which could have a permanent impact on the future stability of the entire region. We should like to ensure that we have national consensus first, so that consensus could be achieved regionally at the end of the day.

As we move forward towards a single market and a single economy in the region, we must never be unmindful of the fact that there are forces which are operating against that very process. As a region, it is being speculated that if Jamaica does not have its way with the reduction of the CET from 45 to 20 per

cent, there is a strong possibility that we can have some instability in the whole integration movement.

Let us ensure that whenever decisions are taken, the people are meaningfully consulted and the people's representatives are meaningfully involved. We must not continue to commit the error of simply bypassing the institutions of the people and allow, for instance, the possibility of division and great disharmony.

Mr. President, we have observed that the arrogance of some Ministers of Government is really frightening at times. We are speaking about a very important issue and you could hear the kind of snide remarks being made during a contribution.

Mr. President: There are some things which the Chair does not hear and I would advise you not to entertain—what somebody calls—asides.

Sen. W. Mark: I could well understand that, Sir. What we want to ensure here is that we set proper examples. I do not know if they have much future with certain people. Where is the example being set? They are on camera. We want to ensure that whatever decisions we take are thoroughly examined, that when these decisions are arrived at, we ensure that we provide proper examples, the kind of inspiration, motivation and imagination to our people so that they can aspire to greater heights in the region.

3.00 p.m.

We must never live to regret our actions. Hence the need for us to be extremely careful and vigilant. We know that a SARA poll was published recently and there is a tendency on the part of some to believe as the previous administration believed. They become swelled heads and very boastful. We hope that in the context of our discussion, sobriety would reign and that the hon. Minister of External Affairs, who seems to be very thin-skinned would be able to respond very meaningfully to the concerns we have raised on this side.

Unless we are able to get the kind of clarification that is absolutely necessary, as we have raised here today, we on this side would find great difficulty in supporting this measure. We urge the hon. Minister to give us some explanations and provide us with some clarification, to let us know what were the criteria and the persons who comprised this team that selected those awardees. We believe that those things are critical in determining our final position on this matter.

Order of the Caribbean Community Bill
[SEN. W. MARK]

Tuesday, August 4, 1992

Mr. President, based on your guidance, I have been able—in a very creative way—to cut away almost half of my prepared statement. I have been able to reduce—

Mr. President: I always try to help you.

Sen. W. Mark: Thank you very much, Sir. I know you always look after my interest.

In closing, we should like to say that it is very important for us to strive for national and regional consensus, particularly on important matters like the one which we are debating. We believe that we should not commit the same error the next round. It is the first effort in terms of awarding these honours to Caribbean citizens, and maybe in the haste, there was an oversight on the part of the Heads of Government.

Our responsibility on this side is to ensure that when there are oversights, we bring them very forcefully to the attention of the government concerned. We believe that if there is honesty and sincerity and less arrogance on the part of the Government, the country and the region would be able to move in a more organized, harmonious and co-operative way. We should like to ensure that at the end of this debate, the hon. Minister would deal with some of our concerns. We hope that he would be able to provide us with the clarification and explanation, so essential for us to give any support to this bill before us.

Thank you very much.

Sen. Roi Kwabene: Mr. President, let me first of all begin by welcoming you back to this Chamber. I also wish to let you know at this time, that you were ably represented by the Vice-President, who conducted the affairs in this Senate in a very progressive manner.

The bill before us proposes to give effect to an inter-governmental agreement assented to at the Heads of Government conference at Grand Anse in 1989. Specifically, it creates the Order of the Caribbean Community. This is referred to as the OCC.

I am going to reiterate a position on this side of the Senate, that this Government is putting the cart before the horse. I am saying that before they acceded to this treaty, they should have brought it before Parliament. If they had done that, probably I would not have had the need to speak on it today. However, I

would not hold the Members on the opposite side of the Senate responsible. I would describe it as a treaty, because it is in fact an agreement between the member states of Caricom.

At present, if we are to discuss the OCC, we have to make reference to Caricom, even though it would be a passing reference. We have to acknowledge the fact that the people of the Caribbean region, the masses in general, are very disenchanted with Caricom as a medium for integration. The people have taken the initiative in the past; they do so in the present and I am quite sure they will continue in the future to bring our people closer together.

It does not always come through politics. Most of the time it comes through the medium of culture and trade. As you know, we have the inter-island trade which provides us with food. In addition to this, in my travels through the Caribbean I have discovered that our way of life does not differ in the various Member States. However, in the Caribbean, if we are truly to speak about integration, and if we are really expected to debate on this bill of the OCC, we have to question the fact that Caricom has been unable to date to address the issues of racism and alienation as they exist in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean and member states are confronted with a situation where we have a history that is interlocked with the memory of chattel slavery and indentureship. We are carrying a burden for many years on our backs, that even though we are afforded an opportunity to celebrate days like Emancipation Day and Indian Arrival Day, we find ourselves repeating a cycle of disillusionment among the populace of the region.

People feel somehow that they are not truly supported by their representatives in Parliament at home in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as in other member states. I feel very strongly about it. When we take into consideration the fact that the people of the Caribbean were not involved in the selection of the candidates for the OCC; once again we are going to question what criteria were used. The public was not aware.

Most times when they hold these meetings—I agree that off and on there are radio programmes and reports in the newspapers which cover these conferences—people are not truly aware of what happens thereat. We have all this big pomp and ceremony and at the end of it all, we are no closer to integration. At present we are in possession of a report. I know there is some indication that they are

going to come together by 2000 which is a long way off, yet we are no closer to integration.

I remember in my youth hearing about one from 10 leaves zero—a statement which was made by one of our eminent statesmen. It is unfortunate, that years later we are in no better position. It is a charade. It is unfortunate because we have a conspiracy of silence. We have problems right next door, but we are overlooking them and paying attention to giving awards.

What about rewards for the contributions made by exemplars in the society? I am not going to cast aspersions on anybody. I for one, can commit myself here today and let you know, that I, in the past, have quoted some of Sir Shridath Ramphal's statements on Caricom and the whole integration process. This was done on the basis of the fact that he was addressing the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom, where they were setting up an ethnic studies department for Caricom. It is unfortunate that here in the Caribbean we are no closer to doing such. We do not even have the drive among our intellectuals to set up institutions in the Caribbean such as these.

3.10 p.m.

I am not straying from the point. What I am saying is that we, in the Caribbean, have not been making the headway that we should. The years are slipping by and we are here getting greyer and thinking about giving awards to people who have made contributions and, at the same time, overlooking people who also deserve these contributions.

Again I question the criteria. I am 36 years old. Today is not my birthday, but within recent times I was 36. What has transpired within the last 36 years and prior to this is that we have had people like Marcus Massiah Garvey who have made a contribution to the Caribbean. He was not given an award, even though it would have to be posthumous. We also have another brother, Dr. Walter Rodney, who met his death, unfortunately, through crucial circumstances in neighbouring Guyana. He was not given an award.

There are other people, Henry Sylvester Williams—a Trinidadian by birth—who has contributed to the whole Pan-African Movement. The children in school have never heard about him. What about George Padmore, who reached as far as the USSR—then called Russia? Not a word has been placed in the history books, and we are in power to do that. I can go on. Nobody says anything about Bob

Marley; nobody is making any statement concerning Lord Nelson—who has made a contribution in the area of calypso. I can go on, if we want to speak about authors who have made contributions in the Caribbean—other than the ones who have received awards—many of whom have gone to their graves. Some of them are still alive.

There are many local writers in Trinidad and Tobago who initiated the local publishing industry but who have not received any award. There is one, in particular, Leroy Calliste—and I am now speaking about Black Stalin—from up on the hill. He contributed much towards the development of local poetry in the Caribbean, the United States of America and Europe; no award for him.

Hon. Senator: Roi Kwabene.

Sen. Kwabene: I would not call my name. I do not blow my own trumpet, brother. I am not into that.

I can also make reference to the fact that the late honourable Malcolm X is of Caribbean parentage. There was no award for him, but today the children are wearing T-shirts with his face on them, so he is coming back from the grave. Do you want to have a situation like that where later on our young people are going to be wearing T-shirts with faces of our own heroes and heroines, and rebelling?

It is unfortunate that we keep repeating this cycle of disillusionment—overlooking our contributors. A calypsonian once said that we do not know how to honour our heroes and we keep beating and criticizing ourselves, and we are not rectifying the situation. What criteria were used? That is my question. Here it is we are going to accord these honourable "gentlemen". There are other genders in the Caribbean; I will leave that for other Members on my side of the Bench to deal with. That is just a hint of what is coming up. This is a situation which we have to check up on if we are to leave an example for our young ones. Here it is that we are straddled with a foreign debt.

Nobody is saying anything about the contribution made by Cola Rienzi to the labour movement. I would not call Butler's name again. I think his name was sounded in the Chamber for too long, and only a holiday has been accorded him and probably the name of a highway. That is not good enough. The PNM Government have to do much more and they are in a position to do it.

The hon. Minister is an individual who has made a great contribution to theatre and the film industry in Trinidad and Tobago. I am an admirer of his. I

have much respect for him. That movie is one of the best I have ever seen, the one called BIM. What about an award for Andre Tanker for the music that he has contributed? We leave Andre Tanker on the side and we are awarding honours to people who have already received honours. They have left us in jeans and sandals, up and down on the pavement looking for jobs, pushing our hands for handouts. Mind you, they themselves are not creating a good example, because they, too, are begging for handouts.

I want to make a small reference to a statement made by a journalist recently. I would not quote him. He said that an individual who represents one of the international lending agencies indicated to him that he does not have much respect for the Caribbean countries because we always come individually, with cap in hand, begging. We cannot come together as one unit to ask for what we want. We are not united in the Caribbean; we are no closer to unification in the Caribbean, and then it is left up to the people of the region—be it nationally or regionally—to face the austerity measures.

If you go to Europe, the people are more aware of the contributions made by someone like Claudia Jones to the development of the working class movement in the region. Nobody is saying anything; she is a Trinidadian. She is responsible for setting up Nottinghill Carnival. She stopped riots in the early 1960s. She is buried next to one of the great socialists.

I continue on the conspiracy of silence. There is a conspiracy of silence here in the Caribbean. We can have a massacre on our doorsteps, and we hear about it in the newspapers; we can see it on television; a movie can be made about it and nobody moves to take any initiative towards eradicating such a situation. The Jim Jones event could have happen here, but the Creator blessed us in such a way that it did not take place here. It happened just next door in a member state and we have a conspiracy of silence. We have a conspiracy of silence when it relates to free and fair elections. I am not saying that we do not have free and fair elections here in Trinidad, but at the same time if it does not occur in Guyana or in any other neighbouring state, it is cause for concern by all of us, because we are all on the same ship.

If we are to think about awarding people—give the award where it is due—what about the families of the people to whom I have referred, who have made contributions? They will never get a diplomatic passport; they will never have the opportunity to travel free through the Caribbean, regardless of if their father was

Marcus Garvey or their great grandfather was Marryshow, or whoever. They will not be afforded the opportunity.

It is unfortunate that this bill is brought before the Senate and our representatives at that meeting did not see it necessary to question why other people were not included—Maurice Bishop, for example. We do not usually know what happens at the meetings. I made reference to that earlier. If we do not know, the masses cannot know, because we are always reading. This is a serious problem and a cycle we keep repeating. The children in schools do not know who their parliamentarians are. I would not go to members of the protective services. I would not reach so far. Let us deal with the children. This is how terrible it is in the Caribbean, not only in Trinidad. At the recent CPA Conference, I was speaking with a representative from St. Vincent who indicated to me that she also has the same problem. What are we doing in the Caribbean? Are we not serious?

3.20 p.m.

Hon. Senator: We are giving awards.

Sen. Kwabene: But not in the right area.

Mr. President, there is no freedom of movement today in the Caribbean. I was in Barbados in 1990, and I had to get a visa to stay for two weeks extra—a visa, and I am from next door. But the “honourable” people can purchase land, property and what have you and dispose of it. I am not saying that I deserve the award, I have made my contribution, but, at the same time—you understand what I am saying hon. Minister, Mr. President—we need to give it where it is due.

Let us look at a situation. We have a woman who can dance, who has opened up the world of dance in the region—Beryl McBurnie—no award for her. She is responsible for setting up a national theatre when there was none. For 30 years the PNM have reigned and there is not a national theatre to this day. You know what they did? They broke down the Princes Building, so we cannot go and dance there any more. I did not dance in those days.

There is no place for recreation. Our young people are always complaining that there is nowhere to go, there is nothing to do. Boredom leads to crime. That, in effect, has some relevance to the matter.

Mr. President, more awards, new passports, up and down the Caribbean. A friend told me outside—I cannot quote him, but he says—“pardners, friend-friend”. What sort of mechanism exists for the giving of these awards that would protect people who are not supportive, politically, of the regime that is in power?

For instance, suppose there is someone in Trinidad and Tobago who does not support the PNM, would he or she ever get an award? What are the criteria? This is the argument. The people of Trinidad and Tobago—I cannot speak for the Caribbean—are not involved. They bring this to Parliament, like the cart before the horse, and expect me to rubber-stamp it. This is a situation that should not continue under your good guidance.

I am not putting to them, Sir, what they should do in their office, but, at the same time, I am of the opinion that this regime needs to discontinue this sort of activity. They need to come to the Senate with matters that are more relevant. There are hungry people out there, but the Government are talking about awards. People cannot get water in their taps but they are talking about awards.

What about Tourist Annie? She deserves an award. She used to sell chachacs. She is still alive today. Her spirit lives in Carifesta. She promoted culture. All of them do not know about Paper Doll. I can tell you about Paper Doll, a woman who used to dress in newspapers and sing in Belmont. Nobody remembers her.

Now did we allow Butler to leave? Now did we allow Spree Simon to leave? This is a gross insult to people who were the pioneers in different fields. If we are talking about giving justice where it is due, the hon. Minister through his good offices and with the support of other Senators—I suggest to the Minister, come, sit with the Opposition and let us make awards. I will suggest to you whom to give the awards to.

Mr. President, they said they do not want to make the register too long, so it seems that they have a plan to exclude people as they please from this register of holders of this award.

Finally, Mr. President, before I close, if Caricom is serious about moving towards integration, let us address the geographical issue, a proper map of the Caribbean. For some strange reason we have been excluding Surinam, French Guiana and parts of Guyana from the map of the Caribbean whenever it is referred to. Let us look at another area.

In the Caribbean, where we have fragmented loyalties, those who believe that they are not part of the Caribbean because they are supported by the Netherlands, people who believe that they belong to France and they are not Caribbean—and I do not think we should exclude Cuba, at all, because were it not for Cuba, we would not even have Carifest within a particular year. I think that is important for us to remember.

We are living in the days of deception and profit, but we are not profiting. The deception continues and the people who hold the reins are not nationals. They control the satellites in the sky, they beam to us what they want and we have to swallow that. We had a grand opportunity via Carifesta, where we could have sold our rights for performances and broadcasting rights to those same agencies, made some money for Carifesta and for the Caribbean, as well as exported our culture internationally. We did not take up on that opportunity.

We are confronted by a situation in the Caribbean where people are saying, “Oh, they are going to provide the opportunity for people to travel free,” freedom of movement, also people are coming at present with their drivers’ permits, their ID cards and what have you, and we are overlooking the importance of really bringing the Caribbean together.

I asked a young person the other day what he thought about Caribbean integration. He said, “Politicians are bankrupt”. Everywhere I go, that is usually what they say. Let us change that image; let us do something.

I wrote a book on the Caribbean entitled “About the Caribbean”, that is currently used in schools in England. They do not use the book in the Caribbean, particularly the southern Caribbean. You know, they use it in the Netherlands Antilles, though it is in English. That same book refers to the fact that the Caribbean has a unique history. It has been referred to as the mountain tops of Atlantis; you are an anthropologist, you understand me.

We are living in a special time—you cannot fool the people—we are a special people. Just as we have Grenada, you had Granada. If you want to talk about Columbus, it took Africans to reach the Caribbean, long before the birth of Columbus, to establish a civilization in this part of the world. We as Caribbean people must not look backward. If we are looking forward, we have to establish proper criteria for the giving of these awards.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Nirupa Oudit: Mr. President, my contribution will be brief. I want to endorse the principle of this bill, which represents the concept of honour being bestowed on nationals of member states of the Caribbean Community. In principle, what we are doing by bringing a bill like this before the Senate, is moving a vote of confidence in ourselves as regional people, and I think we are sending signals both within the Caribbean Community to our citizens, especially

to our young people, and outside it that as a region we are prepared to honour our achievers. It signals that we are gaining confidence in ourselves as a region.

The second reason why I would support this bill is that it brings the concept of Caribbean unity one small step closer to reality. I think we have to be practical about it: It is going to take our region a long time to achieve the integration we want to achieve. We are very individualistic people, even within our separate countries. We all have opinions and we like to have our say, but a bill like this is a practical manifestation of Caribbean unity.

If we can get together to elect or to support Caribbean achievers, we would be one step closer to achieving that hope of Caribbean unity. I think the West Indian Commission titled its report, "A Time For Action", and this is a small, but positive step.

Now, having given my support to the bill, I want to also raise two questions for the Minister: The first one, the question raised by Senators Wade Mark and Roi Kwabene, under the criteria for awards. It is very important that the criteria for awards be made public. It is extremely important. I have no problem with the awardees that have been named; they are giants among Caribbean men and I think they should all be congratulated. At the same time, all Caricom citizens need to be able to aspire, to achieve these awards some day and it is very important that we know what the criteria are for granting these awards.

The second issue, and this has not come up, is: How often are the OCC awards going to be conferred? Is it going to be on a yearly basis? Is it every three years? Every time the Caricom Ministers have a summit? How often are they going to be conferred?

The last point that I want to make, without in any way contributing to the watering down of the OCC brandy, is that there are many other areas that are of significant importance at this time when we are considering Caricom awards. We have granted awards to a statesman, an economist and a writer. At this time it is extremely important that we also honour our achievers in the areas of business; science and technology, in which there is a great measure of co-operation among Caribbean countries. In medicine, in education, we continue to achieve excellence year-by-year as a region.

And last but not least, recognition for women.

It is sad that in the first grant of the OCC awards, we have so many outstanding women in the Caribbean, but not one has been given the award. I think we need to take note of that and correct it.

In closing, Mr. President, let me say that many problems have been raised by the Opposition with regard to Caribbean unity. We have tried a top-down approach to Caribbean unity which has meant, really, much analysis at the national political level and, as we have heard from the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism, the hon. Brian Kuei Tung, it has meant many loans by Trinidad to other Caribbean countries.

Let us now try a different approach, the bottom-up approach, in which our professionals, artistes and businessmen work together. The OCC seems to me one way of implementing the bottom-up approach to Caribbean unity which should have a shorter time for achieving success than the previous approach that we have tried.

I thank you, Mr. President.

3.50 p.m.

Sen. Hydar Ali: Mr. President, on behalf of all hon. Senators, I welcome you back to the Senate and assure you that while you were away, your position was in good hands.

Sir, like previous speakers, I think the concept of giving an award for excellence in the Caribbean is a good one and it does a lot for the integration movement. In fact, I think it is another rung on the ladder integration movement. Like other Senators, I have to mention again, that the criteria that are used for bestowing these awards ought to be mentioned. I say this, even though the hon. Minister of Planning and Development has, in fact, stated that these are not the main issues. The preamble to the agreement, it gives a broad criterion. That is:

"...outstanding contributions to the development of the Caribbean Region."

From what we have been hearing from the various speakers, it seems that we ought to put some categories to those awards. We have been hearing about awards in the arts, the labour movement, and so on. Perhaps, the people ought to think about these things, and rather than leave it like this, include several categories, some of which have been mentioned here.

In many types of awards like these, to avoid any form of suspicion, one should be fully aware, not only of the criteria, but also of the procedures for nomination.

It is not quite clear from the bill how these nominations are made and how the final decisions are made. Is there a large number of nominees, then a short list, and then a final number is made? Is there a predetermined number that is made in advance? For example, three were awarded this year; is it determined in advance that three will be awarded next year, or those were the best three? Perhaps, some of these things ought to be mentioned.

The other point I should like to make is that in Article VII 3 of the schedule there is just a reference to the ranking of the holders of the OCC in relation to the highest orders conferred by individual Caricom countries. I should like to know from the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, in terms of the protocol list, where does this honour place itself in relation to the highest honours of individual countries; for example, in Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinity Cross.

In clause 4, there is a reference to the restriction to privileges. At the first reading, it does seem a bit petty that because one state does not fulfil its obligations, the President may take some sort of action to restrict corresponding privileges. I wonder if there is some other way in which we can address that situation, bearing in mind that similar bills like these are going to pass through the individual states in Caricom.

In reference to Sen. Wade Mark's comments, I should like to ask what is the status of the award in the event that there is any problem with the individual states not passing a bill like this. Is there a need for unanimity in the individual states before this award has any kind of status? At the moment, is it held in abeyance—even though there have been awardees—until this entire procedure has been gone through? It is a question that has been asked by Sen. Wade Mark about whether this is going through in other countries.

My last point concerns what I perceive as a sort of built-in bias in the awards. If you notice, two of the three—it seems like it has a gender bias already—recipients are associated with regional institutions. For example, one of them was associated with the University of the West Indies and, recently, the West Indian Commission; the other is associated with the Caribbean Development Bank. I am wondering if the tacit, the built-in bias is that people who occupy these posts will automatically get this award.

In other words, if in the future—I know the Minister who spoke earlier about “now and not down the road” is not here, but we have to think about what is going to happen in the future—there is going to be a pattern, that the awards are going to

be offered *ex officio*; I mean, not necessarily by law, but by practice. It is not in many fields that professionals or Caricom people have the ability to make outstanding achievements. There are some professions in which it is very easy to do that. Two examples are professions within the University of the West Indies, which is a regional institution and the Caribbean Development Bank, which is another regional institution. There is—I do not know if inbreeding is the word—some sort of overlap there.

It also seems to have some sort of academic bias in it, judging from the recipients. If you look at all the recipients you will see that many universities would have no difficulty in awarding honorary doctorates to these people. Many of these people are going to be eligible for—I am not saying it is a wrong or bad thing—two types of Caricom awards; one from the University of the West Indies and one from the Caribbean Community.

Mr. President, these are some of my concerns and I hope that the hon. Minister in his reply would respond to them. Also, I should like to congratulate Sen. Oudit on a fine maiden speech.

Thank you.

Sen. Salisha Baksh: Mr. President, like other Senators, I, too, should like to congratulate Sen. Oudit on her maiden contribution. It really gives me a sense of pride when I see another woman stand up and do justice to her presence in this honourable Chamber. This, she has done admirably.

I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome the hon. Minister to this Chamber, although the last time that we sat on official business, we were on the same side. It is quite ironic though, that three people in this Chamber today were all on the same side. We have one sitting on the Independent Bench, one on the opposite side and one on the side of the people, the Opposition. It is nice to see him again. I really welcome him to this honourable Chamber and I hope that he will enjoy his tenure as Minister. I shall not say anything else right now.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. President, historical events are best remembered by addressing the questions: who, what, when, why and how? The decision to form Caricom is a historical event, but, unfortunately, its history is still in the making. The bill before us which relates to a decision made in 1989, in Grenada, raises the five pertinent questions of who, what, when, why and how? I intend, Sir, to address

each one in turn, and, by so doing I will highlight the hypocrisy which clouds and distorts our Caribbean vision. I will try not to deal too much with the Caribbean and Caribbean integration but some reference must be made.

On the question of who are the people that have been deemed deserving of these prestigious awards—we have a former Central Bank Governor; a former Attorney General of Guyana; a famous playwright. I, too, do not wish to cast aspersions on anyone nor do I have any desire to drag anybody's name in mud, as my learned colleague before, but I think we have to mention facts. I have no intentions of being personal here—I should like to make that very clear—but there are certain things that must be mentioned.

As far as this former Central Bank Governor is concerned, has this former financial expert used his vast knowledge in the world of money and banking to significantly uplift the depressed economies of the majority of our Caribbean islands? I am well aware that this learned person has indeed published various works on economic issues and has indeed contributed to economic policies affecting both local and foreign shores.

After all, Mr. Demas was indeed holding the highest position in our country's local banking institutions and so we would expect that he would possess suitable qualifications required for such high office. I am not in a position—nor am I going to attempt—to evaluate the performance of Mr. Demas on the local scene. I am not going to do that. What I can say is that his role on the Caribbean stage as a champion of Caribbean integration is highly overrated. How can we honour a man for achieving what is yet to be obtained?

My colleagues on the right, and on the other side [*Interruption*] you see, you do not understand what I meant by that; that is why I paused and smiled a bit; Caribbean unity, though attainable, remains Sir, a dream yet to come true.

What about the former Attorney General? He resided in a country reportedly riddled with mysterious voting patterns and wanton corruption. His beautiful country blessed with its vast natural resources came into the greedy hands of corrupt politicians whose only motive was to exploit and satisfy their insatiable appetite for wealth and power. That is an established fact.

Sir Shridath Ramphal, now the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, has received enough honour for all that he has done. How can we pay tribute to a man who, by his omissions, has left the doors of his home open to

brigands and thieves. How? Before bestowing such honour upon him I challenge my friends to gain the consensus of his Guyanese people. I challenge them for, after all, we do advocate the tenets of democracy.

We must not forget our talented playwright, who like so many others—including my friend across there—in his field, has entertained and educated our Caribbean people. I am tempted, and I am going to give in to my temptations here. I had no intention of mentioning names but I have to give in. What makes his star shine more than the brilliance of Peter Minshall, one of our local Barcelona favourites who thrilled the world with his theatrical mastery? I could go on and on—Francis Cabral and so forth. I just could not resist. Mr. Minshall is indeed a cultural hero because he was allowed to act on the Olympic stage where many are called, but few are chosen.

Let us not forget V. S. Niapaul, our Trinity Cross recipient who has gained international recognition in the field of literature. There are many heroes in the other Caribbean islands who have received like status—My question is: Not why Derek Walcott, but why Derek Walcott in lieu of any other cultural maestro? That is my question.

On the second question of what. Bearing in mind that it has already been determined although, mind you, not justified, the chosen “who”; that is, the recipients of these awards. Let us examine what they will receive. They are going to receive additional initials after their names. Okay, that is understandable. So too, are their decorations. The privilege of residing and engaging in gainful occupation with the power to acquire and dispose of property like the citizens of the particular member-state, carries with it, Sir, the implied duty that these men would contribute in a significant way, to the socio-economic welfare of the particular member-state.

4.10 p.m.

I am sure that we all remember the experience of Mother Theresa, that woman of substance, who upon learning that she was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize made one single request—that the award be converted to its cash equivalent, so she could further her work of providing food, clothing, shelter and comfort to the poor and starving children on the streets of Calcutta. Will our Caribbean recipients follow suit? Only time will tell.

It has been said that the success of any venture is dependent primarily on proper timing. I am not a lawyer and I am not going to attempt to be one. I am sure that my learned friend here will agree with me. Even in the law of contract, one often hears the phrase, "time being of the essence". My question is: Why are we giving these awards now? True Caribbean integration has not been achieved. There are serious problems plaguing our regions, such as unemployment, crime, poverty, dwindling economies, environmental abuse. Could not debate on bestowing awards be deferred and these more serious issues addressed?

Caribbean unity will only be achieved when we apply a socio-economic policy to rid ourselves of the ills which affect us. Take for example, the environment which we seem to take for granted. There was one hole in the ozone layer; a second hole has been discovered and there is a third hovering over the Caribbean. Surely, there is need for concern. We should not continue to waste precious time in Parliament deliberating on superficial issues. Perhaps, what we should do instead is channel our energies in devising a policy which would enable the preservation of our Caribbean environment. If I go on, I might be deemed irrelevant, so I shall not continue on this point.

Let us go on to why these awards have been given. I sincerely hope that it is not because we feel obliged to enact a decision made in 1989; although unfortunately, from the Minister's contribution, I am inclined to think that. Further, I would be appalled to think that after the recent conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, the only action which was found feasible to display the commitment to Caricom, was the bestowal of these awards. How then, could these awards have been given to maximize the benefit to both recipient and all Caribbean people? In their present form, the awards provide personal gain.

Absolutely no attention has been given to the needs of the wider community. For example, scholarships in the names of the recipients could have been awarded to deserving individuals desirous of pursuing studies in the respective fields of the persons receiving the awards. Would that not have gone a longer way? Governments of member states could have been given the mandate to hold conferences open to the public for their benefit, to be chaired by, or feature the works of the said recipients. This, as my friend on the side here is saying is common sense. This, no doubt would have provided the opportunity for all Caribbean people to feel a part of, and not apart from, this award scheme before the Senate today. I say "scheme" and stress it.

Whether awards are given or not, we should always remember that when we work for Caribbean unity, we are working for ourselves and our people. We should not pat ourselves on the back for doing something which does not go over and above our call of duty. We should always bear that in mind. I end with this meaningful phrase; I shall change it a bit and say: "Ask not what the Caribbean can do for you, but what you can do for the Caribbean".

I thank you.

Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh: Mr. President. I too, would associate with all the Senators in extending warmest congratulations to Sen. Oudit on her maiden speech.

In supporting the bill before us, I ask the hon. Minister for some clarification on clause 4 concerning reciprocity or the restriction of privileges. Sen. Ali made reference to this clause. If there are problems or complaints from recipients of the OCC, I ask: What steps would be taken by the Caricom Secretariat, or the Caricom Council of Ministers to address such problems, before getting the Parliament and the President of a member state involved?

4.20 p.m.

I do not like the tit for tat solution provided in clause 4, because already, there are several indications that Caricom is very fragile. In fact, I think, concerning this clause if the final authority for the application of Articles of Agreement is the Heads of Government Conference, then they should be involved in appeals, since the withdrawal of privileges of recipients of this award—Caricom's most prestigious award—is a very serious matter. I do not think that requiring unilateral decisions of an aggrieved member state is the best way out. It could not be. I believe that dealing with these problems should be a matter for the member states of the Community. I should like the hon. Minister to address this issue in his reply.

Thank you very much.

Sen. Martin Daly: Mr. President, while I certainly would not volunteer for the committee making these awards, I should like to associate myself with the awards that have been made to Sen. Oudit for her maiden speech.

I should like to say what a great pleasure it is, in a loose sense of the word, to be working with the Minister of Foreign Affairs again. I am sure that the leaders

Order of the Caribbean Community Bill
[SEN. DALY]

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of his party know that he was a member of a winning team before he went into politics and that team comprised, Sen. Baksh, himself and someone who sits on the Independent Benches. It gave the Minister his first taste for business and success.

While I want to support the bill, I want to tell the Government, in no uncertain terms, that I continue to be very, very unhappy about bills coming to Parliament to approve things that have already been done. I continue to be very upset about this, and I would really like the Minister to explain why this bill is coming so long after these awards have been made. It is a very serious matter and it is increasingly difficult, however meritorious a bill, to support it so long after the event. I think it is a pappyshow—a real pappyshow—to come here and say to approve this Order of the Caribbean Community Bill, and it has been done already. I should like a fairly serious explanation of why we are being put in that position. I think it is quite wrong, in principle, and I do not think it is a practice that should be condoned.

That said on the procedural issue on which I feel very strongly, I am afraid that I want to strike another discordant note. I do not in any way want to trespass on anyone's preserve, but I want to disassociate myself, in the strongest possible way, from the individual evaluations that have been made of the people who have been given awards. Just as dangerous, constitutionally, as it is for us to fall into the practice of approving legislation after the event, I think it is a very bad practice, under any circumstances, for any of us to come here and attack persons who cannot defend themselves here. I cannot, as a citizen and as a practising attorney, condone either practice—legislation after the event, and attacks on persons who cannot defend themselves here. I may have my own view about who should receive awards for anything, but I want it recorded that I think both of these practices are totally wrong and cause me a great deal of grief.

What we are here to do is to pass legislation to permit something that was decided by the Heads of Government to be done. While I think that the Heads of Government have their priorities all wrong, I will support the bill, because I think it is important for Trinidad and Tobago and I also think that it is an act of responsible government if you make an agreement to keep it—and this is not the first time I have said that. So, despite my misgivings about the lateness, I will support the bill for that reason.

When you look at Caricom as a whole, I do not think that there is very much about Caricom to merit an award, and insofar as you anoint individual persons in

the Caricom region for achievement, you are also sending signals to people out there that things are going well in Caricom. That is why I think that the Heads of Government have their priorities wrong. Therefore, there is something to be said for the view that in approving this legislation on its merits, we are subscribing to an elitist practice, and we are doing something superficial. It is bound to strike the people who listen to these debates that not only are things not going well in Caricom, not only is there not much to be recommended about Caricom, but also that it is another secret process of bureaucrats. We have to be careful when we are approving this bill to make sure that we let people know that we are considering these matters. So, I do have some misgivings that this is what the Heads of Government should be busy doing. I am very clear in my mind that if that agreement has been made, Trinidad and Tobago will stick to it.

I have another misgiving which has been expressed by previous speakers. I hope the Minister will tell us what he knows about the legislative timetable of the other members in relation to when they are going to be passing the legislation. You know, if you follow cricket, because of the high standards we have in this country, Trinidad umpires always give Trinidad batsmen out and they very rarely give batsmen from other member territories out. So, we must be very careful that, once more, we are not doing the right thing, while others around us are not proceeding to do what we are doing. I should like to hear the Minister on what is happening in the rest of the region in relation to the promulgation of the corresponding legislation. I think it is important.

I am comforted, to know that the number of awardees is going to be limited. I only wish that we had thought of that in relation to some of the higher categories of our own national awards. I think it is very important that high awards should not be thought of—to put it colloquially—as Orders where you just wash your feet and jump in. I am very pleased to hear that it is 15 persons, and I hope that the Government will consider some informal limits in relation to the higher awards in our own country. I think it is very important.

We are taking a lot of time—and I am contributing to that, I recognize—in discussing something that really, to the people who listen to us, is a wrong priority. For the reasons which I have given, I will support the bill. Perhaps it is useful that Sen. Rooks' question came up for oral answer today, because I do think that the citizens of this country, as I have said, will continue to be concerned that Caricom—from which I think it is generally believed we are getting a raw deal—is getting the time and attention of this Parliament.

I mention that only to spur those Members of the Government—like Sen. Kuei Tung, who has to look at these bad and non-performing loans in his portfolio, and for whom it must be very irritating—to start taking a hard line with some of our Caricom partners.

In that kind of setting, I really support the bill, but with those misgivings. Therefore, I would not present you with any procedural difficulties; I will take my seat. Thank you very much.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Carol Merritt: Mr. President, I join with my colleagues in welcoming you back to this Chamber, I should also take this opportunity to congratulate Sen. Oudit on her maiden speech in the Senate.

Sir, the agreement to institute the Order of the Caribbean Community, to be conferred by the Conference of Heads of Government on distinguished Caribbean nationals, was signed at the second intersessional meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, at Port of Spain, in Febraury 1991.

From the informationa I gathered, the agreement was signed initially by six Heads if Government, which were Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana. The Bahamas, Belize and St. Lucia. But it was signed subsequently by the other member states of the community and came into force on May 28, 1991, when it was signed on behalf of the Government of Dominica. An advisory committee was also established by the agreement for the purpose of inviting and receiving nominations for the awards and ultimately making recommendations to the Conference of Heads of Government for the conferring of the awards.

The bill before us, proposes to give effect to an inter-governmental agreement assented to at the Grand Anse Conference in 1989. It is proposed by this agreement to confer high honour upon nationals of Caribbean member states who are recognized as having made significant contributions to Caribbean development. The two points which I want to raise are, one, that the bill before the Senate came on the heels of the Caricom Heads of Government meeting just concluded at the Trinidad Hilton, and constitutes little more than a slap in the face of Parliament. The way it was brought before us: The Caricom summit has already conferred the honour of membership of the Order upon three individuals, while simultaneously recognizing that the relevant law has not been passed in the several member countries.

In fact, it may be instructive to find out which countries have already introduced the relevant legislation to institute the OCC, before this Parliament approves a piece of legislation coming out of Caricom, again. Caricom decisions placed before us year after year will still not be effected because other member states do not introduce the relevant legislation. Recent examples of this nature are the Common External Tariff, which was rushed through this Parliament, and the Caricom Enterprises Regime, neither of which has been effected, despite having been approved at a Heads of Government meeting which signed the Chaguaramas Treaty, recognizing the urgent need since 1973.

This Government persists in its blatant disregard of Parliament's authority by requesting now, after a policy is implemented, and I should like to know whether this is one of the policies which have been agreed to at most of the Heads of Government meetings over the years, which has been rushed through and implemented. We are not seeing any implementation of the various recommendations which were made beforehand, but this one has been implemented, even before coming to Parliament.

It is typical that the Heads of Government, having recognized that the laws had not been passed in several countries, persisted in making the awards on June 29, 1992. The three individuals selected this far are: Derrick Walcott, poet and playwright—a man whom I always admired for his books. I also remember a few of his plays. One of my very close friends was one of his main actors, but she is dead now—William Demas, ex-Secretary General of the Caricom Secretariat and former President of the Caribbean Development Bank; and Sir Shridath Ramphal, former Commonwealth Secretary General and current Chairman of the West Indian Commission.

Again, it must be noted that the criteria are questionable. I ask the question: What criteria have been forwarded for their selection? Although there is an advisory committee for the OCC honour, Parliament is being asked to authorize the Heads of Government Conference to select individuals who are to be given dignitary status, including the equivalent of a diplomatic passport—a very high honour—without there being stated selection criteria.

Speaking about selection criteria, I raise the question: What are the clear guidelines that were given to the advisory committee? I am sure there was a whole list of nominees which was sent to the advisory committee and they have come up with three people, three nominees who were awarded in 1992. Also, I should like

to state, without going too deeply into the question of anybody's character or well-being, that the people of the region should have an input in the selection. Maybe they should send out a questionnaire to the various regions, asking people to put forward their nominations and the reason why they nominated those individuals.

Other matters of a more pressing nature from a public viewpoint also contained in the 1989 communique of the Heads of Government Summit must, of necessity, be addressed. For example, under the heading, "The control of drug trafficking and drug abuse", the Conference had proposed the creation of a multinational force under the aegis of the United Nations, and the establishment of a commission of enquiry and an international criminal court. In light of the growing drug crisis in Trinidad and Tobago and the region, evidence of increased Mafia-style executions, allegations of a police drug cartel and the recent discovery by the PNM and the country and the country is indeed a transshipment point for drugs, priorities other than the Order are obvious.

The proposal mention is even more critical than the Order that was bestowed and implemented so quickly. I wonder why the same haste with which the Order of the Caribbean Community was implemented, was not put into establishing the criminal court and the commission of inquiry into drug abuse and drug trafficking in the region.

My one other point, Mr. President, is that I should like this Senate to take note that not one single woman was selected in this first instance of conferring the Order. Not one woman was considered to be one of the three recipients on June 29, 1992. This shows the disrespect and disregard for the region's women continued by the Heads of Government. The women in the Caribbean, at present, and in the past, have contributed wholeheartedly in all aspects of the region's development, be it socially, economically, politically, educationally, legally or culturally. We have contributed. There are women who are worthy of receiving the honour, at present. I am also sure several of the distinguished women's names in our region were put forward as nominees. The women of the region also deserve respect and honour. Why no honour for the daughters of slavery and indentureship, the women who have stood their ground and fought with a spirit undaunted, present and in the past; the women who have contributed to the development process and have held the respective member states together? Women have played an important part in that and yet there was no honour or recognition of the women of the region. What annoyed me is that the Heads of

Government continues to ignore women's issues in the region, or they might simply touch on some of the issues. That is not sufficient.

Mr. President, I would end by saying that I am looking forward to seeing the Order and honour conferred on women in our region who are deserving of it, and not anyone with a question mark over his or her head.

I hereby give you a list of some of the women I have in mind for such an honour. I have listed several women both alive and dead. Although the Minister of Foreign Affairs mentioned that the honour is for living people, I will still mention the women who have contributed. I list their names:

—the late Audrey Jeffers, Trinidad and Tobago, for social work:

—Louise Bennett, Jamaica, poetry and culture;

—the late Dr. Barbara Jones, science and agriculture;

—Ethelyn Roberts, Trinidad and Tobago, from the 1937 riots.

She contributed greatly and that has paved the way for many of us in this country and in the Caribbean, whether people want to admit it or not.

—The late Edna Manley, Jamaica;

—Beryl McBurnie, Trinidad and Tobago, for dance.

She was a great pioneer in dance, who started the Little Carib Theatre and who projected dance in most of the schools. I remember, as a child, she was one of those who were involved in preparing us to perform for the Queen, when she came to Trinidad, and for Haile Selassie.

—Julia Edwards, Trinidad and Tobago, who has taken dance and calypso as far as Japan and China.

These are the few people who I think should be recognized in the bestowal of this Order.

Mr. President, I thank you.

Sen. David Cowie: Mr. President, let me, again, reiterate from this side of the Senate our welcome on your return and my commendation to Sen. Oudit in respect of her maiden contribution.

At the outset, I crave your indulgence, Sir, to address, perhaps, what might be considered to be some of the less emotive aspects of the bill before us—perhaps

less esoteric, as well. Perhaps I might best serve this purpose by addressing some of the concerns which have jumped off the page for consideration virtually in the form of enquiries that might be usefully addressed by the Minister in his reply and perhaps, in his further exertions in the preparation, if at all, of the bill.

Now, at the very outset, I note that the agreement which comprises a schedule to the bill, does not provide for the format or the mechanisms through which the several dispensations that are proposed are to be vested or conferred. One would expect, in the normal course, that the extent of the abdication in respect of which this Senate has been—if I might say—to some extent, solicited, would fall short of, in effect, deferring these matters for consideration by the Conference, which is described to mean the Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community.

Now, in particular, I wish to invite concern or consideration of what, if any, consequential amendments to the existing local legislation as regards work permits for example, will become necessary and/or be implemented. I note as well that there is a proposed provision for further dispensation as regards the acquisition and disposal of property in the same manner in all respects as citizens of any member state.

This country has recently to some substantial extent, liberalized its Aliens Landholding and Aliens Securities Holding statute law, but to some extent one would imagine that there might have been some address to the question of Trinidad and Tobago, to what extent it is harmonious with comparative provisions where they do exist in regional statute law.

If it is that dispensations are to be granted that are founded on different bases, then, of necessity, it would be a question of conferment of dispensation in different terms as well.

A further aspect that seems to warrant some consideration would be the question of this proposed travel document that is:

“...designed to facilitate travel within the Caribbean community and which would enjoy in every member State a like status as a diplomatic passport.”

I trust that it would not be a misguided enquiry as to the extent to which any consequential amendments, for example, to the local tax clearance and exchange control legislation, would be necessary. Because if these dispensations are to be meaningful, then one would expect that in the normal course these rather ancillary aspects could perhaps be addressed in some measure.

I have seen, as well, reference in rather unspecific terms in the agreement, to “spouse” and “child”. These, as we are well aware in our local framework, have their own peculiar connotations—am guided—their own particular significations. One would, of necessity, need to address the comparative law significations in the respective territories.

If it is that a situation such as is provided for at clause 4, for the withdrawal of privileges conferred by the President, which is another sore point on which I wish to touch—because if it is that there is to be reciprocal conferment, if at all, then there would need to be, to some extent, some comparative similarity in the substratum of the law on the basis of which these dispensations are to be accorded.

I would wish, as well, to invite the Minister to consider whether it is entirely an appropriate circumstance that is going to be put in place in terms that the ceremonial Head of State, the President, is to be thrown into the maelstrom, which is not unlikely given our past regional differences of opinion over the selection of the West Indies cricket team. Is it entirely appropriate that the ceremonial Head of State be tossed into the furore of withdrawal of privileges, the mechanics of which we are not certain, because there is nothing said about that in the bill or in the schedule?

Is it ideal that the ceremonial Head of State be the person upon whom the responsibility or the onus falls for the withdrawal of privileges which have been agreed to by the executive Heads of State of Government, in the region? This, in my respectful view, is an area that is pregnant with controversy; and it is fraught with peril, and it is something to which careful consideration should be given.

In passing, I note—and learned Senior, Sen. Daly has, in fact, mentioned it, that Trinidad Cricket umpires err to some extent, through an excess of fairness. But I note that the criteria for eligibility for the Order, as far as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are concerned, is citizenship on the one hand, whereas the agreement defines—if I may describe it as paragraph (d) of the interpretation section—it extends this parameter of citizenship to include persons who are native, who may no longer be citizens but who may have been nationals in the sense that they were born in those respective countries. And, I see at subparagraph (2) where it extends further to residents with whom there need not be any parity as regards nationality or citizenship.

This is in the context of the application of the entire agreement. So if it is that our local law which purports to integrate this agreement into efficacy and effect, is

to be limited to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—because the drafting is not clear; the framing is rather ambiguous—perhaps some kind of necessary harmony must be struck with the criteria for eligibility as regards other member states. That is, other than Trinidad and Tobago.

In closing, let me, perhaps, extend the scope of my reference to these clinical aspects of the drafting, to my concern, much more aptly expressed by my colleagues on this side, with the tokenism and the cosmetological aspect that seems to really give, what otherwise would lack substratum in the bill—it seems as if the priority has certainly been misplaced. It is quite unfortunate that in a context in which the initiative would be otherwise quite a commendable one, it has to fall short so badly, both in terms of the conceptualization and drafting.

With that, Mr. President, I must confess that I have nothing further to contribute on the bill. I thank you.

Sen. Everard Dean: Mr. President, may I join with my colleagues in welcoming you back to the Chair and to say how saddened we are to see the Vice-President back on the high bench on the other side.

The contributions by Sen. Oudit and Sen. Cowie have been extremely good and I also want to join with my colleagues in complementing both these Senators on their maiden speeches here this evening.

Sir, I had intended to say many things, but I believe most of them have already been dealt with by other Senators. But let me say from the very beginning that as an unrepentant Caribbean integrationist, I rise to support the bill in its present form and I will continue to support any legitimate move to bring our people together.

This OCC bill is one small step towards integration, by giving the honourable recipients certain rights and privileges, I am not here to cast any shadows or mouth any innuendos, or bring the names of any of the recipients, current or in the future, into disrepute. I am not that kind of person.

As I said, I am an unrepentant integrationist, and I become very emotional when speaking about things Caribbean. The average West Indian, as we know the people of the West Indies, is yearning for closer relationship among the West Indian family. But, Mr. President, I have had the privilege and good fortune to travel up and down the Caribbean area, visiting, from time to time, all Members of Caricom and beyond, and I can say, without any shadow of a doubt, that the

grassroots people are psychologically ready for this integration movement. I do not think the leaders, however, are really ready to move at the pace with which the average West Indian is ready to move.

I think, Sir, after 19 years and 13 Caricom meetings, we had two positive decisions made: one is the OCC; and, two, the date of the next meeting of the Caribbean Heads of Government. It is unfortunate that the recommendations—I will not say decisions—that come out of these meetings, are not given the priority they deserve, immediately, the Heads of Government go back to their respective homes and there is a statement proposing something that they agreed upon. I recall one of the deputy leaders of the Caribbean who attended the summit recently, on his return said he had a problem with freedom of travel and Caribbean currency. Another one made it quite clear in a statement in Trinidad and Tobago that the CET must be reduced.

5.30 p.m.

I remember, in growing up, my mother used to use the old term, that she would put the fowl to set, and after a certain period, she would expect the eggs to hatch. Unfortunately, with the kind of CET that we agree upon, in the Caribbean there is no hatching. Nothing is brought forth. It is a whole question of every Caribbean leader protecting his own piece of dirt in the Caribbean, not taking into consideration the wishes of the Caribbean people.

The sagging economy of all our islands demands that our leaders come together and forget whether they are MDCs or LDCs; whether we are an agricultural or industrial economy; because I feel it will be to our advantage to merge both these economies—CET or no CET—so that we can all benefit by first developing the intraregional trade and, at the same time, testing the deeper waters of the globe.

When you look at the communique issued after the last Heads of Government Conference, except for the OCC, not one item was positive. I will give you just the first line of maybe five, as examples:

"Heads of Government extended congratulations to P. J. Patterson and to Mr. Compton..."

"Heads of Government were pleased that the opening ceremony..."

"Heads of Government conveyed their warmest felicitations..."

and it went on.

"Heads of Government expressed their awareness..."

"Heads of Government noted with interest..."

"Heads of Government examined the recent development in the international economic environment..."

"Heads of Government noted with interest, the continuing effort of Canada, Mexico and the USA into NAFTA..."

Not one thing on their own position, concerning that. The list continues. It goes on and on, "Heads of Government..." this, and "Heads of Government..." that. Not one thing of substance came out of that meeting that would say that the Heads of Government agreed to implement, except, that the heads would meet again in October.

My own view is that the sitting Government cannot be blamed to any great extent for the inability of the leaders of the Caribbean, other than Trinidad and Tobago, to put their efforts where their mouths are. I think we have a history in this country—I said it before and it is worthwhile repeating it—that all our Prime Ministers, over the years, including the current Prime Minister, always pushed the question of Caricom forward, so much so that we go with so much haste that it sometimes turns out that “it is we to catch”. I must commend our governments for that kind of exercise over the years.

I said some time ago that years ago Trinidad and Tobago was called the “Caribbean Godfather”. I think the information given by the Minister of Trade on behalf of the Minister of Finance, testifies to that fact. We have millions and millions of US dollars out there. We cannot get it, but we know we are in the same boat and if they cannot pay, we give them an opportunity to put their house in order. In the meantime, those other leaders of the Caribbean are taking us for a ride. I do not feel that this ride should go on much longer.

The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and his Ministers must assert themselves. I hold the point of view that if the Government has to go with three—in the beginning to make it work—by all means, go. I hope, however, that the old maths of one from 10 leaves nought, will not repeat itself, by saying three from 13 leaves one. I feel that—and I want to repeat this over and over again—the Western Indian psyche is ready to move forward together as a Caribbean family.

Again, I have had the privilege over a number of years to meet with over 300 or 400 Caribbean grassroots people every August. You should see us sitting around the bar-table, the lunch-table or at the seashores during that 10 days of intensive work, and see the camaraderie which exists among the grassroots people.

We are ready, and I want to call on all leaders of the Caribbean to take cognizance of the voices and do what they were elected to do. Thank you.

Sen. Surendranath Capildeo: Mr. President, permit me to welcome your return to this honourable Senate, and to thank my friend, Sen. Ainsley Mark, for having sat at your feet, and any having begun to learn the ropes.

Permit me also, Sir, to congratulate Sen. Oudit on a contribution that was as attractive as the Senator is herself; also, Sen. Cowie, whose erudition in the law, could possibly persuade Mr. Attorney—when the time comes, we will inform Mr. Attorney—that silk is not too far off for Sen. Cowie.

Mr. President, I consider it most fortunate that we should have the distinction, honour and privilege, of having the Minister of Foreign Affairs come to this Senate to seek approval of this bill. The Minister will appreciate the irony, and the sardonic, almost twisted, humour of mimic states conferring mimic honours.

5.40 p.m.

You see, it is one thing to have the idea of conferring honours on your citizens; it is another thing when you have the history of the Caribbean Community and its political leaders—Sen. Dean—who have jointly, over the last 40-odd years or so pushed the idea of the Caribbean man into mythical status. Because I will challenge the Minister to name one political leader in the Caribbean today who would sacrifice his political office and his leadership on the altar of Caribbean unity. Name one and then come to us in this Senate and say, confer gold on our people. You see, Mr. President, in days of old, as Sen. Barnes would tell you, when a citizen of the Roman Empire said *civis romanus sum*, “I am a citizen of Rome”, that was all he needed to say. “Paul of Tarsus said, I am a citizen of Rome”. Full stop. No further question.

If Surendranath Capildeo were to say, “I am a Caribbean man”, there will be hoots of derision, maybe; I do not know. But if Sir Shridath Surendranath Ramphal were to say, “I am a Caribbean man; look, I have a gold medal to show it”, there may be applause. The point is that again this Senate is being asked to

support a measure with which we have had absolutely nothing to do. We have had no contact with what is being brought to us here in this Senate.

When we look at this bill, we must look at the Caribbean Community, and our minds must go back to what has been the unifying force of the Caribbean Community, sadly the word, “collapsed”, comes to mind. The Multilateral Clearing Facility—collapsed, Caricargo—collapsed, Awarak Cement—collapsed, West Indian Shipping Corporation—collapsed, BWIA with heavy injections of Trinidad and Tobago taxpayers money—almost on the verge of collapse. Mr. Kuei Tung have we sold it yet? When last I looked at it, one of your jets was leased to an Irish Corporation.

The point is this—all the countries within the Caribbean Community have similar problems of high unemployment, a high level of indebtedness, increased incidence of crime and drug abuse, high level of poverty, poor growth rates, low foreign reserves, no foreign investments—very little; poor industrial climates and poor promotion of the countries of the West Indies internationally. I take up the point that my friend made.

You have over a billion people looking at the opening sessions of the Olympics; you have a Caribbean man born in Trinidad and Tobago putting on the opening show, and nobody in the world knows that Peter Minshall was born in Trinidad, that it was a carnival they were looking at, that it was a West Indian thing they were seeing at the opening show. Are we so ashamed of ourselves or is it petty politics?

Is it petty politics that a once in a lifetime chance of a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, putting the stamp of Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean stamp, to a billion people simultaneously in the world, and not one word. Nothing at all. Instead you had some squeamish little debate in the national press about who had which sculpture and where the sculpture was and what happened. You have the genius of a Trinidadian, exposed to a billion people in the world and not a word, but you come here and tell me, hang a medal on Shridath Surendranath Ramphal.

Mr. President, it is an insult to my intelligence to bring this document which Sen. Cowie has torn to shreds, to demonstrate that there is no way we in the Opposition, no matter how we may be inclined to say, yes, it is a good thing to honour citizens; it is a good thing to inject civic pride, national pride, community pride in the entire Caribbean Community—you want to do that and then you bring

this slipshod piece of legislation to us. We cannot support it. We cannot support these pieces of paper here. It does not and it cannot deserve our support. If you are coming to hang gold around the necks of our prominent Caribbean citizens, for God's sake, do it properly and let us be proud of it. Do not rush into legislation like that. This brings me back to a point I have made here in the Senate over and over again.

What is the legislative programme? Why this now? Why were we not told about it before? How come all of a sudden it is important that we should pass this piece of legislation? Has Barbados done it? Has Antigua done it? Has the Bahamas done it? Has Belize done it? Has Dominica done it? Has Grenada done it? Has Montserrat done it? Is Jamaica still in Caricom or out of Caricom? Have they done it? Has St. Christopher and Nevis done it? Has St. Lucia done it? Has St. Vincent and the Grenadines done it?

Why should we, with all the legal talent at our disposal, with all the master legal draftsmen and women that we have, be subjected to this thing as a bill to honour citizens, possibly, the highest honour that we could give at this point? Because what you are doing is creating an elite class, and you are going to create an elite class with a piece of legislation that is drafted so badly and so full of holes, that it is not worth even my assessment.

I come back to the central point, the mythical Caribbean man that has been put into legend and into myth by the political leaders of the Caribbean Community, who sit, and the only thing they can agree upon, is to give medals to three persons about whom we all know, but without the consultation of the people of the Caribbean. The people of the Caribbean know nothing about this. The people of Trinidad and Tobago know even less. If anybody should have been given a medal at this point, in the year of the Olympics—our own. Our own was being studiously ignored, but it is only a government that is totally uninterested in everything, save continued political power, would have ignored the total impact of the opening ceremony of the Olympiad. It is only a government obsessed with political survival that would do that.

Mr. President, we are asked to come here to honour Caribbean citizens, and once again we are being asked to do that when all their horses have bolted; when all the islands are in such a state of continued disunity, that we cannot get even a simple singular agreement with respect to a single Olympic team, a single football

team—how on earth they are keeping hold of that cricket team, it is only by a miracle—a single shipping corporation.

5.50 p.m.

Like my good friend, I have not been back to Barbados since. You got to apply to stay there. I did not bother; I flew out. Why should I have to apply to stay in a West Indian island? Why should any West Indian have that problem when people could walk in and out from here with a driving permit and drive on the wrong side of the road without any problems. And then why should we Caribbean people deny ourselves all the rights to which we are entitled, because of the selfishness of our political leaders? Why should we be asked to come here to hang medals on persons whom we have not properly assessed in the context of what is taking place in each Caribbean Community?

I repeat, name one political leader in the Caribbean who will sacrifice his position on the altar of Caribbean unity who will bring the Caribbean man out of his present mythological status and put him into reality. I am not talking about putting Surendranath Ramphal into Caribbean reality. I say, put me into Caribbean reality. Make me feel that I am part of the Caribbean Community. Make the average Trinidadian citizen feel that he is part and parcel of the Caribbean Community. Make the same thing for the Jamaican citizen and the Montserratian citizen.

Achieve some measure of co-operation and understanding between the people of the Caribbean; then, come to us and say, “Let us honour our citizens who are deserving”. Do not come with this thing and insult our intelligence and tell us that we are going to honour people wear as a decoration on appropriate occasions, the insignia struck in gold, and the ribbon of the Order.

It is mimic. You have a mimic state, with a mimic army, mimic airport, mimic airforce and mimic warship. Mimic men! They set up their own little army, airport, airforce, navy and now they are giving themselves their own little awards. The people are suffering. There is high unemployment, a high level of indebtedness; increased incidence of crime and drug abuse; a high level of poverty; poor growth rates; low foreign reserves; high import bills; little foreign investment; poor industrial climate; poor promotion of the countries internationally, but you have all the apparatus of a metropolitan state. You want to crown that now by giving orders and medals.

I have just been advised that they left out from the bill that the medals should be struck from gold mined in Guyana. Do that, but by all means, before you do so, come honestly and make the people of the Caribbean feel that they belong to each other. Then, let us embrace and honour each other, so that when I stand up and say, "I am a Caribbean man", wherever I say it, it would have some meaning. If I said I am a Caribbean man now, Mighty Stalin might start to compose another song. Thank you, Mr. President.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Mr. President, belated as it is, let me also take the opportunity of welcoming you back. You would understand that I did it late because I have not frequented this place as often so as to know that you had departed on a vacation.

May I also take this opportunity of offering my congratulations to Sen. Oudit on her maiden contribution and, of course, Sen. Cowie.

I was referring to Sen. Oudit who made a very significant contribution. May I say that her contribution was really symptomatic of the general contribution one got from the Upper Benches. I do not know if the fact that they are from the Upper Benches, is in itself significant. I should really like to congratulate the Independent Senators on a certain sobriety in their contributions today. It really has heartened; it has improved my experience in this Senate. I think were it not for the contribution of the Independent Senators, I may have left this place disillusioned.

Many concerns were raised and seeing that Sen. Capildeo was the last to speak and the freshest in my mind, I might begin with his contribution. I suppose as I go along, I would have answered all the concerns that all the Senators raised, because there seemed to be common concerns as they went along.

Sen. Capildeo started off in a very dramatic way by talking about mimic states, mimic awards and mimic men. I am sure I know where that comes from. On one hand in the society, we are saying over and over that we need to recognize our heroes. We are saying over and over that civilization must be built by recognizing achievement. Here there is an attempt to do this, and you are hearing people talk about mimic men and mimic states. It is indeed a mimic mind, I am wondering, that would make such a statement. They do not seek to recognize the purpose of this whole effort and instead seek to denigrate it with this kind of terminology, which really has no relationship at all to the reality of what we are seeking to do. It is just a very attractive and dramatic description that really has no relevance to the matter.

Sen. Capildeo also asked a question, and he repeated it, as to whether any Caribbean leader would be willing to sacrifice his position in the interest of Caribbean unity. I do not see how that sacrifice is in any way related to Caribbean unity. I am sure the Senator and other Members of the Senate would recognize the fact that we have gone, in the minds of many people, way past the notion of a federation, that we are seeking now for example, to come to the kind of arrangement where you have an association of independent states.

6.00 p.m.

The whole process of Caribbean unity and integration is evolving; people are complaining. We have heard complaints over and over about the slow pace of Caribbean integration. I am taking time off to deal with these matters—irrelevant as they are to the debate—because I think it is important that we answer some of them. We have been hearing about the slow pace, but things are indeed happening. I am myself convinced, having come into Government, and having been part of the Caribbean Heads of Government Conference, and having interacted with my counterparts in the other Caribbean countries, that there is, indeed, the very honest intention and the will to move towards eventual integration.

But, integration has to evolve as it is doing now. Growth is slow. That evolutionary process, that incremental process that is on, is eventually going to determine what the whole nature of the Caribbean is going to be in the 21st century. I have no doubt that there is the will, that we are moving along this path, and this Order of the Caribbean Community is just one aspect of the manifestation of the will towards Caribbean integration.

Indeed, I did not expect that this debate would have taken as long as it did today. I am surprised that, at 6.00 p.m., we are still dealing with what ought to have been an automatic passage of this bill in the Senate. So that matter about political leaders sacrificing their position on the altar of Caribbean unity is obsolete, effete, anachronistic. The idea is gone, so to bring that now does not really—

Sen. Prof. Spence: I just wondered whether the hon. Minister would not agree that the attempt by the four Windward Islands to form an integrated government, is not an example of Caribbean leaders giving up some of their sovereignty, and, indeed, that effort is in the direction, contrary to what he is saying.

Hon. R. Maraj: We are not even sure to what extent sovereignty has been given up. Even the whole question of the political union to which the Senator was, I suppose, referring, has not yet been determined. That is also an evolutionary process. So that to come and talk about sacrificing your political position and power is, I do not think, applicable at this point.

Sen. Capildeo spoke about Peter Minshall, thinking that we have not recognized Mr. Minshall's contribution and great achievement at the Olympics. I want to assure the Senator that we on this side of the Senate, have recognized Mr. Minshall. Indeed, we made a statement on the matter. The fact that he has not been one of the recipients of the award does not mean that we have not recognized him. We made a statement on the matter and the fact is, if they had, for example, awarded Peter Minshall the Order of the Caribbean Community, they would have been asking questions about why Mr. Walcott did not get it. Any three or four persons who were chosen, questions would have been asked about why others did not receive it. One must start somewhere.

So that for Members on the other side to come with a long list of people who they say ought to have been chosen, is approaching the matter in a very amateurish way. It is not as though this Order of the Caribbean Community being effected here is going to be a one-and-done affair. It is going to be ongoing and many of the people who were mentioned here today, I am sure they themselves would be in line for it at some time. There is no doubt about that. But you have to start somewhere, and wherever you start, you will have people saying that others should have got it. Let us not get into that kind of puerile debate about who should get it and who should not. The fact of the matter is that the people who have been given this Order of the Caribbean Community are, indeed, outstanding citizens who have made outstanding contributions to development in the region.

A question was asked by Sen. Daly and some of the other speakers as to why we should be doing it when others have not done it, or what is the timetable for other Caricom states to put into effect this Order of the Caribbean Community. Let me say that I am aware that other Caribbean states are in the process of getting it done, but that a decision was taken by the Heads of Government Conference for this Order of the Caribbean Community and the privileges that go with it, and it is the responsibility of the particular governments to embark upon this process of legislation in their various parliaments. Somebody has to be the first in doing it; we cannot all get together and say we are going to do it at one particular time,

throughout the Caribbean. The fact that we might be the first doing it, is again to support Sen. Dean's very valid point, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has always been at the forefront of supporting the integration movement and this is just another example of that in motion. Again, that was a very trivial observation on the part Sen. Capildeo.

There was a question about why we have handed out the awards and now brought the legislation. As Sen. Saith said, the two things are separate. A decision was taken to make these awards, the Order of the Caribbean Community; that was one thing. The Heads of Government did it. Now here we are, in each of our separate countries, mandated as it were, to embark upon the legislation. I see no real problem with that. The fact of the matter is that the two things are separate: a decision by the Heads of Government to do it and here we are in the Parliament seeking to give legal status to the privileges that go with the Order of the Caribbean Community. To talk about blatant disregard for the Parliament, I think is taking it a bit too far. A process is in motion and as mature people we ought to recognize that process.

6.10 p.m.

I am looking at my notes dealing with Sen. Wade Mark's contribution and I have a note here which says "irrelevant". Mr. President, I think you very accurately handled Sen. Wade Mark and sought to bring him back in line. I think one of the things that he was saying, over and over, one of the things that came through very clearly was, "were the people involved, were the masses involved".

Hon. R. Maraj: I will come to the criteria in a moment. "Were the masses involved; were the grass roots involved?" I remember asking him the question while he was talking, were the masses involved in his being appointed a Senator? I asked him the question and I still want to get a response to that: Were the masses involved? How were the masses involved? He said the masses were involved and he is right. The masses were involved. How were they involved?

The masses voted in an election; they voted in an Opposition and the Opposition Leader, having a mandate from the people, appointed all those Senators. That is democracy in action. You appoint a government. You elect a government, you have a Prime Minister, you have a constitution, you have a democratic process in motion, you expect us now to go back to the people for every little decision that is to be made? Some Senators spoke about sending out questionnaires to the masses about whom they want to have involved and so forth.

That is trivia, Mr. President, childish notions of how democracy should operate. We cannot operate democracy in that way.

If you elect people to run a country, then it is the responsibility of the elected to do so. Of course, there is never any of that type of thinking we had from the Opposition Benches coming from the Independent Senators. I suspect that they accept democracy at work in a mature way. But you have that notion being repeated by all of the Members of the Opposition, “masses involved”, rhetoric that really means absolutely nothing.

Sen. Wade Mark also said something very interesting and I wonder what it meant: “Caricom privatized”. I do not know what the meaning of that is, and we will leave that behind for the time being.

Mr. President, Sen. Wade Mark also spoke about criteria. Let me say for the benefit of this honourable Senate that as far as the selection process is concerned—and I omitted to mention it in my opening contribution—there was an inter-governmental agreement that established an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Conference of the Heads of Government for awards of membership of the Order, and to tender advice to the conference on matters concerning the Order.

The composition of the seven-person advisory committee is as follows: The Director General of the Secretariat of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, of his representative representing member states of that organization, which are member states of the Caribbean Community, and one representative of each of the other member states of the Caribbean Community.

So you have consultation taking place among the members. It was not a thing that was done in an ad hoc way. There as a mechanism in place for advising the Heads of Government as to who the recipients should be and who they will be in the future.

Sen. W. Mark: Who was our representative?

Hon. R. Maraj: I will give you the other members of the advisory committee. At that point in time, Mr. Karl Hudson-Phillips was Trinidad and Tobago’s representative on that advisory committee. From he Bahamas, Mr. Hubert Walcane, who was the Secretary to the Cabinet, from Barbados; from Belize, you had Mr. Joseph Bulwa; from Guyana, Lewis Bobb; Jamaica, Ambassador Louis Booth; and the OECS, Dr. Vaughan Lewis, and so forth. So as far as that is concerned, Mr. President, I hope that the honourable Senate is informed.

There was the question of criteria. Certainly, the advisory committee would have had their criteria to operate with. The mandate given to them was that they select outstanding persons who had made outstanding contributions to the development of the Caribbean area. That, in a general sense was their mandate—Outstanding contributions to the development of the area. They, in their wisdom, would have looked at the entire situation and made their recommendations to the Heads. How they broke the mandate down, and so on, I am not in a position to say at the moment, but as far as the criteria are concerned, that is what we have on our records.

The question of whether there should be posthumous awards—and, interestingly, Sen. Wade Mark asked us to be more broadminded and he, in asking us to be more broadminded spoke only of labour leaders. But posthumous awards; there was that question, I want to assure you that it has been decided that there would be no posthumous awards for the Order of the Caribbean Community. But if we are to go back in our history, there is the possibility of eventually having some further mechanism for recognizing those people who have passed on, but who have made contributions to the development of the region. So I want to assure the Senate, that that is also in motion at this time.

Sen. Wade Mark then brought up an interesting point which I have heard before and which was repeated by a couple of other people about the elitist group. I really cannot see what the argument is about the creation of an elitist group—that by giving awards to outstanding people in the Caribbean, you are creating an elitist group. I have said it over and over: every society and every civilization recognizes superior achievement.

If in recognizing superior achievement you are being accused of creating an elitist group—I do not know what to say maybe all countries should give up recognition of their nationals.

Maybe awards should not be given in the field of art and culture or any other field of human endeavour.

How are we creating this elitist group, by recognizing people who have achieved and who have made a contribution? Indeed, what you are doing by highlighting these people is pointing to the younger people, and to the generations to come, standards to which they may aspire. These people, having achieved what they have achieved, ought to serve as an inspiration, rather than as an elitist group.

I do not know if you want to recognize Sir Garfield Sobers, Sparrow, Naipaul or Selvon. Are you creating an elitist group by recognizing these people? Have the English created an elitist group by recognizing Shakespeare, Milton, Keates and all their playwrights and so forth?

SITTING OF THE SENATE

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. President, with a view to assuring that the Opposition leaves here fully informed this evening, I move that the sitting of the Senate continue after the third reading of the bill.

Question put and agreed to.

ORDER OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY BILL

Hon. R. Maraj: Thank your very much, Mr. President, and I also want to thank the Senators for allowing me to continue with my contribution.

I was making the point, Sir, that all societies recognize their heroes and we would indeed be failing the future, as it were, if we did not ourselves do it.

There was the point, as well, that privileges should not be extended to the family of the recipients. I think Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt handled that very well. I see no problem with the family of any recipient having the privileges extended to them. That seemed to be a problem, as well, for Sen. Wade Mark but I cannot understand why.

Sen. W. Mark: On a point of clarification. The issue of privileges is one that needs some clarification and we have to look at it very carefully.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt alluded earlier to that statement that I made. I just want to allay the fears of the Minister that while he is creating the privileges and so on, we have to be very careful. It is not to say that we on this side do not want to recognize contributions made by citizens, but we are looking at the dangers, and so on that could be involved in that exercise.

Hon. R. Maraj: Well, I am very happy to see that the Senator is finally coming around and accepting the argument.

Sen. W. Mark: Not coming around, just clarifying.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, on the question of privileges—because there still seems to be some confusion—the hon. Minister has said that the

privileges would be extended to the families. In fact, only the privilege of travel will be so extended, if I understand the bill, and the privilege of property ownership would not be extended to the family. At least, I do not see how it can be, given our existing law.

Hon. R. Maraj: The bill states very clearly that one is going to acquire citizenship, and it seems very clear as far as the family is concerned. Let me just get to that point dealing with the family, Mr. President:

“The spouse of a member of the Order and those children of a member who have not attained the age of 18 years, shall be accorded privilege conferred by paragraph 1(d).”

Which says:

“to be issued with a travel document designed to facilitate travel within the Caribbean Community and which would enjoy in every member State a like status as a diplomatic passport issued by or on behalf of the Government of any such State.”

The whole question rests on the fact that it is common Caribbean citizenship and once you are granted that citizenship, you are given all the rights that go with that. That is also to answer the question that was raised earlier on by Sen. Cowie, dealing with all the other matters of travel, ownership of property and diplomatic passports and so on. That is our position as far as that is concerned.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, it seems to be an extremely important point that we seem to be having two views on. I should like to know what the Government’s position is, then we can determine if what is in the legislation is in accordance with the Government’s position. My interpretation of the legislation would be that the man who gets the citizenship has all the rights, if he can own property. If he wills that property to his son, who is not a citizen, that son by our laws can only hold that property if the Aliens (Landholding) Act, or whatever has replaced it, allows that. Otherwise, he cannot own it. But there seem to be some Members here who feel that he can. It is important that we understand, one, what the Government’s intention is and, two, what the legislation is actually doing for us.

Hon. R. Maraj: It is very clear that if, according to the bill, you are given common Caribbean citizenship, all that goes with the status of a citizen is afforded to you. That is our position on that.

I am trying to go quickly, Mr. President. We dealt also with what I consider to be the very unfortunate part of this debate, when attempts were made—and I think Sen. Daly handled it very well—in this Senate to denigrate the character of people, more specifically, the recipients of these awards, when, indeed, these people cannot defend themselves here. That, as I indicated before, is one of the more unsavoury aspects of this debate and I consider it very unfortunate, indeed, that it should descend to that level.

Opinions vary, Mr. President, and opinions will always vary as to the merits and demerits of citizens, as to whether people deserve awards or not. But it is a sign of the level at which you are operating, really, to come into this honourable Senate and use the cover of parliamentary protection to attack people in a most vicious way by suggesting that they are not deserving of the awards. I am not about to defend anybody here; that is not my purpose. The awards were decided upon by the advisory committee, accepted by the Caribbean Heads of Government. But to think that a person of the calibre of Derrick Walcott, for example, would be subjected to such unfair criticism, that it would be suggested in this Senate that he is undeserving of the Order of the Caribbean Community, is going too far, in my view.

Sen. Baksh: Mr. President, on a point of clarification here. I rise because I made reference to Derrick Walcott, and nowhere in my contribution did I say that he did not deserve this award, nor did I attack him in any way. I said he is a talented playwright. I mentioned that like so many others in this field, he has entertained and educated our Caribbean people. But what I went on to say—perhaps the hon. Minister did not understand my language—is that while I agree that the Minister is accustomed to writing scripts, I would urge him, please, do not make an attempt like that on my contribution. My question was, not why Derrick Walcott, but why Derrick Walcott in lieu of other cultural maestros. He did not do his homework and come here and tell us why these people were chosen. That is all I was enquiring about.

Thank you, Sir.

Hon. R. Maraj: Well, as unsuccessful as it is, I am glad to see that the Senator is attempting to extricate herself from what I consider to be a grave error indeed. Mr. President, I am sure that she is now repentant.

Sen. Baksh: Why does the Minister not answer the question?

Hon. R. Maraj: I am sure she is now repentant as she ought to be.

Sen. Baksh: I challenge the Minister to answer it. Answer it.

Hon. R. Maraj: She has answered her own question and has gone on to prove what I was saying earlier on.

Much of the debate went on about that. Not only this Senator, but indeed several Senators on that side questioned the validity of the achievement of the people who have received these awards, and sought to suggest that other people should have been awarded instead of these people, and in so doing suggesting that they were not deserving. And it reminds me of a similar kind of suggestion that emanated in another place from the Opposition, that these three recipients were undeserving geriatrics. That was the disparaging term used.

Mr. President: I think enough has been said about the merits and demerits of the individuals who have received the OCC. I think the Minister was within his rights to make the comments that he made and I think that following the explanation by Sen. Baksh, everybody saw that generally nobody was questioning whether the three people deserved it or not. They were merely trying to make a point that there were others who may have been equally or more deserving and I think we should leave it at that.

Hon. R. Maraj: Mr. President, you are indeed very generous in your interpretation and I am sure that that adds to your stature in this honourable Senate. But you would accept the fact, as well, Sir, that I think it is my duty when I see innocent citizens attacked to rise to their defence.

In fact, if I remember clearly—and I have my notes—Mr. William Demas was referred to as overrated, and as having pronounced on economic policy for the Caribbean but the Caribbean had not achieved it, and so why should he be given an award? That is indeed very unfair and I must comment on it. It is indeed a very simplistic view for anyone to sit and say, because a man puts forward an economic theory or dream for a region and because it has not yet been achieved or because it has not been achieved within a certain period, that the man is undeserving of an award. That is what was said.

Sen. Baksh: Mr. President—

Hon. R. Maraj: Mr. President, I am not giving way.

Sen. Baksh: Mr. President, on a point of clarification. What I said is that this role on the Caribbean stage as a champion of Caribbean integration is highly overrated. I seek your protection, Sir, from the Minister with his theatrical antics.

Hon. R. Maraj: Again, another mundane reference to my former career and I knew I would be assailed with that from the time I entered the Senate.

Sen. Baksh: Because you are acting.

Hon. R. Maraj: That is what she thinks, and she is a stranger to the truth of her own utterances. When you hold a mirror before certain people, Mr. President, and they are able to see their own faces, they duck from it and that is the ugliness that went on in this Senate today. I am not going to be quiet about it, because that is why the people of our country continue to lose respect for our politicians.

Sen. Merritt: Personal vendetta?

Hon. R. Maraj: It is not a personal vendetta: it is a debate we are dealing with and you cannot be allowed to come here and attack people.

Mr. President, those are some of the major issues that came up during the course of the debate and I do not have much more to say except to ask this honourable Senate to support this bill for the Order of the Caribbean Community, 1992. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

Senate in committee.

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

Clause 4.

Question proposed, That clause 4 stand part of the bill.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. Chairman, on the question of clause 4, we had made an observation that the President of our republic ought not be dragged into this kind of situation, particularly when you bear in mind the fact that these are executive decisions taken by governments throughout the region and you find that the President is being brought into the picture in order to determine whether people should be granted privileges or not, given their situation. Sen. Cowie, raised the issue, and we should like that question clarified. Maybe the Minister would like to develop this point a little further.

Sen. Huggins: Mr. Chairman, if I may suggest, this is one of the instances where “the President” is used but, in fact, what happens is that the Minister advises the President to act in a certain way. The Minister is responsible for citizenship and this is how it operates under the present Immigration Act, where the President has a function to perform. It is a matter which the Minister takes to Cabinet, Cabinet agrees and the Minister then advises the President, who act accordingly.

Sen. W. Mark: All right. Well, we are so guided.

Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the bill.

Clause 5 ordered to stand part of the bill.

6.40 p.m.

Schedule.

Question proposed, That the Schedule stand part of the bill.

Sen. Capildeo: Mr. Chairman, we need clarification under Article VII paragraph 1(c), which says that a member of the Order is entitled to—

"reside and engage in gainful occupation in any member State and to acquire and dispose of property in the same manner in all respects as citizens of any Member State;"

It would appear, at first glance, that if a member of the Order has all the rights of a citizen, and can acquire and dispose of property in the same manner as a citizen, then his family will also be the beneficiary of those rights. We should like to get from the Government what their view is on that. Is the member alone to be the beneficiary of the Order?

If that is so, then (c) will have to be amended. If it is not, then his family could share in the benefits which flow from his position as a member who can acquire and dispose of property. So, we need some clarification on (c).

Sen. Huggins: Mr. Chairman, the only benefit accorded the spouse, or a member of the family under 18 years, of the holder of the award is what is set out in paragraph 1(d), which relates to the granting of a diplomatic passport.

It is a fact that the holder of the OCC, has the right to acquire and dispose of property, like any other citizen in Trinidad and Tobago. If your fear is that his—

Sen. Capildeo: I have no fear; I just want to know.

Sen. Huggins: I am clarifying this. Citizenship is not accorded to his children or his spouse.

Sen. Capildeo: I am not on the question of citizenship. I am on the question of his ability to acquire and dispose of property as if he were a citizen; and if he could do so, then it appears to me, on the face of this, that his family will be the beneficiary of that power.

Sen. Cowie: It is more a question of devolution.

Sen. W. Mark: If he dies, what happens to the property?

Sen. Capildeo: Or if he disposes of the property?

Sen. Huggins: If he dies, then the succession laws take effect. An ordinary citizen of Trinidad and Tobago has children who are not citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. What happens if he dies?

Sen. Capildeo: Then, it means that the benefits that he gets as holder of the Order of the Caribbean Community flows.

Sen. Huggins: Yes, it flows. It flows in terms of succession. I really do not see the concern. You are giving the man a certain benefit. Are you saying that if he dies that benefit must stop there?

Sen. Capildeo: This is what I am asking to have clarified.

Sen. Huggins: No, it does not stop there. If it is that who is to benefit from it may be a non-citizen—let us say his son is an American citizen—and let us assume, for example, that the Foreign Investment Act affects ownership of property, then he would have to go through the process of getting the necessary approvals to own that property.

Sen. Capildeo: It is not an automatic extension?

Sen. Huggins: No. Even in the case of a born citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, it could not be. You are a citizen of Trinidad—I take it—and if you acquire property and your children are citizens of Rome, then the Foreign Investment Act, if it applies, would take effect; it would not flow naturally. When your executor acquires a grant of appointing—

Sen. Capildeo: I will appoint you my attorney, so have no fear about that.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the bill be reported to the Senate.

Senate resumed.

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

Motion made and question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, August 11, 1992 at 1.30 p.m. [Hon. R. Huggins]

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.58 p.m.