

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, March 28, 1995***SENATE***Tuesday, March 28, 1995*

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. John Rooks to continue to be absent from sittings of the Senate until March 31, 1995. I have also granted leave to Sen. Surendranath Capildeo to be absent from sittings of the Senate during the period March 27 to April 2, 1995.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: I have been advised that His Excellency the President has appointed Mr. Verne Richards to be a temporary Senator during the absence from the Senate of Sen. Surendranath Capildeo, with effect from March 28, 1995.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Verne Richards took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
(Appointment of)**

Mr. President: I have received the following communication dated March 28, 1995 from the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

“Dear Mr. President,

I wish to inform you that at a sitting held on Friday, March 24, 1995, the House of Representatives agreed to the following resolution which was moved by the Leader of Government Business:

‘Be it resolved

That this House consider that it is expedient that a committee of both Houses be appointed to consider the Companies Bill, 1995 and the Securities Industry Bill, 1995.’

The resolution is accordingly forwarded for the concurrence of the Senate.

Yours faithfully,

Occah Seapaul
Speaker”

FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

Bill to vary the appropriation provided for by the Appropriation Act, 1994 and to authorize the utilization of any sums occurring from a reduction in expenditure under certain Heads of Expenditure for the purpose of meeting any liability incurred through the increase in expenditure under other Heads [*The Minister of National Security*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate [*Hon. R. Huggins*]

Question put and agreed to.

PAPERS LAID

1. Special Report No. 1/95 of the Ombudsman of Trinidad and Tobago. [*The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins)*]
2. Draft White Paper on Food and Agriculture Policy 1995 to 1997. [*Hon. R. Huggins*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*Hon. R. Huggins*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1992. [*Hon. R. Huggins*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Wade Mark:

**Retrenched Employees
(Outstanding Money Owed)**

- 16.** Could the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives state:
- (i) The outstanding sums of money still owed by employer to employees who were retrenched during the period 1981 to 1991?
 - (ii) The names of the companies and the number of workers involved?
 - (iii) What steps are being utilised by his Ministry to have these sums settled?

National Carnival Commission

- 21.** (a) Is the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs aware that for the years 1992, 1993 and 1994, the National

Carnival Commission has failed to submit financial statements in accordance with section 24(2) of the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 1991?

- (b) Is the Minister also aware that the National Carnival Commission has failed to submit audited statements of accounts and accompanying reports of the Auditor General in accordance with section 24(5) of the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 1991?
- (c) If the answers to (a) and (b) are in the affirmative, could the Minister explain to the Senate the failure and/or negligence of the Commission to submit financial statements and audited statements of accounts and reports of the Auditor General referred to above?
- (d) Could the Minister advise this Senate as to what steps are being taken to ensure that the National Carnival Commission complies with the provisions of section 24 of the Act?

**Provision of Estimates
(National Carnival Commission)**

- 22.** Could the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs please provide the Senate with the Estimates of Income and Expenditure of the National Carnival Commission for the financial years 1992, 1993 and 1994 and the final budgets approved by the Minister for the same period in accordance with the provisions of section 21(1) and (2) of the Act?

Sen. Wade Mark: Mr. President, I have been informed by the Acting Leader of Government Business that question No. 16 is not ready and that he requires two weeks to complete this exercise. Similarly, questions Nos. 21 and 22 are not ready and would require another week. I have reluctantly consented to accommodate the Government at this time.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. President, I seek the leave of the Senate to deal with Government Business, Motion No. 1, at this stage, before proceeding to Motions under Private Business.

Agreed to.

1.40 p.m.

**INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
(PARLIAMENTARY DECLARATION FOR)**

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. President, I beg to move,

Whereas Parliamentarians for Global Action, a non-governmental organization, has prepared a Parliamentary Declaration in support of the establishment of an International Criminal Court;

And whereas the Declaration calls for the establishment of an International Criminal Court to administer justice against crimes at the international level. Such a Court would provide support for the rule of law in democratic systems and for the preservation and advancement of democratic structures of Government globally;

And Whereas Parliamentarians for Global Action has circulated this Declaration to Parliamentarians of many member countries of the United Nations for their support and signature;

And Whereas the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, with the support of several other member countries of the United Nations initiated the process for the establishment of such a Court at the 1988—1989 sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations;

Be It Resolved that this honourable House support the Parliamentary Declaration in support of an International Criminal Court, such Declaration to be signed by Parliamentarians;

And Be It Further Resolved that this honourable House is of the view that the said Parliamentary Declaration should be attached to Trinidad and Tobago's comments on the draft Statute for an International Criminal Court prepared by the International Law Commission, which document and comments thereon are to be discussed at the meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Committee commissioned by the General Assembly of the United Nations by Resolution 49/L.24 scheduled for April 3 to 15, 1995.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Sen. Wade Mark: Mr. President, I beg to second the Motion moved by the honourable Leader of Government Business and hope that this particular thrust to establish this International Criminal Court would materialize in the not too distant future.

International Criminal Court

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We know, Mr. President, that the mover behind this particular Motion is not the Leader at this time. I hope that at the end of the day we would be able to get some justice and that global support and action for the establishment of such a very important court of justice against the criminal gangs that reign supreme in many parts of the world today.

Thank you.

Seconded by Sen. Wade Mark.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this honourable House support the Parliamentary Declaration in support of an International Criminal Court, such Declaration to be signed by Parliamentarians:

Further resolved:

That this honourable House is of the view that the said Parliamentary Declaration should be attached to Trinidad and Tobago's comments on the draft Statute for an International Criminal Court prepared by the International Law Commission, which document and comments thereon are to be discussed at the meeting of the *Ad Hoc* committee commissioned by the General Assembly of the United Nations by Resolution 49/L.24 scheduled for April 3 to 15, 1995.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE
(FIRST REPORT)**

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate [Tuesday February 7, 1995]:

Be it Resolved:

That the Senate take note of the First Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee 1993—1994 session. [*Sen. M. Hosein*]

Question again proposed.

Sen. Wade Mark: Mr. President, I rise to make my contribution on this report before this honourable Chamber focussing on the work of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee for the period July 29, 1992 to July 15, 1993.

Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee
[SEN. W. MARK]

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Before getting into the meat of this contribution I want to deal with the whole concept of accountability in a parliamentary democracy. As you know, Mr. President, the role of this particular committee is to ensure that taxpayer' moneys are properly expended and that, at the end of the day, we can get greater efficiency, economy—and as the Auditor General said—effectiveness in the delivery of services and the overall operation of the particular enterprise in question.

I have a report here entitled Report on the Integrity Symposium 1993. On page 123 of this report a definition is given by the Assistant Auditor General, Marie Knights, who made a contribution at the symposium when it was held. I quote:

"Accountability has been defined as an obligation to answer for a responsibility that has been conferred. Put simply, accountability is 'answerability'."

She went on further in her statement to indicate:

"The issue of Accountability has become crucial and visible and governments have been taking note. It has been said that democracy may be in greater danger from internal collapse than from external enemies. Its survival in the long run may depend on its ability to regenerate itself, to prove that accountability and the supremacy of Parliament are not just words mouthed by politicians, but, part of the reality of Government."

Mr. President, as we get into this very important report before us, we have to deal with the issue of real accountability, both in terms of public and financial accountability to the population of Trinidad and Tobago and to see to what extent the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is living up to doing whatever is necessary to provide the population of Trinidad and Tobago with greater accountability in its day-to-day operations re: the public finances.

If we look at the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee's report, very salient recommendations were advanced for consideration by the Parliament of this country, and I wish to quote some of the proposals that they have, in fact, advanced for consideration by this Parliament. It is to be noted that on page 11 of this report, under recommendations, a number of important areas have been advanced. This committee has some 10 members. I recall on the last occasion when my colleague and namesake spoke, he made reference as if he was referring to a threat to our democracy based on some of the ideas that were being advanced by this very report.

What is significant, Mr. President, is that this committee is made up of 10 members, six of whom are Members of the Government. I do not believe that this report is a minority report. I do not believe that this report is a report of the Chairman of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. This is a report that has the approval of the entire committee. I want to mention the names of the members of that committee so, at least, we would understand what is at stake here.

These recommendations should have the support of the Government and it would be very disappointing if the Government now seeks to amend this report, by saying that it is in support of one area but it is not in support of another area. We hope that the Government would not be so bold to deal with that kind of arrangement. On page 11 under recommendations, the committee sought to ensure that there was transparency with regard to the selection in the tendering procedure. It means that the committee that interviewed, investigated and analyzed the audited accounts and the balance sheets of the state enterprises were not sufficiently impressed with the whole question of transparency on the issuing of contracts to various persons or organizations.

To this end the committee repeatedly requested that it be informed whenever contracts were not awarded to the lowest bidder and the bidder be informed of the reasons for his or her non-selection.

One would have thought that any state enterprise that is engaged in an exercise of awarding contracts would have as one of its guidelines such a procedure. I do not understand why a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee has to appeal to the various state enterprises involved. A few were mentioned in this report, where the actual emphasis was made on the question of a procedure that ought to be adopted when issuing contracts.

1.50 p.m.

As I said, one would have thought that it would have been an automatic approach on the part of these state enterprises. Apparently, this is not to be. We, on this side would really like to know, and maybe the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries could provide us with some answers, seeing that he is the person responsible for the energy sector. In the case of the Trinidad and Tobago Petroleum Company Limited on page 10—books being assessed, accounts being analyzed for the period January 1986 to December 31, 1988—the report refers to the need for approval. The Committee recommended that approval should be sought from the board and the committee was informed by letter of the reasons when a major contract was not given to the lowest bidder.

There is something strange taking place in some of the state enterprises.

What the committee pointed out in its report is that there appears to be some kind of committee within this particular state enterprise that is taking decisions and not having the matter referred to the board that is responsible for the overall operation and direction of this particular agency in question. I am saying that that is an area that we need to look at, to determine whether all is well. Why someone submits a bid to do X or Y and that bid happens to be below one submitted by A, let us say Y submits a low bid, and A submits a very high bid in terms of cost, what are the reasons? maybe there could be justifiable reasons.

Mr. President, we are debating a matter and we do not have the facts before us; we do not have the information so I have to be speculating, assuming and saying, "Look, yes, maybe it is so, maybe it is not so." But then, as a Parliament, debating a report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, we ought to have more comprehensive information in our possession. This is precisely what the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee has been saying, that it needs to have more research staff. It is the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, not the Opposition office. We have outgrown the Opposition office and we are going to outgrow this Government shortly. The point is we are arguing—and I support the view expressed by the committee when it says the committee recommended and supported previous recommendations for investigative staff to be attached to the PA(E)C to assist the committee. How can we be serious about accountability? How can we be serious about transparency and scrutiny in public affairs when the relevant parliamentary institutions are not provided with the relevant and necessary backup staff? I will tell you.

This is not the first time that such an appeal is being made. If one goes back to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee's report for the period 1987 to 1989—I have a copy here—one would see on page 5 that there is a section which deals with constraints. In this report it also referred to the same kind of difficulty. It is not something that is new, it has been repeating itself. I think that the time has come for us to take this matter very seriously.

Mr. President, do you know what is the base of this matter? The base of this matter is that for the last five years the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago has been appealing to this Parliament through her reports for more staff. They need more manpower. As is known the Auditor General is the agency that assists the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. If the Auditor General does not have the necessary staff, or does not have the necessary quota of professional and

technical manpower to investigate and to audit all the ministries, statutory boards and authorities, all the departments and state enterprises, one could well appreciate the difficulty that the Auditor General's Department is having in providing adequate staff to deal with the work of the relevant committee we are now analyzing and investigating. I think that this Senate has to look very seriously at the recommendation of the committee to ensure that it has the relevant and necessary support, so that they can do their work swiftly.

I would like to note, as well, a grave weakness that is involved in this Committee called the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. If one looks at the report very closely, what does one see? There are a number of enterprises that were examined by this committee. If one takes a look at the periods when these reports were actually examined, most of them date back to 1986, 1987 and in the case of the Trinidad and Tobago Oil Company between 1983 to 1986. Those reports were being examined by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee in the year 1993. How can we justify to the population these wide gaps in the final submission of the audited statements and accounts to the Auditor General, or from the Auditor General to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee?

Sometimes heads of department and enterprises leave office, and when they do so it is very difficult for the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee or any other committee for that matter to summon these people to engage in serious scrutiny of the operations. What we have here is a very serious weakness. To my mind, that damages democracy, it undermines the parliamentary system that we are supposed to be promoting and advancing in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.00 p.m.

This is why I was not surprised when I got this press release. It is entitled: "Reducing the Democratic Deficit". Mr. President, you featured in this report as a member participating and, I am sure you would support all of these recommendations that were put forward, seeing that you have now supported our very call for parliamentary committees.

Mr. President: —supported everything?

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I did not see a minority report here so I could only assume.

Mr. President: That is a press release. I am sure every parliamentarian did not express all those views; they were views which came up.

Sen. W. Mark: Okay, Mr. President. With that aside, I think the principles advanced in this press release really coincide with our thinking. We have been agitating, arguing and advancing the need for us to deepen the democratic process in our country; the need for us to deal with the question of parliamentary committees to investigate publicly. My colleagues say that we have different traditions from the United States. Yes, I agree. But there is need to get the population involved because, as this press release reveals, there is a deficit in our democracy. The population is not directly involved in the way it ought to be involved. I want to refer to a specific paragraph on page 2 of this report. I quote:

"The modernization of the parliamentary system was highlighted as critical to the reform process. Greater use should in particular be made of parliamentary committees .."

I am sorry that Sen. Ainsley Mark is not here.

"...independent from partisan politics."

In other words, when one is on a parliamentary committee one sheds one's political garments and deals with the public business. It goes on:

"These parliamentary committees should be investigative bodies to examine bills and policies before they are passed. Parliamentarians were urged to be more constructive and less adversarial so committees can help to solve the society's problems."

Sen. Huggins: Mr. President, I wonder if the hon. Senator understands all that he reads.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, may I advise my hon. Friend and colleague that this is nothing new, even though it was published in London as a press release in February, 1995.

I have the report of the Constitution Commission. This commission was chaired by the late Hon. Sir Hugh Wooding. It is dated January 22, 1974. What this release says in terms of parliamentary committees and their investigative powers is what the Hugh Wooding Commission had recommended in 1974 on page 63 of its report, under the heading: "Parliamentary Committees". We had visionaries back in the 1970's who were seeking to deal with this democratic deficit which has now developed in 1995 and maybe before. In 1974, they were advancing the need for parliamentary committees to be given the power to summon Ministers before them; to summon whoever it was necessary to summon. This section of the Hugh Wooding Commission report was not accepted by the

then PNM. They selected certain portions which were convenient to them at the time, but left out very fundamental sections. This area is an important area. If I may just indulge in a particular passage here. Listen to what this commission said at paragraph 265 on page 64:

"Accordingly, we recommend that the importance of the committee system should be emphasised by enshrining it in the Constitution itself."

The following committees were recommended with specific areas of policy and legislation:

- "(1) Finance and Estimates
- (2) Public Accounts Committees (Ministries and Departments)
- (3) Public Accounts Committees (Statutory Authorities and Nationally Controlled Companies)."

We have those too but they are weak. It goes on:

"(4) External and Caribbean Affairs"

Mr. President, you would always refer me to the Standing Orders on this matter. I continue:

- "(5) Labour, Industry and Commerce
- (6) Agriculture
- (7) Constitution and Legal Affairs
- (8) Education and Social Services."

These were some of the committees that the Hugh Wooding Commission had recommended. At that time there was talk about a National Assembly as a replacement for the Parliament. What they were trying to do was to get away from the very point that I raised in this document when my colleague asked whether I understood what I was reading. This press release states:

"Parliamentarians were urged to be more constructive and less adversarial so committees can help to resolve the society's problems."

Listen to what the commission said in 1974, Mr. President. I quote paragraph 264:

"There is no attempt at specialisation and there is little likelihood of inducing the Government to make any significant concession after the public debate. All of this places an emphasis on the confrontation aspect of parliamentary politics—"

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We have to understand that parliamentary politics is confrontation. Therefore, we have to move the PNM. Just as how the PNM did everything to rid the country of the NAR, everything has to be done to rid the country of the PNM. We are not here for window dressing; we are here to form the Government.

What Sir Hugh Wooding and his commissioners were seeing and forecasting was that this adversarial parliamentary politics will continue to exist unless a system of parliamentary committees was established. The commission stated:

"All of this places an emphasis on the confrontation aspect of parliamentary politics—Government and Opposition adopting combative stands in a mock battle the result of which is a foregone conclusion. Admittedly, this can play a part in attracting public interest in the processes of government but, particularly a small country like this, our view is that solid progress is much more likely to be made by emphasizing efficiency as a result of specialisation and finding areas of consensus in the search for national development. The committee system seems to offer a useful road to the attainment of these ends."

Since 1974 the question of the system of parliamentary committees was emphasized, and today the Government is still reluctant. It is afraid to expose its operations to the population of this country. It still believes in secrecy and conspiracy rather than to tell the population what is taking place.

2.10 p.m.

On this question of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee report as it relates to the question of the committee system, I want to indulge you once more in a particular section of this Report, Mr. President, which deals with the question of the Auditor General and these state enterprises.

Under the National Gas Company, which is on page 7, the following statement is recorded in paragraph 5 of the Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee:

"The Committee was concerned that the accounts were not up to date, but was informed that the accounts from 1987 to 1990 had been audited privately and were being finalized based on the adjustments that the Auditor General had suggested."

Mr. President, you would know that the Government of this country took a decision in 1991 or 1992, if I am not mistaken, November of 1992, to allow state enterprises to hire their own private accounting firms—their own auditors.

Mr. President, let me quote from the Auditor General's Report of December 31, 1993 on this question. This is what she stated from Chapter 10, paragraph 10.07. The pages are not numbered. Under the heading: State Controlled Enterprises, and I quote:

"In November 1992, Cabinet rescinded the Memorandum of Understanding between the Auditor General and the Minister of Finance."

The Cabinet rescinded that Memorandum of Understanding.

"State Enterprises were advised by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance that they may appoint an Auditor of their choice."

The Minister of Finance advised state enterprises that they may appoint an Auditor of their choice. She goes on, Mr. President:

"To date"

That was in 1993, and I am saying, at present—

"...there is no evidence of a mechanism to facilitate the submission to Parliament of the Accounts of State Enterprises which have been audited by an Auditor other than the Auditor General and the examination of those accounts by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee."

This is what the Auditor General has said—that while the Government of this country, on the question of state enterprises—because we are dealing with state enterprises here. Mr. President, we have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in state enterprises.

Sen. Barrack: Billions!

Sen. W. Mark: Billions of dollars. In the case of ISCOTT alone, \$2 billion; BWIA, \$2 billion; T&TEC, hundreds of millions of dollars.

Sen. Barrack: TELCO.

Sen. W. Mark: CARONI as well, all of them. They have invested billions of dollars. No problem—but what is being said here is an indictment against this Government. I would like the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries or the Minister of Public Administration to tell this Parliament why, up to this time, there is no evidence of a mechanism to facilitate the submission to Parliament of the accounts of the enterprises which have been audited by an auditor other than the Auditor General; and the examination of those accounts by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. Why is there no mechanism, Mr. President?

This is a statement coming from the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago; and we want accountability from the Government on this matter.

Sen. Barrack: We will not get it. We will leave them there; they will not be there for long.

Sen. W. Mark: Why is it they remove the right of the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago to investigate the operations of state enterprises; and to examine their balance sheets and accounts? They give the right now to state enterprises to hire their own accounting firms, their own auditors; but there is no mechanism to report to this Parliament as to how this matter is going to come to the Parliament up to this time, as we speak. We have no evidence of it and the Auditor General made this statement in December, 1993; 1994 has passed and we are in 1995. Nothing has taken place. This is a very serious matter, Mr. President, and I think it reeks of all kinds of underhand—

Sen. Huggins: Mr. President, let me take the opportunity to correct that statement. I do not know if it is an error in that report, but Cabinet took no such decision. The decision of the Cabinet was that the state enterprises have the ability to appoint auditors with the approval of the Auditor General, because the Cabinet could not take such a position in light of the present provision in the Constitution. So in order to facilitate the timely reporting on the financial affairs of state enterprises, the Cabinet took a decision whereby the Auditor General—the companies were given the authority to hire auditors with the approval of the Auditor General and the Constitution only requires the Auditor General—in fact, the Constitution requires the Auditor General to report on all these accounts. The Auditor General may very well attach a copy of the accounts to her report.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I am glad that the hon. Minister has cleared some aspect of what is here, but it does not escape from what is here! This report was published in December, 1993. The Government of this country has never gone on record as denying the statement. This is a statement that is in black and white, Mr. President.

Mr. President: Anything I say here is off the record—[*off record statement*]

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I understand what you are saying about the Constitution governing the operations of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, but I am saying this is a very damaging statement in the Report of the Auditor General of August, 1993, where the Minister of National Security, the Leader of Government Business, is telling this Parliament and the country that Cabinet took no such decision. Here the Auditor General is saying that in

November, 1992, Cabinet rescinded the Memorandum of Understanding between the Auditor General and the Minister of Finance. This is in black and white; and state enterprises were advised by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance that they may appoint an auditor of their choice. To date there is no evidence of a mechanism to facilitate the submission to Parliament of the accounts of state enterprises which have been audited by an auditor other than the Auditor General and the examination of those accounts by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

Sen. Barrack: Precisely!

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I will not debate this matter any further. All I do is put on record the contradictions involved in the statement made by the hon. Minister and what is, in fact, contained in this Report.

Sen. Huggins: It is a correction.

Sen. W. Mark: It cannot be a correction.

Sen. Huggins: It is a correction.

Sen. W. Mark: Well, you must have a public press conference and tell the whole country that this statement under Chapter 10 of the Auditor General's Report of December 31, 1993 is wrong; Cabinet never took any such decision and the Auditor General is misleading the country.

Sen. Huggins: Mr. President, I never said the Cabinet did not take any such decision. All I said was that the decision was that they can appoint in concurrence with the Auditor General.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, the reason I raised this point is to deal with the kind of double-faced arrangement of this regime they call the PNM on the question of public accountability.

Sen. Richards: Double-speak.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, the Auditor General is the main agency responsible for auditing all our public finances—how they are expended, and so forth—whether there is efficiency, efficacy and the question of economy for every dollar that is spent in a state enterprise or a government ministry.

The Auditor General has been crying out for more professionals. The Government is prepared to allow their friends who have auditing firms and accounting firms to engage in auditing the accounts of state enterprises. We do not know how much it cost the taxpayers as yet. I may have to file a question to

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find out how much money we have expended since this decision was taken in 1992 and even before, Mr. President.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. President, it can be argued that that same money that has been given to private firms to audit our state enterprises could have been channelled into the Auditor General's Department to increase the staff so the work could be carried out.

Now we have a situation where many of these state enterprises are bypassing the Auditor General and there appears to be duplication of responsibility, because the Auditor General now has to vet those accounts to make sure everything is all right before they can be tabled in Parliament. So the Auditor General has to do the work, maybe, in many instances, of the very auditing firm that has been hired at a cost of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money.

I think it is a very important point that we need to note in terms of the concerns of the Auditor General regarding this matter of granting the privilege to state enterprises to hire auditors at will.

One of the proposals which has been advanced—and I think it is important to note in the case of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee Report—the Constitution Commission of 1987 headed by Sir Isaac Hyatali made some observations about the role of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, and certain recommendations were made by the commission to at least ensure that the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee functioned more effectively.

For instance, if one looks at page 159 of the Constitution Commission Report of 1987, the following was recommended:

"(a) section 116(3)..."

of the Constitution

"...should be amended to provide that the Auditor General shall carry out audits of the accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all State enterprises owned or controlled by the State;"

Mr. President, the commission, in 1987, proposed to the country and the Government of the day that all state enterprises "shall" be audited by the Auditor General's Department. It must be left to the Auditor General to determine if it wants X or Y to audit a firm and not for the Minister of Finance to instruct a company to hire its own auditors. The Auditor General must have that authority.

That is where things become very shady and we become very suspicious as to what is taking place.

Another point that was made here in this report is:

“(b) all references to the conduct of audits in subsection (2) and (3) ...”

A very important point, Mr. President. In the Constitution there is no reference to comprehensive audits. The Hyatali Report advanced that we should include comprehensive audits in all those reports that are being submitted to Parliament concerning state enterprises.

The commission went on to define... *[Interruption]* Well, the definition of comprehensive auditing is contained in paragraphs 1.3 and paragraph 297 of the Auditor General's Report of 1987. It said that this would be suitably adapted and included in section 116. So, we have to refer to the Auditor General's Report on the concept of comprehensive auditing.

Most importantly, in section (d) of this report, it states that 117(5) of the Constitution should be amended to provide for the inclusion of a fiscal vote over which the Auditor General shall have control subject to his accountability for its use.

The Auditor General's Department is an independent creature under our Constitution, yet the central government allocates a vote, resources or provides a budget *[Interruption]* Well, Parliament does it, but what I am saying is that the Government of the day would be responsible for releasing funds for the Auditor General's Department. If that were not so, what explains the fact that the Auditor General could place in his report every year the need for more staffing? If the Auditor General's Department had an independent fiscal vote then that department would have to be accountable in terms of its use, and, I submit, that Department would not have the kind of problems that it is now having in terms of virtually begging for money from this Government to employ more personnel.

What I am saying is that the Hyatali Commission recognized the need for more power and authority in terms of a fiscal vote to the Auditor General's Department. It also wanted to ensure that comprehensive auditing is conducted. It is called "value for money auditing". So we would know how every dollar was spent in a state enterprise; whether it was badly spent or not. *[Interruption]* Maybe, it is part of what that means. Maybe the hon. Minister Draper can define what that concept means.

Sen. Draper: Mr. President, perhaps, I can help the hon. Senator. The Auditor General has, in fact, been conducting comprehensive audits. There are specific

purpose audits; there is a plan to do those audits and reports have, in fact, been submitted on the basis of comprehensive audits already done. It does not mean that one goes in and does a comprehensive audit every time one goes in. It is an audit that recognizes that one looks beyond the financial auditing to look at other aspects of the management of resources. Those things are not generally done every year in every organization, but they are done in a planned and phased way in particular aspects of the operation of a company, a ministry, or department.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I understand what my hon. Friend has said, but what he did not understand, that was coming out of this report, is that this report was recommending that the Constitution of the country be amended under section 116(3) to include the word "comprehensive" so it would not be done in a piecemeal fashion. It would be done on a regular basis. That is what was being proposed.

Sen. Draper: Mr. President, the Auditor General has, in fact, recognized that they can do comprehensive auditing under the existing umbrella of the law and they have been doing it.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, if that is so, how has the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, since it came into existence in the new Parliament of 1992, never received before it a comprehensive audit from the Auditor General's Department? How can that committee not report on that question?

What is happening is that, maybe, the Auditor General is doing so, but our Standing Orders are so backward and outdated—35 years. We need to amend those Standing Orders to make it compulsory that this Auditor General's Report should be automatically debated in this Parliament. We get reports year in, year out and the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee had to engage in a ballot to determine who is first and second in an effort to have that report debated.

I am saying it should be automatic in our Standing Orders that once there is an Auditor General's Report being tabled, it becomes a public document. It must come under Public Business, similarly, the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee Report, if this Government is serious about accountability.

I have to actually engage in some effort to urge the Government, under Private Business, to get a report debated. If we were serious about accountability, that would not have been so. We have to amend our Standing Orders to reflect the present reality. I hope that this Government, before it leaves office very shortly, would engage with the Opposition to have a comprehensive review of the Standing Orders.

2.30 p.m.

I believe that we can initiate the changes. We need to get the co-operation and support of the Government to get those Standing Orders comprehensively reviewed. I hope that the hon. Minister would be able to recognize the points that I have made, Sir.

Mr. President: The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. C. Merritt*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, there is need for us to recognize that the issue of accountability is extremely critical. I noted in this report as well, that whilst the Government is opposed to public hearings, the Auditor General believes that it is important to engage in such an exercise.

Mr. President, if you look at page 1(12) of this report you can see, for instance, where the Auditor General was referring to the role of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee and the need for us to highlight matters like waste and mismanagement and to provide a check on the waste and excessive spending by the Executive.

You would see in this report where the Auditor General is saying that the public has a right to know what is happening in the country in terms of public finances. As a matter of fact, the deputy Auditor General indicated that she was in favour of these matters being heard publicly—I was trying to get the relevant section where she, in fact, raised this particular point. The important point I am making is that we on this side are in favour of public hearings. We need to have public hearings, we need to have people come before these committees in order to be properly scrutinized and analyzed so that we would know exactly what is happening in those areas of their operations.

If this Government is in favour of greater public accountability in its financial dealings, it would have no difficulty in supporting such a recommendation. Let us go live on television. I agree with this report under "TTT", where it said that Parliament should have one camera or there should be a special camera. You, yourself, have been indicating that in other countries there is, in fact, such a system in existence.

We need to have an independent, impartial machinery to record parliamentary proceedings, not the propaganda arm called the Information Unit, that only brings

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Government information—it cuts up the Opposition, the Independents and all it shows is Senators Draper and Russell Huggins. We do not want that kind of media. We want an independent parliamentary television unit that would fairly record what is being debated in Parliament and not to simply cover up and make excuses. *[Interruption]* You cannot help it because you are in charge of it. I guess when we take over, we would have to bring about some equity in that arrangement. I agree that there is need for such a unit in this Parliament. The population is frustrated. They are not involved in the decision-making process.

If there are public hearings where the public can see the Minister of Finance being grilled by a parliamentary committee on the question of accountability—bring the Minister of National Security before a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, or a Public Accounts Committee, or a National Security Committee, the public would come alive as they see those matters taking place in their living rooms and bedrooms. There is need to have that kind of scrutiny. Everything must be held in secrecy. I know why, Mr. President.

The reason that things are being done in this way is because our Standing Orders are outdated. The Standing Orders do not allow these happenings to take place, hence the reason we need to amend our Standing Orders.

I appeal to the hon. Minister, acting on behalf of the Government today, to liaise with the Opposition and Independent Benches to establish a joint parliamentary committee to work on these Standing Orders so that there can be public hearings on these matters. The Government is afraid of this. They want to be involved in secret matters. They want to establish CIA, SIA, SSA. All they want is more power. They want more central control. They are not interested in democracy in this country. They want a dictatorship; that and God face, Mr. Manning, the Prime Minister of this country and the PNM, would never see under the UNC. Once we are here there would never be a dictatorship in this country. We would run the PNM out of this country before that ever happens—the masses I am talking about, not us. I think it is a matter of time. *[Interruption]* I am saying it is a matter of time for you all.

Mr. President, you would recall that sometime ago when the NAR was in power the PNM had a slogan, a clock, "It is just a matter of time for the NAR." We want to give it that same clock.

We on this side support the recommendations submitted by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. The question of transparency, we are in favour of that arrangement. We support the need for a larger investigative staff. It

would take a UNC government to revolutionize the parliamentary system of democracy in Trinidad and Tobago, where, for instance, the very PNM Government that would be in Opposition in 1996, would be able to benefit from that arrangement. We want to ensure that there is equality and justice in the system.

Mr. President, finally, the committee, cognizant of the fact that the "public was not fully aware of the work of the committee, recommends that sessions be held in public and the report be debated in Parliament." We are in favour of that. We support the recommendations of the committee. We would like the Government to also support it.

I would find it extremely strange for this Government not to adopt this report in full. Since the Government has six Members on this committee, two Independent and two Opposition make up the rest, it would be difficult to see how the Government at this point in time could seek to amend this report to take out certain sections under the recommendations. *[Interruption]* So the Government is in favour of public hearings.

We accept this report *[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Take note.

Sen. W. Mark: That is the limitation again. We engage in a big debate and we take note of a report. *[Interruption]* No, no, the Motion went a bit further, but we could not go further because the President would tell you, according to the rules, it would be difficult. We need to amend the Constitution, not to take control of the police service but to give greater accountability to the population of the country.

In essence, we support the recommendations advanced by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. I hope that the Government and the Minister in charge of state enterprises would take note of the key points and the rate at which they are disposing of four state enterprises. I suspect that at the next session of Parliament when there is a new Parliament, we may not have use for a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, because the PNM Government by that time, would have sold out every single state enterprise, possibly, in the next two years. Probably, that is why they are not too concerned about bringing about constitutional amendments, bringing about changes, reforming; because they want to do away with the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee; they want to do away with the Public Service Commission, the Police Service Commission, they want to appoint judges in this country—the Chief Justice. What do they want? A Papa Doc country?

2.40 p.m.

We heard that the Prime Minister said that he wants to get rid of the commissions. That and God's face they would never see once we are here, and we shall be here for a long time.

In closing, if there was any doubt in the minds of our detractors and enemies that the UNC was half dead or quarter dead, with all their efforts at attempting to denigrate, vilify, attack and undermine our party at different levels and in different ways, I am saying that the truth is that the UNC is alive, well and kicking. It is galloping very rapidly. We are moving from a gallop and we are getting into what is called a steeple chase. We are heading straight for victory whenever the Prime Minister calls an election in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.

Sen. Everard Dean: Mr. President, in piloting the Motion before the Senate, Sen. Hosein correctly advised that Sen. Mansoor resigned and Sen. Dean replaced him. What he omitted to say is that I joined the committee after May 1994. That is the date of this report. I thought I would just make that point for the record of *Hansard*. I joined the committee after the May 1994 report.

He also indicated in his contribution that he would like to examine the issue for all to see the mirage and facade that is accountability through the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. While I am tempted to agree with those words, I would prefer to say that the PA(E)C is limited by the authority of section 119 of the Constitution. It seems to me that we must look at the possible amendment of section 119 of the Constitution. When we look at section 119(8) it says very simply:

"The Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee shall consider and report...

- (a) the audited accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all enterprises...
- (b) the Auditor General's report on any such accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements."

It is clear that under the Constitution all the PA(E)C can do is to look at the financial audit as presented by the Auditor General under section 116 of the Constitution. Section 116(3) states:

"The Auditor General is hereby empowered to carry out audits of the accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all enterprises that are owned or controlled by or on behalf of the state."

Section 116(6) states:

"In the exercise of his functions under this Constitution the Auditor General shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority."

This is saying that the Auditor General's Report which deals strictly with the financial statements, would be the reports that the PA(E)C has to deal with in summoning the accounting officers to understand what the financial statements really mean, and to look at the management letter together with the accounts, to see if these things are being implemented.

Mr. President, you would agree that some of these reports are really, I think I read somewhere, ancient vintage. I would say that they are more than a decade old. By the time one gets down to look at those statements, even the very management letter that accompanies those statements would no longer be relevant to the accounts. I support the call that section 119(8) of the Constitution be amended so as to facilitate the comprehensive questioning and operations of the committee with the view of getting deeper than into the financial aspect of it. I do not think that the PA(E)C is singular in that respect.

If you would permit me to look at the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee Report which was laid on February 21, 1995, it also stated on page 4 that provision should be made for the committee to hold public hearings as is done in the British Parliament. Even the sister accounts committee is of the same view as the PA(E)C. The report also says that we should look at staffing for the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, as well as the Auditor General's Department. I would think that if we look at investigative staff at all, it should fall properly under the Auditor General's Department with the PA(E)C having access to those members of staff to do the investigative audit, because I do not feel that the committee itself should be responsible for those members of staff.

When we look at the whole question of public hearings, I recall, I think it was Sen. Ainsley Mark who suggested in his response, that we were looking at too much CNN, ABC and CBS in order to make the point that—I am sorry he is not here—we should not be looking at public hearings because people are in this Senate day in and day out. When one looks at the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee that called also for public hearings and the composition of that committee, at the back of it one would see the name Ainsley Mark figuring prominently as a Member of that committee. I must hasten to add that there he did not sign the report, but similarly, I have not seen a minority report. I assume

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somewhere along the line that there was agreement by Sen. Ainsley Mark on this Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

As section 119 indicates, the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, according to Sen. Capildeo, is formed, but there is no substance, in that the committee is there according to the Constitution, but what can it do?

2.50 p.m.

I have been on this Committee for the last six months or so and I have observed that in order to get at the bottom of the operations of the state enterprises, there is a tendency to ask political questions. To my mind, we should look at that situation and put something in the Standing Orders which would give authority to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, notwithstanding the position of the Constitution, to do a little more 'comprehensive' questioning, if I may use that word, with a view to getting at the bottom of the operation.

Strictly speaking, when one looks at the accounts for 10 years or more, or even five years, the events would have already escaped everybody and this is really not what accountability and transparency is about.

Without getting too much into the details, I recall examining a state enterprise and a question was asked on the future plans of the company. The answer to that question was: "We have developed a strategic plan, but we are playing that close to our chest." Obviously, that accounting officer had read the Constitution and he felt no obligation to answer that question in the correct manner. He, I am sure, knew that he had answered in the correct manner because he was not bound, under the Constitution, to say anything more than what the financial position was. Shortly after that I saw where shareholders threatened to close down that company and buy out the shares. I do not want to identify the person or the company at this stage, but I am sure that members of the PA(E)C would be well aware of what I am speaking about.

Having sat on this Committee for the last six months, another observation I made is that there are persons who are members of this Committee that, had I not been familiar with them, I would not have known who they were. To date, they have not attended one of the meetings that I have attended and I wonder if frustration is causing it. Already, I feel frustrated about the work of the PA(E)C, and sometimes I honestly believe that it is a waste of time attending these meetings. I hope I am wrong and that history would prove me wrong. Really and truly, from the structure of the Committee and the provision in the Constitution, that Committee cannot do very much.

Let me, in closing, say that I have a little problem with page 11 of the report. Sen. Wade Mark quoted the first paragraph under the caption "Recommendation", but to me that is a statement; that is not a recommendation. The recommendations really are in the other two paragraphs. This is saying that:

"The Committee sought to ensure that there was transparency with regard to the selection in the tendering procedure. To this end the Committee repeatedly requested that they be informed whenever contracts were not awarded to the lowest bidder and the bidder be informed of the reasons for his non-selection."

To my mind, that is not a recommendation and I am sure that the mover of the Motion would want to develop that particular section of the recommendation.

I would like to comment briefly on the question of auditing by private auditors. Sen. Ainsley Mark alluded to this and made reference to the Auditor General's report. I can state without contradiction that I have seen state enterprises' financial reports audited by private auditors and submitted to the PA(E)C under the letter of the Auditor General. To those of us who can remember, I think it was in February of this year that the National Quarries Limited was audited by a Mr. Chanka Seeterram. Certainly the name of that person is not on the staff of the Auditor General. I just thought that I would help by making this statement.

On the question of a permanent camera for the Parliament, I agree with that statement, but I recall, in examining the staff of TTT, it was pointed out—and they were very firm—that although that was said some time ago, it could not be implemented by them because of the cost of implementation and overtime.

Mr. President, I want to commend Sen. Hosein for bringing this Motion before the Senate so that we can air our views on this Committee with a view to enhancing, not only its operations, but the state enterprises themselves.

Thank you very much.

Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Barry Barnes): Mr. President, I rise with a certain reluctance and really, I suppose, in response to the invitation of my colleague, Sen. Wade Mark. Also, perhaps because of the Members of this Senate I find myself in a situation where I have seen the matter from both sides.

Let me deal with the energy companies. The reality is that under the company law of Trinidad and Tobago, companies are required to have audited statements of account laid with the Registrar of Companies by the 30th of the month after the

end of the year. For the time that I was there, Trintoc rigidly complied, and I know for a fact that Trintoproc complied. This they did on the basis of going out and having auditors who produced those accounts, but the official government auditor was the Auditor General. There was, therefore, a situation where audited accounts for the company were completed, registered and accepted under the law of this country by April 30 of the year after and yet there was what we are seeing today—the accounts for 1986, under the hands of the Auditor General, have now come to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. President, let me share with Senators the reality of the difficulty in which the persons in charge of your energy enterprises are placed, because we are in international trade and because when we meet a new contact, a new potential client, we of ourselves seek from them their financials. Among the things that they bring is their up-to-date audited accounts, one of the tools with which we make our evaluations. By the same token, when they meet us for the first time, they ask for our audited accounts, to facilitate trading. For a long time we had the situation in which Trintoc was formally instructed that out of respect for the sovereign Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, the company could not issue audited accounts until it had had consideration of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee and the—so to speak—assent of Parliament.

We have heard this afternoon that Trintoc's accounts for 1986 were considered by the PA(E)C in 1994. The end result of it—and I should not say this publicly—is that we sat there and we said—well I would not say what we said, Mr. President—but we then went ahead and carried on with our formal registered accounts done by a private auditor. And one gets the strange situation—and I have had this happen to me—that in the strictures and bustle of a very exciting market place in 1981, when the thing was all over the place, a young man from the Auditor General's Department arrived at my desk, with the sanction of the Auditor: "Stop, stop, my man, I want to find out about a transaction in 1975." With respect, Sir, no problem, I hand over the files to go through the accounts for 1975, six years later. The young man comes back and says, "Well, I do not understand what was going on here. I want you to explain it to me."

What I am really saying—to me, it is very simple. What we have tried to do under the law, the requirement is to have audited statements registered with the Registrar of Companies, and we have professional and capable audit companies. I almost hesitate to say it, but I will say it nonetheless. When you go outside

Trinidad and Tobago in an international market place with large companies that do not know us, and we presents audited statements—Coopers and Lybrand, Peat Marwick Fitzpatrick—recognized, understood, accepted, and with respect, Sir, the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago—self to himself—doubts, queries. There is, therefore, a very real dichotomy in terms of how we must proceed: recognizing the sanctity and the authority of Parliament; recognizing the reality of the international trade there must be some way to marry those two. We have tried to do this. We have said let the Auditor General give his approval—accept competent private auditors who can get the job done on time and let it be brought forward to the Parliament for consideration, for approval, under the hand of the Auditor General.

I go to one other area, Sir. For the companies that came out of, for want of a better word the multi-multinationals—Trintoc came out of Shell, Texaco—there were working tendering procedures in place. There is a situation in which, for Trintoc one may be awarding tenders, virtually petty voucher \$500.00 tenders and it may be a tender for \$5 million or even more. On every occasion the board has set particular financial authorities: tenders under such and such handle at one level; tenders under such handle at— The board has indicated which tenders and the level of the tenders that must come to the board. As I understand what the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee is recommending, perhaps even suggesting, that even outside, it would wish to see virtually all.

Let me just say that from a very practical measure, for any kind of operation—Petrotrin as it now is or even the National Gas Company—the quantum of the individual tenders in the course of everyday work would drown a board and would, in my respectful view, certainly drown any Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

Sen. Hosein: On a point of order, Mr. President. I think the Minister is misquoting what we said. The report never asked for all the tenders to come before it. We spoke specifically about those tenders not awarded to the lowest bidder, that we be informed of the reason and that the lowest bidder be informed why he has not received the tender.

Hon. B. Barnes: I am sorry if in that sense I misquoted. What I was really trying to explain is that anything as bland as that would apply equally to a tender, that is, an oil spill and the pipeline is leaking and the duty engineer is required to pick up the telephone to find the quickest available contractor. He does not even prepare an estimate; come and suck that oil out, put it in a bin and dump it. This happened at precisely 2.00 a.m, if that is the level at which the Public Accounts

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(Enterprises) Committee wishes to get involved, there is a difficulty. What I am saying is, not only for that company, not for one, two, three or four companies, but across the breadth of the industry, I think that kind of general and generic instruction really has to be looked at again.

Mr. President, I was reluctant to intervene. I intervened because perhaps, in a way, I personally have seen the other side of it and I just thought that this might help the consideration of the Senate.

I thank you.

Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh: Mr. President, first of all let me compliment and thank Sen. Muntaz Hosein for reminding us of this parliamentary mechanism, the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, which can be of invaluable service to the nation and Parliament if given the appropriate support systems in monitoring Government's expenditure in state enterprises.

It must be a serious defect within our parliamentary system that the Senate has to be asked—in this case by a Motion—to take note of the report of one of its Standing Committees. This does not even happen in a cricket club. Does this Joint Select Committee command a place for consideration in the order of any sitting of the Senate? It seems that the answer is in the negative otherwise this Motion would not have been necessary.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. President, implicit in Sen. Hosein's Motion is the plea for more diligent oversight in the use of Government's funds raised or allocated to the state enterprises. I may add, such caution is absolutely essential in every Government Ministry with their various departments. Notwithstanding the work of the Auditor General's office and other agencies in monitoring the spending of millions of dollars of state funds, it is desirable that there should be some measure of parliamentary oversight in the monitoring of the use of state funds, but this must be more purposeful, meticulous and assiduous.

I want to cite three illustrations which are reminders that all may not be well in accounting for public spending. I have received in my parliamentary package for this week, March 28, 1995, the Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Quarries Company Limited for the years 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989. Only recently the Parliament received the Auditor General's Report on the Victoria County Council for the year 1982, when the expenditure was about \$71 million. I want to come back to the one I got two days ago in my package, the

report on the accounts of the National Quarries Company Limited, after 10 years it is to be laid on the table. I am still looking for the definitions of what is the meaning of "laid on the table" and also "take note of", that are included in the Motion.

We have these reports, ten years old, to be laid on the table, a decision in my view, at its best, that is so dead, ineffective, useless and valueless—just as the other parliamentary custom "take note". I do not understand. I have heard this over and over and I realize how much time we are wasting. I know the force of those terms. Look at the serious matter in documents, material and reports like these that we are going to tell the nation, "Oh we did it, it was laid on the table." Maybe it will forever be laid on the table, until it gets under the table.

Mr. President, if today or tomorrow somebody is eager to take these reports that have been handed to me—by the way a policeman came to Chaguanas to give me these reports when there is so much greater need all over the place—reports that are ten years old and we come here for somebody on the Government's side to move and say, "I wish that it be laid on the table." I looked at those reports and I am going to quote from those reports to tell you how serious these reports are in the context of the Motion we are debating. If this is ever taken from the table or lifted from the table—incidentally, I would like to hear the parliamentary term resurrected, revised. The question is: What can the PA(E)C do now to those reports? What can this Parliament do with those reports? These are some of the comments I have lifted from the 1985 Auditor General's Report. I quote:

"The accuracy of sales for the year 1985 was not verified due to the non-availability of relevant documents. Weaknesses were also observed in the purchasing function.

The company incurred a loss of \$7,878,426.00 million for the year ended July 31, 1985 and accumulated losses at that date totalled \$16,138,493."

This is what will be laid on the table.

Mr. President, the 1986 Report. I quote:

"Weaknesses in the areas of sales, purchases, salaries and wages were observed and drawn to the attention of the company."

The same company! Nobody else, not the Minister in charge, not the Parliament, not the PA(E)C—as if the company did not know that it had accumulated losses of \$16.1 million. How ridiculous! These weaknesses and observations were drawn to the attention of the wrong person! I wonder why this was not pointed out to the

Minister in charge. No wonder the company's accumulated losses totalled \$20,669,172.

The 1987 and 1988 Reports say—something else is added. I quote:

"Weaknesses were observed in the areas of wages, salaries, debtors and fixed assets."

New development after two years. Ten years today we are told that. The company's accumulated losses were \$29,932,000—there was nobody to look into that, Sir. Something has to be wrong somewhere. This is why I am so disturbed and disgusted with these reports that the Government brings after ten years just to lay on the table. Is this good accounting of taxpayers' money? Something has to be wrong, whether with the Government at that time or whomever!

Mr. President, as Sen. Dean said—and he is quite right—to whom can we refer now if we want to ask any questions? Persons may not be there, nobody to answer questions, no documents to prove, no receipts. Would they be available after ten years? What were the monitoring mechanisms in those days? Where were they? Who investigated the reasons for these accumulated losses? Who dealt with the weaknesses that have been pointed out in these reports?

What about the Board of Directors, the Management? The horse has already bolted and this is now laid on the table and we are asked to take note of a pile of lifeless reports. A testimony of the failure of this nation and so many people in responsible positions; a failure to be better custodians of the nation's resources. Has this been a pattern for certain other state enterprises? They have been a law unto themselves and the PA(E)C is only a big joke.

Mr. President, my next illustration further strengthens my appeal for a closer and more purposeful monitoring of Government's spending, particularly now in the area of cost overruns. Why, at the end of projects, the overruns are so high? I just want to quote this for the younger generation. This is a part of our history, we remember the construction of the Hall of Justice estimated to cost \$97.5 million, but the actual cost skyrocketed to \$242.6 million. Also, the Financial Complex estimated to cost \$75.2 million in those days, the actual cost was a phenomenal \$439 million. This must be madness, whatever the explanation given. I hope that we learn from the past and avoid the errors of yesterday. It seems that we are not totally free from that kind of influence.

The last report concerns the new maximum security prison which may cost as much as \$222 million, rather than the estimated \$200 million.

3.20 p.m.

As I was saying, there are always explanations, Sir. We can always find and invent explanations—some dispute about the security equipment tied up somewhere; some talk about bridging finance and someone will lose, and we do not want to lose. Somebody will talk about the flotation of the dollar—you name it. The fact of the matter is, in the long run, the already burdened taxpayers and future generations will pay. Enough of that, Sir.

Another contemporary illustration concerning the monitoring of public spending whether in state enterprises or not: within recent times another matter has been brought to national attention in the press that may impact upon the increase of certain basic food items. Is Government satisfied that at its state enterprise, the National Flour Mills, all is well concerning the freight cost of transporting grain, and that we are not paying millions of dollars more than is really necessary? Someone's calculations show an excess of \$12 million or \$15 million in freight costs. In Trinidad and Tobago, rising prices may not only be due—as was stated by the hon. Minister of Finance on another occasion—to external factors, but possibly there are internal factors and nobody is looking at them. In those internal factors, we may have a say. Any unnecessary cost in that kind of transaction will be the burden of the consumer. Already we are seeing it. The poor man's food—hops bread and shark and doubles—has gone up.

Mr. President: Hon. Senator, I am getting lost along the way in listening for the last 10 minutes. I would appreciate if you could direct me to the part of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (First Report) that you have been dealing with.

Sen. Rev. D. Teelucksingh: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I thought of all these illustrations and I was saying we are dealing with monitoring public spending. That is my burden. This is what I get from the concern. The basic fundamental thesis of that report has to do with public spending being monitored very carefully and assiduously—diligent public spending. This is the scene I am on.

I also made reference to looking at public spending over a long period of time; the decade past. Very little can be done with that. This is why I am looking at contemporary spending practices and the need to be more diligent even now over these things. What can happen is that the next Parliament 10 years from today might be receiving a report from the National Flour Mills. This is what I am seeing. There is a link, otherwise I would not make an attempt to stray deliberately. I am seeing a problem. We have received a report from the National

Quarries Company Limited which should have been presented here 10 years ago. Ten years hence for this situation, if we do not investigate it now, we would have this same pattern repeated. I shall close because that was my last illustration.

I consider this to be so important that I believe that it is absolutely necessary while a project is on stream that monitoring should also be in effect. This is how I see Government's money should be spent. The Minister should be involved; the various ministries should be involved; the departments should be involved; this committee which we are discussing should be involved; the entire Parliament and the nation should be looking on a more regular basis at public spending. I want to close with that.

I support the Senator's Motion by making an appeal for more active and greater parliamentary and governmental support for the work of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. I add, as I am broadening my perspective in consideration of the Motion, that in Trinidad and Tobago, the man in the street expects greater diligence at all levels in monitoring public spending and resource management.

I thank you.

Sen. Carol Merritt: Mr. President, the mover of the Motion asked for wider powers and authority for the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. Section 119 of the Constitution also needs to have wider powers. Looking at the definition of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee at section 119 of the Constitution, the committee does not have the power to summon any official before it. There is need to take note of the recommendation of the mover of the Motion that the Constitution needs to be amended in that respect.

I have three main concerns with respect to this report. Firstly, the periods under review are eight or nine years gone by. In most instances, when the accounts are being deliberated upon they have become irrelevant and, in some instances, the person who was employed at the state enterprise at that time is no longer there. The Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee does not have the authority to summon that person who was the relevant official at that time. These are my observations.

On page 5 of the report, the committee made a statement about a concern it had in its deliberations with TTT. The audit report for 1989 reflected that accounts receivable, inventories and bank overdrafts were not verified by the auditor as a result of the accounting records being destroyed during the events of July 1990. In this day and age, an enterprise such as TTT should be computerized. In

computerization one of the main established practices is that the accounting systems, be it inventory, fixed assets or the general ledger of any company are backed up at different periods during the course of the year, maybe on a monthly or quarterly basis.

3.30 p.m.

Duplicates of the computer disks or diskettes could be made and some stored on-site. I do not know what the practice is at TTT—some may be stored off-site at a bank. Some people rent the facilities of the safety deposit boxes at banks to store their computer software.

Mr. President, this Report is only to take note of the recommendations, but I would like to recommend that TTT and other such enterprises, as well as other Government Departments—in computerizing their fixed assets and their accounting systems in general—should keep duplicate copies of their computer disks and diskettes and store them off-site.

Maybe the Government needs to establish a Records Department where they could store this information in case there are any disasters. In 1990, many of the records at the Police Headquarters were destroyed during the coup; and if there was a proper computer system in place with all the records being stored on the computer and files stored elsewhere, we would have been in a better position, today, to have criminal records and other files of Police Headquarters and TTT.

The Committee also talked about a merger between TTT and the National Broadcasting Company. What I would like to suggest to the PA(E)C is that after recommendations are made to the various bodies of state enterprises, there needs to be a follow up; or if there is a follow up the mover could explain in his winding up of the debate that there should be a follow up on the recommendations made to the officials that come before the committee. The recommendations and observances made by the PA(E)C should be acted upon, or else it would be just a mockery.

When we state that the reports coming before us now might be irrelevant in some instances, we are looking at Trintoc and Trinidad and Tobago Petroleum Company Limited which is now a merged company. How would that affect the recommendations coming from the Committee at present since the two companies are now merged?

The Committee has made a request to the National Gas Company that in the tendering procedures the lowest bidder should be informed of its non-acceptance. In my view, this is not an unreasonable proposal and I think all the state enterprises should have such a practice on hand.

The other area I want to address—and as I indicated I will be quite brief—is the National Flour Mills. One will note in this report that there is a mission Statement—

"The Mission of the National Flour Mills Limited is to have a continuous supply of basic foodstuff at affordable prices to the nation."

Mr. President, in looking at this mission statement one can say that the National Flour Mills has moved away from its stated mandate, because prices on basic foodstuff in this country have escalated in the last two or three years by leaps and bounds.

What agencies are going to look after keeping the basic foodstuff at a moderate level in Trinidad and Tobago at present, seeing that National Flour Mills has moved away from their mandate? It is all well and good for the Government to be blaming international factors for the increases in food prices, but one should remember that the first thing this Government did when it came into office was to liberalize trade, which has the effect it is presently having on the National Flour Mills. The policies of this Government are what causes food prices to be escalating at present; and it has also removed subsidies and transfers from basic foodstuff. So what is the purpose of National Flour Mills' stated mission here? It has moved away from its stated mission.

Mr. President, the Committee has also asked for certain things to make it function more effectively and I do not think it is an unreasonable request. The Government is thinking of reform and the recommendations the Committee has made should fall in with the reform programme and should seek to have the available staff, equipment and mechanisms to make the Committee far more effective, because accounting to the nation is of vital importance at present.

These are my comments on this report and I endorse the recommendations of this Committee.

Sen. Muntaz Hosein: Mr. President, let me start by thanking all Senators on all sides of the House for making their contribution to this historic debate. I would like to deal with some of the negative comments which polluted the otherwise high standard of the debate. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Draper: From Sen. Wade Mark?

Sen. M. Hosein: First, I will deal with one of the more positive contributions by Sen. Dean.

Sen. Dean made a point that I think we need to take note of—the question of frustration. Sen. Dean is a new Member of the PA(E)C, as he told you. You can understand, Mr. President, that Sen. Dean is less than one year on the PA(E)C and he has already reached the point of frustration. I want Members to understand that if, in Trinidad and Tobago, we are to have accountability and transparency, we must not subject the Members of the PA(E)C to frustration, otherwise the work of the PA(E)C will be hampered. Without a quorum, Mr. President, we will not be able to have meetings; and without the meetings, we will not have the accountability and transparency which we all desire.

Sen. Dean, in his contribution, talked about the recommendation re: tendering procedures and invited me to expand on that. The fact of the matter is that it became the norm for many state enterprises to award tenders to those tenderers who are not the lowest bidders, although there has been pre-qualification of tenderers.

When we found out that many of the state enterprises were involved in such practices, we tried to bring them back on-stream and requested that the Committee be informed by letter of all contracts which were awarded to anyone who was not the lowest tenderer; and furthermore that the lowest tenderer and the Committee should be given a reason why the contract was not awarded. We believe that is a very serious matter.

It is all well and good to say that there are open tenders and the lowest tenderer was not awarded the contract because there was a difficulty with whether that person could have performed the job, but not when there are pre-qualifications—because it means that all of the tenderers would have had to pre-qualify. They would have had to satisfy the board, the managing director, or his tenders committee that they were capable of doing the job; otherwise they would not be invited to tender.

3.40 p.m.

We ask the question: During examination of some of these accounts, what is the use of having a pre-qualification procedure if you will not adhere to the principle of giving the lowest tenderer the job? We are very concerned about this and you will see in the report several times we have made mention of this. Up to the time that we have made mention of these state enterprises which are carrying out these practices, I want to tell you, Mr. President, that we have not received one single letter indicating that they had not awarded a tender to anyone other than the lowest tenderer.

I want to believe, perhaps, it is being carried through and our request has been adhered to. We have no way of checking this. As you know, we have no staff, therefore, we cannot do investigative auditing. We cannot do it because we have no staff to do that.

I hope, Sen. Dean, that I have dealt adequately with those two point which you raised.

I want to now deal with Sen. Barnes, who touched on the debate of the Auditor General versus private auditors. This has been a problem from the beginning. It is not kosher for the good Minister to come today to tell us that, "Look here, this is the situation now, so we have to get private auditors to do the job so we can get our balance sheets and accounts ready because they are required internationally and by law." That is not good enough, Mr. President. This particular problem was there from the beginning and this Government, to which Sen. Barnes belongs, was there from the beginning. The problem is in all of the reports of the PA(E)C; it is not a new problem and we ask the question: Why did the Government not deal with the problem in the Auditor General's Department? Why was it allowed to reach the crisis position it has now reached? Why did the Government not give the Auditor General the staff it required? This is a recurring decimal. All the Auditor General's reports point to inadequate staffing. It points to remunerations to staff; that they are unable to keep and to attract talented people to the Auditor General's Department.

Mr. President, to come here and make it appear that this is a new problem; a problem they did not know about so they now have to deal with it is, perhaps, not true.

Sen. Barnes: Mr. President, I hope I did not give the impression that it was in any way a new problem. In fact, if I remember, I referred to my own experience on the other side of the fence and that experience, certainly, was a long time ago. One only has to look at me and one would know that.

One recognizes that it was a problem for a long time. I was merely pointing out that if you accept that these reports are available and if between the Auditor General and the Parliament the validity of a professional audit would be accepted if available on April 30 or the point thereafter—under the hands of the Auditor General, then you would get your audit reports in the same year and a number of the comments, criticisms and directions that you give would have immediate urgent relevance and I think you would find them much more acceptable.

Sen. M. Hosein: Mr. President, that is part of a story and what I was trying to say to the Minister. It is not enough to give us part of a story. He must say why the Government failed to deal with the problem in the first place. That is the point I am making. The Minister is aware of it.

Let us now move on to the more positive contribution of Sen. Merritt. She spoke about follow-up of the recommendations to state enterprises. I wish to point out to Sen. Merritt that this is done on a regular basis as a matter of procedure by the Secretary to the PA(E)C by letter. One must understand that the executive of the state enterprises are fully aware that they do not have to respond, and they do not have to respond on a timely basis. They do not have to and they are fully aware of it. This is an old problem so they would respond to what they want to respond to and whatever they do not wish to respond to, they forget about it. This is the problem we have. Unless this Parliament deals with the recommendations of this report, the PA(E)C would remain a toothless tiger.

I am very sorry that my Friend Sen. Ainsley Mark is absent today, but I hope his colleagues would carry the message to him. I want to now look at the sterile arguments of the hon. Senator. I quote from a page of the *Hansard* report of the contribution of Sen. Ainsley Mark. This is what he said:

"The whole issue of financial accountability rests upon the pillars which have been entrenched in our Constitution: the Auditor General, the PAC and the PA(E)C."

He is correct. That side is aware of the pillars of financial accountability. He has it right, but let us look a bit further at his contribution to see how it develops. I refer to another part of his contribution:

"Mr. President, not even the Public Service Commission could treat willy-nilly with the staff of this creature of our Constitution."

He continues:

"So that if we do not understand and appreciate the powers of the Auditor General, of the PAC and of the PA(E)C; if we do not understand and appreciate that they are supposed to work closely together; if for whatever reasons the chairmen of these committees do not utilize the full capacities, the experiences of people within the Auditor General's Department, it is foolhardy to come here to try to impress us otherwise."

If the good Senator had taken the time to enquire of the secretary of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee he would not come here and talk in the manner in which he had. I do not want to be derogatory of the Senator's contribution.

Here he is saying that we must work together. Let me disabuse the minds of Senators opposite and the hon. Senator who is absent. We of the PA(E)C have a very good working relationship with the Auditor General's Department. I want to let him know that, and he could have easily found that out by simply calling the Secretary of the PA(E)C.

3.50 p.m.

Hear how he continues:

"You see, what is happening here is that with the advent of cable—and I keep making the point that one of the things we have to thank the NAR for is the opening up of the airwaves and so forth—there is too much television."

Do you understand what he is saying, Mr. President? He thanked the NAR for opening up the airwaves, then he says, "there is too much television." He seemed to be arguing against himself. On the one hand, he is thanking them for opening it up, then he said we have too much television. I cannot follow the sterile argument of the hon. Senator, but it gets better. Let us go further down and we would hear what he said.

"Some of my colleagues of the Lower Benches opposite have these visions of themselves heading these powerful committees—*[Laughter]* and having our citizens both public and private appear before them in awe and trepidation."

He is talking about the hearings in public. The Senator was arguing from a personal point, very subjective, rather than being objective.

Mr. President, it is important that we understand that when we make laws in this Parliament, we should be making them for all, not especially for the present occupants of the seats. The Senator does not seem to understand that. I want the Senators opposite to tell him. He goes on:

"In this whole view of extra staff and committees and so forth, there are two facets one will treat with. Notwithstanding the small size of our Parliament, I ask the question: If we were to go along that route, if we were to take what Sen. Hosein describes as the best of the United States' system, what time would Sen. Capildeo find to be on several committees, given his onerous professional, social and religious responsibilities? When will he find time?"

Again, the Senator is subjective and personal. What a pity that he seems unable to extricate himself from the filthy river of personalities into the fresh clean waters of objectivity, hope, courage and accountability. He argues that our

Parliament is too small, and Sen. Capildeo would not have the time. We would not have accountability because, according to Sen. Ainsley Mark, we are too small and Sen. Capildeo would not have time to serve on these committees.

Mr. President, well, well, what a weak argument, if ever there was one. This is not a speech that the hon. Senator would write home about, I can assure you. It goes on and here is what he had to say:

"...there is a view that if Parliament is to exert more influence over public expenditure then the legislature will have to reduce the power being exercised at present by the executive. That is the fundamental issue; the ascendancy of the executive or that of the legislature. That is a very significant and fundamental question."

That is how the Senator deals with that.

Mr. President, our parliamentary system and the Constitution states very clearly who has the power and how it should be exercised. It is clear that the Government has the power to plan and execute the day-to-day business of running the country. But they must first have the approval of the Parliament. Although they have a built-in majority in both Houses of Parliament, they must face the scrutiny and opposition of the Parliament which it is hoped, by the weight of arguments, may influence changes or, in extreme cases, men of good conscience within the Government may even vote against Bills they may feel are not in the best interest of the country.

I, therefore, cannot understand, Mr. President, why the Government and their spokespersons are seeking more power. Let me say that the PA(E)C report is not seeking to minimize the power of the executive or the Parliament—I make that very clear—but to promote accountability and transparency and to prevent an abuse of power.

If a poll is taken today on this subject matter, I am certain that well over 85 per cent of the population will agree with this report, and the past reports of the PA(E)C.

The Senator, in quoting, goes on—here is what he says in another part of his contribution:

"...In practical terms, advocates of the 'moderate' view have said that Parliament should not set political objectives but should investigate their implications and their executions."

Mr. President, that is precisely what the PA(E)C is doing. We are asking for the tools and the power to investigate. Again, the good Senator is arguing against himself. *[Interruption]* Yes, until it gets into your head. It is important that the Minister gets it into his head, I know how thick it is. The Senator continues:

"So that there is a parliamentary committee which you allow to do its work. When that Committee reports to the Senate, which is open—there are strangers—the question one might ask is: Why is it necessary to have the public present at these hearings?"

Mr. President, it is important for me to inform the Senate that it is necessary to have these things done in a timely fashion. If it is that we have public hearings, those officers who come before the committee in public, would be aware that they would be scrutinized on their performance. Therefore, that would be an incentive for them to perform and to be prepared when they come before the committee. It would also be showing the public at large that there is transparency and accountability in governmental activities. That will not benefit the Opposition, that will benefit the Government because, it is government that puts these officers in charge. It would also benefit the very officers.

I dealt in my opening statements the other day, when this debate was started with the perception out there that Trinidad and Tobago is a land of bobol and corruption. I said then that that statement tends to paint everyone with the same brush unfairly. I also said that there are good politicians and it is unfair to them that they be painted with that brush; there are good public servants who ought not be painted with that brush; there are good CEOs and managers in many of the state enterprises, and they ought not to be tarred with the same brush. They are the ones who will be the beneficiaries of this because the public will see accountability at work. That is what we need in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. President. I hope that the Senators opposite will understand that. It seems as though Sen. Ainsley Mark did not understand that. The Senator went on and this is what he said:

"He prefers to call the name of an individual, who cannot come here and defend himself; and if there is no other reason, but for the irresponsibility of the UNC Members of Parliament, the question is: How are we going to protect those private citizens when they appear before committees like yours, Sen. Hosein, on which you are the Chairman?"

4.00 p.m.

He argued that we should not have public hearings because he did not like the Chairman and the party to which he belongs. It is a terribly weak argument. We

cannot make laws based on the preference of Sen. Ainsley Mark or the likes or dislikes of the political party. We must make laws that will deal with all individuals and all parties.

We should not have public hearings because Sen. Hosein said that somebody was hired at TTT and the company started to lose money, and the CEO at TTT cannot come to defend himself. It is for that very reason that you would allow the CEO to come before that committee and the people and he would have the opportunity to explain himself. If it is that the Chairman or anybody on that committee made an accusation or wanted to get some information, it is only fair to that CEO that he be given that opportunity in full glare of the public to defend himself. It seems to me that he is arguing against himself again. If we are to give people an opportunity to defend themselves at a public hearing, that is the place to do it. Only if one has something to hide one would not want to face the people who are the shareholders. One must give an account for one's stewardship.

The good Senator continued:

"Mr. President, I did not plan to speak for this length of time, but let me wind up. We have absolutely no problem with the recommendation that the Auditor General's Department be strengthened—"

I am very glad to hear that. Then why, after so many years and so many reports, has nothing been done? I ask the question. Today we are strengthening the private accounting firms instead of dealing with the problem in the Auditor General's Department. I am quite disappointed that the hon. Senator, who is an accountant by profession and ought to know that, makes a speech in Parliament and ignores the facts. He goes on again.

"We have absolutely no problem with the strengthening of the Auditor General's Department because it has the mandate, the powers and the responsibilities for doing all these things. But to talk about the PA(E)C and the PAC having an investigative staff, the question one asks is: Where will it all end?"

Mr. President, I want to draw your attention and that of the Senate to a report of the PA(E)C dated July 1987 to August 1989. This is what that committee reported. Under Scope and Function of the Committee, it states:

"The Members agreed that the Committee will be meaningless if it functioned within the narrow scope of Section 119 and sees its true function to be that of looking behind financial statements so that an assessment can be made of the

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Company's performance, managerial skills and impact on the economy. Further, because of the backlog of accounts, the Committee's examination of a company was generally with respect to a number of years of accounts. Moreover, the committee took the opportunity to obtain from management an up-to-date status of the operations of the company and an outlook for the future.

The committee is of the view that there is a need for its own qualified staff, such as an analyst, management expert, an engineering expert, among others, in order to perform its mandate effectively. To this end the Committee made certain recommendations to the Constitution Review Commission via the Speaker of the House of Representatives."

This is a report prior to our report and you can see that they are arguing and making the same recommendations as we are. Let us see who was the Chairman of this committee. I read from the section, the Appointment of Committee.

"The committee was appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives on 15th May 1987. The Members were:

Senator K. Valley	Chairman
Senator A. Tiwary	Member
Senator R. Montano	Member
Senator L. Bradshaw	Member
Senator G. Furness-Smith	Member
Hon. T. Sudama. M.P	Member
Hon. J. Toney, M.P	Member
Hon. L. Myers, M.P.	Member
Mr. A. Sanderson, M.P.	Member
Mrs. M. Donawa Mc Davidson, M.P.	Member
Mrs. Z. Seereeram	Clerk"

This was a committee headed by a Member of the PNM asking the same questions we are asking. The hon. Senator comes here and says that we do not need to have that. When it is convenient we say one thing and when it suits us we argue another. They will want accountability when in Opposition but not when in Government. From 1956 to 1986, the PNM was the Government. The

recommendations were the same as today. It did nothing. When in Opposition it wants changes to effect accountability and today they change again. Like a 24 hours' it does not want any accountability. One must be very careful of what one says and what one does because it would come back to haunt one.

The Member went on again:

"...if certain Members believe that these powers should be expanded so they can achieve what the framers of the Constitution had in mind, then I am certain they would be in a position to suggest the appropriate constitutional amendments."

That sounds very nice, but to put it into action would be very difficult for us when we are opposite. What I thought the hon. Senator might have recommended is that they would assist us and we would be prepared to table it from that side; then action would be taken. There was no such thing. In closing his remarks, this is what he said:

"Mr. President, I think that our position on this report is clear. There are a number of issues that have been raised that we have absolutely no difficulty with, but we must be concerned about some of the recommendations because they seem to strike at the very heart of our traditions of parliamentary democracy."

He did not detail and say what recommendations he agreed or disagreed with. He was not clear. One had to sift through the rubble to find out what he was talking about. I am sorry he is not here. Perhaps, we can deal with that privately. I am a bit confused as to who speaks for the Government on this issue. Is it the PNM Members of the PA(E)C, or Sen. Ainsley Mark? His views are about 60 degrees off his colleagues on the PA(E)C. Let me remind the House that the recommendation of this report is unanimous. All Members agree. There are no dissenting voices. All men of good conscience!

4.10 p.m.

After these good men sat down at the PA(E)C level and did their duty, when the time came for the debate, someone else got up and torpedoed the whole thing, saying that the men did not know what they were talking about and that he knew. The Government has a different point of view now. Well, I am recommending that the left hand tell the right hand what it is doing and the right hand tell the left hand what it is doing, because it puts these honourable Members at a terrible disadvantage. I love them all because they have served us and the country well by

serving on this Committee and giving unbiased support. I pay tribute to all of them again.

I think it is important that I go on to something that is more constructive and forget the destructive element of the debate. My good Friend, Sen. Prof. John Spence, spent about five minutes on a gem of a contribution in which he exploded and demolished Sen. Ainsley Mark's argument. It was like taking a sledge hammer and killing a fly. I thank you, Senator, for your support. You are surely a man of good conscience.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm faith in the PA(E)C and to ask all members here today to come out and cast their votes in favour of adoption of this report, to take note of the report and not to allow it to die. I ask that Senators take a very active role in getting the recommendations of this report enacted in the Standing Orders of the House and that the constitutional changes required to give the PA(E)C the teeth necessary to do its work be made.

I want to remind Senators opposite that this is not a partisan debate. The PA(E)C is not a partisan committee; it is a committee of the entire Parliament which deliberated and brought forward a splendid report deserving of the support of the entire Senate and, more importantly, deserving of the active support of the Government in making the recommendation a reality.

Let us work together and strike a blow for some level of accountability and transparency, and let us restore the good name of our managers and politicians. I therefore invite all to unanimously support this report.

Mr. President: That brings the debate to an end. There is no vote to be taken as the Motion was to take note of the report. The only thing that I am curious about is that between the period July 29, 1992 and July 15, 1993 only 10 meetings were held. I think that the Committee could try to meet a little more frequently.

Sen. Hosein: That is already taking place. You will recall we had a late start.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. President, following a discussion between the Senior Independent Senators and the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, I now seek leave to deal with Bills Second Reading, Private Business, at this stage.

Agreed to.

Mr. President: The sitting of the Senate is suspended until 4.45 p.m.

4.17 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

4.45 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

COUNTING UNREMUNERATED WORK BILL

Order for second reading read.

Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. President, I beg to require the Central Statistical Office and other public bodies to produce and maintain statistics relative to the counting of unremunerated work and to provide a mechanism for quantifying and recording the monetary value of such work, be now read a second time.

Mr. President, in introducing this Bill I thank my fellow Senators, specifically and particularly Sen. Martin Daly, Sen. Prof. John Spence and Sen. Junior Barrack, for graciously allowing me to introduce this Bill at this time. I am also very thankful for the co-operation of the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of Government Business. I very much appreciate it. I think it does, however, point out the need for some kind of change in the Order Paper to allow for this kind of Private Bill to be introduced without having to discommode other people.

In introducing this Unremunerated Work Bill, I would like to start off by giving a very brief background to it in terms of the historical and international context; the events that led up to doing this Bill on a national basis and the definition of the concept of unwaged work, which I think many people misunderstand. From there I will go on to list some of the objections and perceived disadvantages that have been raised about the Bill or about instituting, in any form, in the GDP statistics dealing with unremunerated work and possible advantages before touching briefly on the mechanics.

For many years, the United Nations has, in principle, attempted to promote the idea of giving women equal opportunities with men to develop as human beings. From as late as 1962, in the first United Nation's Development Decade the General Assembly actually called for a unified long-term United Nations programme for the advancement of women. It did not do this, I would hasten to make the point, for cosmetic reasons or because it thought it was going to keep women quiet, which is usually what is assumed any time a woman's issue comes up on a national or international scale. It was because, in international economic and political circles, the realization had come that there was no point in talking about world development if we were not going to deal with development of a potential half of the human beings in the world. That development potential it had acknowledged, had in fact, never really had very much attention up until that

point. It also realized that this did not auger well for the whole question of human economic development.

In 1970, a programme for the advancement of women was drawn up. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, but quite frankly, nothing much happened. Apart from instituting a certain number of research projects into what the actual status of women was, when it was suddenly realized that nobody really knew what the actual position was in relation to women, nothing much happened. Some of the member-states tried to get policies adopted about equality of remuneration and equality in opportunity, but nobody was really in a hurry. It obviously did not have any kind of political priority.

In 1985, in Nairobi, the United Nations Conference was called to appraise the achievements of the previous decade which was supposed to have been a decade for the advancement of women. Not to anyone's surprise, it did not find that very much had changed during that decade. But the fact was it did recognize that the world economic situation was in a worse condition then than it had been since the 1930's. It has since been acknowledged by the United Nations that the world's economic situation overall is in a worse condition now than it was in 1985.

Again at the highest decision-making levels it was recognized that unless the resources of women were recognized, were developed and used, long-term national and international development really was not going to take place. It was at that time that attention was drawn to the whole question of the unremunerated work of women. While doing the research they discovered that most women—although they were very busy—were not part of the wage-making labour force, but that they were obviously making a contribution to social and economic development. They realized that what women were doing, although not being paid for, enabled everybody else to do the productive work that they did.

If I could just define for a moment what I am talking about—the context of what I mean when I talk about "unremunerated work". I am referring to domestic work which is necessary for the sustenance of life and health, to the care of the elderly, to the care of the handicapped, to child-bearing—which incidentally is called labour, although it is not regarded as doing work—child-rearing, the socialization of children, the teaching, the feeding, the transporting, all that essential, emotional and psychological work which goes into developing people so that they become productive members of the society, rather than unproductive and antisocial. I will come back to that.

All of this work has traditionally been women's work in Trinidad and Tobago. All of us are here because somebody did that work in relation to us. If somebody

had not done this kind of work when we were growing up, I do not think any of us would be here in this Senate today. They may not necessarily have liked it when they were doing it. Some people do like doing that type of work, and some people do not. The point is, it had to be done, it was "women's work" and that contribution should be recognized because if they did not do it, it would have had to be done by three shifts of paid workers at orphanages. That is significant in terms of the value of that kind of work.

It also refers to agricultural work which is done for family consumption; essential sanitation work or the supervision of sanitation work in and around dwelling places, which is essential for public health and is especially difficult where water has to be toted for long distances.

Since 1988, the United Nations system of national accounts which is referred to in the jargon as the SNA, recommended the inclusion of goods and services not exchanged for money in national accounts that is taken from the market place in the concept of economic activity. In other words, it was recognizing that the kind of work that is unremunerated is something which should be reflected as economic activity. The SNA is the agreed standardized method of computing GDP. I am not going into a discussion the merits and the demerits of the GDP and how it is used. The fact is that it is a system which recognizes certain inputs into the society and into the economy and because it is there, I feel that is the system we have to use.

Basically the SNA defines who is a worker, what work is productive and how the value of goods and services are to enter the GDP. After many years of discussion amongst politicians, statisticians and economists at the United Nations, it was agreed to amend the SNA and that change in the SNA did not come out until March of last year. So much of the discussions that have taken place in Trinidad and Tobago about the merits or demerits of having unremunerated work counted as part of the GDP was done on the basis of the old SNA rather than what has since come in.

The new SNA now includes agricultural work for own use, only in family farms, as productive work which is to enter the GDP and it does count other non-caring work. It includes unwaged household work as productive and it proposes, as this Bill does—and I would like to make this point very clearly that the quantity and the value of household work enters satellite or parallel accounts. The new SNA gives methods for doing this. In other words, I am not suggesting that we muck around with the sanctity of the GDP and the accounts that we do at the moment, but that satellite or parallel accounts be kept which recognize the unremunerated work of men and women.

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Unremunerated work has obviously always existed in Trinidad and Tobago both amongst men and women. If one goes back into history, to our indigenous forebears, the Arawaks and the Caribs, and, I suppose any of the early settlers, that is all they did. All their work was unremunerated.

4.55 p.m.

It was only when we got to the point where the system changed to one of paid and unpaid labour—the unpaid labour would have included work done under slavery and indentureship—that the concept of unremunerated work began to be looked at as though that kind of work were devalued, not as important as other work. Since our value system at the present time, rightly or wrongly, for better or for worse, is highly monetarized—if something earns money it is valued, if something does not earn money then it is not—as a recognition of a value of unremunerated work that is performed for the community, or for people, recognizing the monetary value of caring work is important.

For much of our history also, most of the wage earning people, who actually earned money were in fact men. The percentage of women in the working population has only recently begun to grow. This probably accounts for the very much quoted UN statistic that women do 66 2/3 of the world's work for which they receive 10 per cent of the world's income, and own about one per cent of its assets.

As recently as 1990, the UN estimated that about 70 per cent of the people in this world who are poor are women. I do not know, Mr. President, if you noticed in the newspaper over the weekend, a report of a PAHO account of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago which estimated that some 29 per cent of the population in Trinidad were in fact poor, and the percentage who were women, no doubt, were at least the 70 per cent that are worldwide statistics.

Mr. President, in that Conference in Nairobi, a document was drawn up, which was signed by the Governments who were present at the Conference. Paragraph 120 reads as follows:

"The remunerated and, in particular, the unremunerated contributions of women to all aspects and sectors of development should be recognized, and appropriate efforts should be made to measure and reflect those contributions in national accounts and economic statistics and in the gross national product. Concrete steps should be taken to quantify the unremunerated contribution of women to agriculture, food production, reproduction and household activities."

Four years later, the Trinidad and Tobago Government published a National Policy Statement on Women and under Policy Objectives paragraph 8, reads as follows. I quote:

"Government recognises the need for more efficient compilation of data on women to inform adequate and meaningful programmes and projects if the position of women in the society is to be properly assessed. Accordingly the conducting of special surveys and investigations on issues relating to women would be encouraged. Government will also co-operate in efforts to measure and reflect the remunerated and unremunerated contribution of women to the gross national product."

That was back in 1986. Nothing has been done since.

Mr. President, I am saying all this in terms of background because I want to make the point that this Bill was not conceived in a vacuum. When the Bill was first conceived and when I first presented it with the permission of the Senate, it was concentrating on the unremunerated work of women. That has since changed, and the focus of the Bill has shifted from counting the unremunerated work of just women to counting the unremunerated work of both women and men for the purposes of the GNP. This is because social and economic conditions in Trinidad and Tobago have changed. I will give reasons for this shortly.

Before I go into the objections to and the disadvantages of the Bill, I would like to acknowledge publicly, for the record, the help that I have received in the research and development of the concepts in this Bill. I have had help from NGOs; international organizations and individuals, including the Canadian Government's Department of Statistics, the report in the International Conference on the Measurement and Valuation of Unpaid Work; the Embassy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which sourced statistical research for me and also put me in touch with university academics in the Netherlands who were working on this concept because it is also part of the policy statement of the EEC; the I.O. office in Trinidad and Tobago; the UNDP; group of network supporters in the community; Andayie from the Red Thread organization in Guyana; and one outstanding and loyal supporter in Trinidad and Tobago—I would like to mention specifically, Mrs. Clotil Walcott.

As early as 1986 and thereafter, year after year, one lone woman Mrs. Walcott, petitioned the Government annually to have the unremunerated work of women recognized. She was accustomed to it, because for the last 20 years she has been fighting for, amongst other things, to have domestic workers recognized

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under the law as workers. I want to pay tribute to her because she has been mocked, reviled, laughed at, jeered at, ignored, put down by both men and women in this society. She has been condescended to in her long and very lonely fight. To me, she is a woman of real greatness and dedication. [*Desk thumping*] She has never given up—I do not know very many people who fight the same fight for 20 years and never give up. She has been an inspiration to me and to many other women in this country, regardless of race, class, education, national or social origin. She is an example of perseverance and adherence to one's beliefs. To me, she personifies the statement "Woman is a Nation." I am very proud to have had her help.

5.05 p.m.

Mr. President, I now turn to the disadvantages of the Bill and to the objections which have been raised to it. These objections started with some people who were objecting merely because they were scared of change, especially in the statistical field. The traditional ways of collecting information are guarded and preserved as being sacrosanct. Even the International Association of Statisticians has acknowledged that change in the ways in which statistics are gathered is something statisticians are loathe to do. For one thing, it means that they would have to learn new methods which means much work. It is always nice when a professional body has the grace and courage to smile at its own foibles and be willing to give it a try.

Other objections have not come from Trinidad and Tobago; objections have been more voiced abroad. There have been objections simply on the grounds that counting women's unwaged work might give women too much importance in terms of their own families, and in society because a rough estimate is that this counting can contribute from 20 per cent to as much as 50 per cent of the GNP, and this might lessen by comparison the status of the other gender in the society.

There was a third objection—and I will just get rid of these less technical ones—that is, that one cannot put a value on love. It is wrong to even conceive of it, and much of the work women do is because they love their husbands, children, their families. Of course, I recognize this. But there are many people who are for example, carpenters who do their work with love. The carpentering work is paid for, not the love. It is just that people who do their work with love, do it much better. A monetary value is not put on the love, it is put on the work. Not all women like doing housework. In fact, I can think of only three of them whom I met in my entire life. We do it, but it is not because we love doing it.

Mr. President, I quote from a letter from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance outlining some of the objections which that Ministry has had to including the unwaged work of women in the GNP. The first objection is as follows:

"The inclusion of large non-monetary flows in the accounts together with monetary flows can obscure what is happening on the market and reduce the analytic usefulness of the data."

As I said, the UN System of National Accounts (SNA) suggests that the statistical data on unremunerated work be reflected as a parallel and satellite account. This would mean that unwaged work would only be included in the GNP for certain specific prescribed purposes—and it can be done in a manner consistent with the GNP—so that it would not affect the existing market-based accounts measure of GNP which, of course, have to remain.

Mr. President, the second objection is as follows

"If the production boundary in the System of National Accounts (SNA) were to include the production of personal and domestic services by members of households for their own final consumption, all persons engaged in such activities would be not merely in the labour force but classified as employed. Unemployment would become virtually non-existent by definition."

Yes, for certain measures and definitions not market based, unemployment would cease to exist. The stigma that women, men and young people carry around with them being termed "unemployed" would also cease. They would become community workers, primary agricultural workers, health-care workers, family care workers—whatever one wants to call them. We think in terms of words. We define ourselves in terms of words; we define other people in terms of words. If we start to talk about people who work in the community as community workers, then for non-market based purposes they are not unemployed, they have value, they are employed. One of the terrible things about retrenchment and unemployment is that it leaves people with a social stigma, a feeling of lack of self-esteem, a personal lack of worth. Perhaps, if we start looking at unwaged work as work it would help in terms of this particular social problem.

The third objection is as follows:

"The UN System of National Accounts has been under revision for the past five years"

This was written in April, 1994:

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"A new edition is to be released in 1994 which clearly deals with the production boundary issue and recommends the exclusion of the domestic and personal services within households from the Gross Domestic Product and GNP."

Obviously, this was written before the SNA report was released. Anyone who has been following the discussions which took place at Copenhagen will recognize that this was raised there as well.

The fourth objection is as follows:

"There is no universally accepted methodology on the measurement of domestic and personal services within households."

That is true, but there are many ways in which it can be done. It is not accurate to imply that there is no precedent.

I have here two books which the ILO published. One of them is entitled: *Unpaid Work in the Household* in which there are 76 studies drawing up methods of measurement of unremunerated work, which include wage-based evaluation methods and also market value of output methods. I have another one: *Economic Evaluations of Unpaid Household Work in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceanica*. One would be delighted to know that Tuvalu is included in one of the studies. This book has 36 studies. There have been many studies in terms of measurement.

Some governments are valuing household work alone—I am not talking about "care" work now, which is a touchy issue—for inclusion in the GNP. An Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development paper which just came out stated that Australia, Germany, The Netherlands and Norway are producing measures for the value of household work in association with GNP statistics. So this is not without precedent. A number of other countries such as Australia, Canada, Finland, France, New Zealand and Sweden are working on it. Much work still needs to be done. A pilot study was done by Caricom in Trinidad and Tobago on the time-use of unwaged household work. In this Bill, it is recommended that we use time-use surveys of unremunerated work. I am not entirely convinced that this is the best method, but it certainly seems to be the simplest and most common at present—I suppose it is the method which is being used most by the countries which I have mentioned.

Recently, economists have been advocating output related measures of household production which will be based on market prices. This would include

profits and returns to capital as well as wages. For example, what is the value of mowing a lawn? What is the value of providing water to a home? If a spouse is doing the family's income tax returns and that spouse, as well as the other spouse, goes to work, and the work on the tax returns has to be handed over to a tax consultant, what would it cost? There are many methods and systems, but the one I have recommended in this Bill, I think is the simplest.

The other most common argument is that it has never been done before. That is not so. In Germany, at present, they are doing a satellite measurement. It seems that the objections which have been brought against this concept over the years have really indicated a lack of willingness to do something substantial for the assistance of women. With the greatest respect to my colleagues in the Senate and in the House of Representatives, I submit that this is also a feature of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. For years, every budget debate in which I have participated, I have argued that when this Government and the last Government talk about employment creation policies and practices, they always concentrate on construction where, maybe, one per cent of the people who work in construction are women and they are usually water carriers, the lowest paid.

I have argued for an equal number of years about housing policies for public housing, that where public housing is given to families it should be in the woman's name, so that the woman and children have some protection when the spouse wishes to either take another spouse or, through domestic violence, creates a situation which is intolerable for the wife and children. There are all sorts of examples. The Youth Training Centre which deals with young people has respectable income generating programmes for boys which include things such as mechanics and carpentry; and for girls, beauty culture and cookery which are the lowest possible paid jobs in the economy.

5.15 p.m.

Hopefully, this is going to change. Social changes are taking place.

The two last major objections were, one, that it is going to be too expensive—we cannot afford it. Mr. President, I do not accept that, either. We already have statistics gatherers. They are already being paid and it does not demand an entire new workforce of statistics gatherers in order to get statistics about women and unremunerated work. Perhaps it would mean retraining staff and it would require additions to the present questionnaires which gather statistics, but this does not mean it is going to be terribly expensive. And the last-ditch objection that I have heard was that it is going to mean a change in computer programming—how can

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we do that? Well, as far as I am concerned, any computer programme dealing with statistics should have a built in feature that can deal with change.

The structural adjustment programmes we are going through are making significant changes in the lives of men and women in this country as they are all around the world. We have many times heard reference in this Senate to the McIntyre Report and one of the things that report commented on, as have people of good faith throughout the country, is the social and economic upheaval which is taking place as a result of structural adjustment programmes and the way that people in the society are suffering. I think it is acknowledged that if we need stability in the society we have to do something which is going to help with these social problems. The McIntyre Report, quite sensibly said that we should not re-invent the wheel; that a lot of work is being done in communities already; and what Government should do is to support those community-based programmes, rather than try to add on to them.

Mr. President, one of the other features of the structural adjustment programme is that a lot of men are losing their permanent jobs and are being replaced by women on a contract basis because they get paid less and argue less and they are willing to accept temporary jobs—

Hon. Senator: What?

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: Well, it is true. They also tend to have better attendance records.

Sen. Hosein: The Senator is making all the arguments, too.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: Thank you, Sen. Hosein. This is happening in the public productive sector and right through the private and domestic sectors; and as a result family incomes are dropping—sometimes sustained only by women who are taking these low-paid positions, which means that other members of the family, very often men, are having to take up the slack by doing more unwaged work than they were accustomed to doing. This includes things like travelling longer distances to get to public health clinics, rather than going to a private doctor. Perhaps, toting water for great distances because they have had to move to an area where—as we saw last week in the newspapers, in Princes Town—riots occur when people start fighting because there is only one standpipe for 200 people to use. In other instances, having to go from place to place to look for the cheapest possible sources of food and clothing. This is unwaged work and men are taking over a lot of the unwaged work in and around domestic dwellings; this is important.

Mr. President, I would like to quote a report which was drawn up by—this is a Wand Occasional Paper—a name which I mentioned earlier, Andaiye from Red Thread. It reads:

"The impact may not be visible in economic terms, but except for those who believe there is no connection between human resource development and economic development, the underlying implications are clear."

She is referring to structural adjustment programmes.

"If we accept that our economies need some form of structural adjustment, we must also understand that structural adjustment can only be sustainable if it does not deplete non renewable resources including human resources. Counting the unwaged work of producing and reproducing human resources under structural adjustment would provide policy makers with the basis for evaluating its true cost and for arriving at a more rational allocation of resources. It will also show that structural adjustment programmes under their present conditionalities work against the achievement of the goals of FLS and the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women."

Mr. President, if I can just finish by referring to the advantages which I see accruing to the country if we adopt this Bill—first of all going back to the McIntyre Report, the recognition of community workers having a value. As the McIntyre Report pointed out, the major burden of social services is being shifted into the communities, which makes sense. It is the sensible thing to do, apparently because Central Government cannot afford to do the work and does not do it all that efficiently. When it is decentralized in the communities, it is more efficient. It is the sort of work that Servol does in terms of caring for pre-schoolers, drop-outs from secondary school; the aged, the ill and so forth; and which has been—according to Prof. Cain in a press report on violence over the weekend—responsible for an actual lowering of the number of cases of adolescents who have been arrested for violence over the last year. All of those Servol programmes are, in fact, governed by school boards, boards of directors, if you like, of people drawn from the community itself, who do everything—from employing staff to paying them, and so forth.

Traditionally, Mr. President, community work was a female field, in addition to the care of the elderly and the ill. In the old days when somebody was ill they went and stayed in the hospital. Now as we all know, they stay for a day and are then sent home. Somebody has to take care of them and this person will be either

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male or female now, because whoever is at home has to take care of who is ill. This is work which is remunerated when it is done in the hospital, but when it moves to the home it is unremunerated, as though the only economic value to care of the ill and elderly is when they are in institutions. I believe, Mr. President, that when men and women in the community take over that kind of work, it should get recognition and I believe that counting this work in the national statistics would provide that kind of recognition. It may attract more men into doing community work which would provide role models for many of the young men, who do not see a male in a role model position from one month's end to the next.

The second advantage has to do with the incidence of crime and parenting; and there is a third point which has to do with domestic violence. Dealing with crime itself, giving a monetary value to the work of producing productive citizens, nurturing them and raising them properly so that they are going to be productive and not antisocial, is something which both men and women have been turning away from in the sense that, instead of improving their parenting skills and bringing those up to professional standards, they are improving their technical skills in the workplace. I think that recognizing the value of parenting and caring skills may attract a lot of people who did not previously consider this as being as important as it is, to considering it to be important.

The cost to the country of youth crime, Mr. President, we have been told, is enormous. Something like 85 per cent of the cases that go to the Magistrates' Court involve crime, and some 80 per cent of those involve young men between the ages of 12 and 21. The cost to victims, the court system, the prison system, and the cost to society as a whole, is growing. I know that a return to the value of parenting is not an answer, but just to recognize that parenting has a value may be part of the answer. When society assigns a monetary value to it, which may be the most currently accepted way to assign a value to activities like parenting, I think young people start to recognize the value of what their parents say and do, in relation to bringing them up; and also parents recognize that value in each other.

I am not suggesting that at this point the state, or anybody else, pay wages to parents for being parents, as they would have to do if they were foster parents or substitute parents in an orphanage, because I know that the Budget cannot afford it in this country, at this time. What I am saying is, that the least one can do is recognize that there is a monetary value to that kind of work.

5.25 p.m.

Insofar as domestic violence is concerned, it relates, as we all know, to the value that is put on women in the society. Unfortunately for many people, the

value of women is marginal, as though women are not fully human. They are defined as whatever is not male. Therefore, if they are battered—*[Interruption]* Well, this is how women are defined. I was absolutely astounded to hear in a debate on human rights that when it was put forward in an international forum in the United Nations—that women's rights had to be considered—the response was, why are women's rights any different from human rights?

Of course, when the declaration of human rights was developed back in 1946—I believe it was—"human" was considered as male. There are certain things that men cannot do which demand rights. *[Interruption]* Check the minutes. The only two women on that whole commission were Eleanor Roosevelt and one other and they were out-numbered and out-shouted all the way down the line.

There are certain rights that women need to have, including reproductive rights in which men do not get involved. At any rate, let me not allow myself to be distracted from the point about domestic violence.

The fact is that women are not valued in the same way in society as men are; apparently because we put monetary value on things—women do not bring in as much money, therefore, they do not get the same value. Often, even in instances of severe domestic violence not even family members will step in to help women.

This Government has said that it cares about the cost of domestic violence to the nation in terms of the health services and the legal system. Apparently the Magistrates' Courts are absolutely swamped with domestic and juvenile violence cases.

One of the statistics we have collected recently, which is quite interesting, is that in instances, as a result of structural adjustment where men have lost jobs and women now taking low-paid jobs are the wage earners, there is a growing number of cases of domestic violence. Because men's self-esteem has suffered, they are taking it out on their wives with violence. This is a statistic, it is not an opinion.

I think if one recognizes the value of unremunerated work the question of men's self-esteem might be helped as well. The Bill values unwaged work regardless of gender.

My last point has to do with the question of matching grants. There is already precedence for this. In the Self-Help Commission, where the Commission goes to help a community with a project, the Commission gives the self-help group a certain amount of money based on matching contributions from the group.

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Matching contributions include labour which people in the group do without remuneration.

If we look at the non-governmental organizations that are looking for international funding for projects—because our national coffers are low, one cannot turn to the Government for help because it just does not have the money and private enterprise is already groaning under the cost of non-governmental organization community support—if there were a national system for measuring the unremunerated work that is done on a voluntary basis in communities and on projects, this would provide a certain official measure which would mean that we could get matching grants from abroad to carry out many social programmes.

So far, the recognition of the social value of unpaid work of both men and women has only been given lip service and I specifically want to mention that we have a national programme which has been growing, given great publicity and some prominence in the community, on self-esteem.

The results of this Bill, will make a direct contribution to the self-esteem of people which will mean that if they are doing work they are not regarded as unemployed, but as people who are making a valuable contribution to the community.

Secondly, in terms of social development and the need for communities and NGOs to get more involved in the social problems of the society, this Bill will go a long way to help.

Mr. President, I started on this project because I was concerned about the status of women, I continue to be so today. As I went on I realized what was happening in relation to the structural adjustment programme. I realized that this Bill affects the status of men just as much as it affects the status of women. My concern for the special needs of women does not blind me to the very real needs of disadvantaged men in the society.

Sen. Huggins: Men, generally.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: Men, generally. Yes, I think that men generally would benefit from recognizing the value of the unremunerated work that women do in the community and in and around the family.

I think that there are very deep and serious implications for the entire society which can only be positive. Therefore, I request that all parties in this Senate support this Bill and vote for it.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Question proposed.

Motion made, That further debate on this Bill be adjourned to a subsequent sitting of the Senate. [*Hon. R. Huggins*]

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. President, I beg to move that the sitting of the Senate be adjourned to Wednesday, March 29, 1995 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. President: Before putting the question, there are still three matters to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment: one outstanding by Sen. Barrack who is not ready to proceed today, but may be, tomorrow; another by Sen. Wade Mark—and I understand that the Minister may be present tomorrow to deal with that one. The third and last one is in the name of Sen. Muntaz Hosein, dealing with water shortages throughout the country, and, in particular the San Juan/Barataria constituency.

Water Shortages (San Juan/Barataria)

Sen. Muntaz Hosein: Mr. President, water is one of the basic necessities essential to human life, and directly affects the social and economic life of the nation. This is exacerbated by the fact that we are currently in the dry season, and information reaching me indicates that we are going to be in a very dry, dry season.

The water situation in Trinidad and Tobago, as we are all aware, is very bad.

5.35 p.m.

There are areas in Trinidad and Tobago where taps have been dry for the longest while. One has only to look at the newspapers over the last few months to see villages throughout Trinidad and Tobago demonstrating for water. Water in Trinidad and Tobago can only be obtained through one agency, the Water and Sewerage Authority.

Mr. President, the Water and Sewerage Authority is responsible for providing to the nation a potable water supply, and the Government of the day is responsible for making that water supply available to all its citizens. It seems to me, that that job appears to be beyond the capabilities of the present Government. As a matter

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of fact, it would appear to all of us—and information coming out of WASA suggests—that the Government is purposely running down the Water and Sewerage Authority in an effort to get the people of Trinidad and Tobago so fed up, so disgusted that any alternative would be accepted. As you know, Mr. President, the alternative at present, is privatization, a position that we on this side of the Senate find difficult to accept and to swallow.

Poor people all over Trinidad and Tobago, and even those who could afford are in dire need of a constant and good supply of water. As we are fully aware, the poor of our country suffer the most. Those who have the money can install large tanks in their homes, as we have seen throughout the country and, therefore, even if the supply of water comes once a day, twice a week or once a week, they are able to store in these large tanks enough water for their normal everyday domestic needs. People who are unable to afford tanks must bear the full brunt of not having a proper water supply. It is also quite dangerous.

Only yesterday I was over at El Socorro South visiting a friend there and a young man came to his house, with a towel in his hand, soiled in clothes that suggest that he was a mechanic. He had left his home four blocks away because there was no water and there had not been water there for a long time.

Mr. President, he came to this relative's home to take a shower. After the shower he would take home a bucket of water—*[Interruption]* I want injury time.

Sen. Barnes: Mr. President, I need to reply. Do I understand the Senator to say that this relative that the young man was visiting was in El Socorro, four blocks away.

Sen. M. Hosein: Mr. President, it is not that the country does not have water. There is water. The rivers are full of water. In El Socorro South, just 50 yards away from where I was, there is a leak in the street that has been there for two years. There is no stoppage of water there. Water is running. A little further up, next to WASA's pumping station, a large leak is there for all to see. WASA officials pass it day in, day out—and it has been there for years and nobody seems to care. Go all over Trinidad and Tobago and one would see the pattern is the same. The Water and Sewerage Authority vehicles, the people they are paying all the time—and I understand 2,000 have already been retrenched with 1,000 more to go. Therefore, I know it is painful for the people on the opposite side.

If Sen. Ainsley Mark was not such a coward he would have been here earlier today to get his share of the stick. *[Laughter]* I want to tell the Minister, through you, Sir, that this intolerable state of affairs simply cannot continue, this facade

that we do not have water, we cannot fix it, we do not have money: the people are not accepting that, as they would not accept privatization of the Water and Sewerage Authority.

This is the worst position—and I have first-hand knowledge of this because I have been involved in this. I am aware and the Minister knows about it as well.

On February 8, 1993 the people of Pargass Avenue, El Socorro Extension No. 2, wrote to the National Self-Help Commission asking that they be given permission and facilities to replace approximately 100 yards of WASA's main. I repeat, WASA's main, not people's mains. Mr. President, the main was badly encrusted in that area. When water is in the line a basin has to be put under the lowest pipe in one's yard, not a bucket. If the tap is too high one would get no water or one would get drip by drip.

Only people in the area who can afford to pay a truck to bring truck-borne water will get water in their tanks. The rest of the people get none at all. These people wrote to the National Self-Help Commission. Here are people willing to do the work themselves. The National Self-Help Commission wrote to WASA. The project No. is BASJ0022/1960. I raised this matter with the late Minister of Public Utilities, Hon. Morris Marshall. That was approximately one year after and nothing was done. The late hon. Minister asked me for three months so that he could attend to it. I told him okay, go ahead. As you know, I had the greatest respect for him.

5.45 p.m.

After three months he asked to be given another month. I agreed, but as fate would have it, the good Lord called him away. He died before he could have dealt with it. When the new Minister came in, we tried to get it revived and they could not find the application. I submitted a new application to the Ministry and to this day nothing has been done.

I took the county councillor for the area to WASA where we spoke to the chief engineer and his assistant and they promised me that they would give the estimate. The estimate is required from WASA for the Self-Help Commission and the rest would be done with the people. The chief engineer has my telephone number. It is now about five months and he has not called. I have made several calls and he is never there. I received a message that they had done the estimate, but to this day, there is no way to get it from WASA. The Minister is aware of this and the people continue to suffer. There is a pattern here and I want the Minister to be aware of it.

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In 1992, there were five leaks which I recognized on Twelfth Street Barataria. I called one of the engineers who told me that he would send someone there the next day. I took it with a pound of salt because you would never get them to move that quickly. Lo and behold, two days later he called me back. He said that he sent some workers who found seven leaks and the following day they would fix all. Again, I took it with another pound of salt because I did not think that would happen. Two days later I went to Twelfth Street and all seven leaks were fixed.

We had a function on Twelfth Street and I thought it was fitting to call the name of the engineer who helped the people because they were people who were willing to help. I called his name and immediately after that I could not get to talk to that engineer. Whenever I call he is never there. He has never returned my calls. It is very strange. The same thing happened in this issue. I would not call them leaks; there were two diversions of the pipeline in the middle of the road. That is a better way to describe them. Those people who pass through Barataria would know what I am talking about. In the middle of Jogie Road and the corner of Twelfth Street there was a big swimming pool. As a matter of fact, the residents put up a sign marked: "Welcome to Linda's swimming pool. Swim at your own risk." It was so bad.

Mr. President: I did not worry to remind you of the time limit. I will give you two minutes extra to wind up.

Sen. M. Hosein: Thank you, Mr. President. There was another diversion in front of the Don Miguel Road Hindu School. The engineers told me that they would have them repaired. True to form, both leaks were repaired promptly. When it came to dealing with the matters over the highway, it seemed to me that some unseen hand got into the picture, and I cannot get in contact with the engineer any longer. This is a very serious matter and I want the Minister to get involved and to cut out that nonsense of dealing with only one section of the public.

Hon. Senator: What do you mean by that?

Sen. M. Hosein: That is exactly what I mean. You know very well what I mean because you practise it. I appeal again to the Minister to look after the plight of the people of El Socorro South in particular, and in general, to give the residents of Trinidad and Tobago a better water supply. Do not privatize WASA!

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Barry Barnes): Mr. President, nevertheless I am glad for the Motion to give me the opportunity to talk to the Senate about WASA,

although I did not hear very much about the San Juan/Barataria constituency and the water shortages there.

Sen. Hosein: Mr. President, on a point of order. Let me inform the Minister that El Socorro South is in the constituency of Barataria/San Juan.

Sen. The Hon. B. Barnes: I did say that I did not hear very much about it. I would just say in direct response that the San Juan/Barataria area receives a water supply from the Caroni/Arena water treatment plant. Most of the areas receive a daily supply, and Barataria in particular has a 24-hour service. Some areas such as El Socorro and Aranguez have problems with low pressure because of severe incrustations in the pipelines. These pipelines are scheduled to be replaced under the existing World Bank emergency project. We will come to that.

There was general talk about the water situation in Trinidad and Tobago. Let us accept that we have passed the first half of the current dry season. In looking at WASA one sometimes forgets what we are talking about. We are talking about a statutory authority that has the charge to supply potable drinking water throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. It does this on the basis of five impounding reservoirs and river intakes namely, North Oropouche, Hollis, Caroni/Arena, Navet and Maraval; 30 well fields throughout Trinidad and Tobago—I do not want to list all 30—about 52 booster stations; 6 high lift stations and 22 river intakes with a requirement to supply water from Matelot to Cedros; Chaguaramas to Mayaro; Parlatuvier to Charlotteville. This is a system that supplies 160 million gallons per day of potable water, roughly 4.5 million barrels per day.

Just for the comparison, let us recognize that the energy sector companies like Petrotrin, Amoco, Enron, Unocal, Trinmar and others move 133,000 barrels per day compared to WASA's 4.5 million barrels per day. This vaunted energy sector moves 133,000 barrels of crude per day to three points; two refineries and one loading terminal at Galeota. WASA has to move 4.5 million barrels per day of potable water to almost every house, office and industry; more than 252,000 connections.

Of necessity, WASA's transmission system is underground, more often than not under the roads six to eight feet down. The transmission mains, some up to 42 inches in diameter, come down from North Oropouche, etcetera, more than 3,000 miles. I am not talking about the distribution mains or the connections coming to individual houses. I am talking about the main transmission system, more than 3,000 miles of stock. This is the reality. Then there is the geography of Trinidad

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and Tobago. The Northern Range is the catchment area where the rivers flow from. This is the same Northern Range which is going to dump flood waters through Central in the rainy season. This is where we catch your water.

5.55 p.m.

In addition to that, it also makes for the aquifers, and the aquifers in the North are prolific. They are replenished from the Northern Range, so that when one puts a well down in the North, for example, in St. Clair No. 4, one gets 750,000 to 1,000,000 gallons of water per day, and when one puts a similar well down in the Penal wellfield, one gets 200,000 gallons per day. That is the geography.

The Water and Sewerage Authority, therefore, has developed over the years following that arrangement. There is North Oropouche, Caroni/Arena, Maraval, Hollis—all in the Northern Range. Only Navet is in the Central Range. Therefore there is the requirement to transmit the water from the North to the South. The movement to the South and, indeed, across the country, is a matter of pumps, pipelines and valves—a tremendous system. We do not make pumps in Trinidad; every one has to be imported. We do not make valves in Trinidad; every one has to be imported. Well, we make PVC pipelines and—I should not say this—but PVC has made plumbers of us all and, in fact, it is now part of the problem. The main transmission, a system that has developed over the years, is essentially of imported pipe, and that will continue.

We started off in 1956 with a production of 18,000,000 gallons a day serving 18 per cent of the population with pipe-borne water as against 160,000,000 gallons today, trying to serve 92 per cent of the population. What WASA did was build on and extend the existing systems, and as the demand grew, it put in booster systems; and it boosted and it boosted and it boosted, while large sections of the transmission system were getting older and older. So it reached a point where it boosted and it 'busted', boosted and 'busted'.

The reality of WASA today is that out of that 3,000 miles of system, there is, among other things, 100 kilometres which was laid in asbestos cement pipe which is now aged and crumbling and I think everybody here understands what that means. Additionally, we have 576 miles of transmission pipe that is like me—over 50 years old—and encrusted. It has been carrying water treated with chlorine and alum; and is recognized to be undersized to carry the quantum of water that it now needs to carry. That is the reality of WASA.

In that situation, it is not games, Sen. Muntaz Hosein. What we have to do is to recognize where we are. We have to recognize that we are coming to the stage

where there is the requirement for, not refurbishment, but extensive replacement. I can talk about Penal Rock Road, but I will talk about Maraval instead, where there is a six-inch diameter main which was put down 45 years ago and since that time they have built Fairways, they have built Andalusia, they have built La Seiva; I do not need to go on. This is a situation in which the capability of the Maraval system is 2,000,000 gallons a day and the estimated demand in 1995 is 6,000,000 gallons per day, so we have to replace that pipeline. When we replace that pipeline we must also recognize that we are not replacing it to meet the demands of 1995, but that the line that we put down will be there in the year 2025 and we had better design it and get it right to meet the requirements then. While we are facing that, there is another problem facing us and that is that neither WASA, nor the Government, can say to the population that it has reached a stage, and it is sorry but it cannot supply water until it fixes everything and puts in something good. What it has to do is to take the existing system and refurbish, seek to improve, to expand and to nurse it along so that it can go on in service and cover the population's requirements for sufficient time to allow WASA to go into the overall refurbishment project.

But we are talking about 1995, so let us talk about what WASA has done—I hear what you are saying about leaks—there were 4,800 outstanding leaks in a system which, because of its age, is producing 1,100 new leaks every month. WASA went on a leak repair programme throughout the country working weekends and so forth and cleared the backlog so that now at least the response time to leaks is perhaps a bit acceptable. WASA continued its refurbishing programme on its main plant, Caroni/Arena, and with \$50 million of loan funding it has commenced an emergency rehabilitation project.

I think Sen. Hosein knows that new pipe has gone in at Beaucarro Road at Indian Trail, and at Borde Nave Village. I think Sen. Hosein knows that if the transmission system is the problem, as it is, then logic suggests that what we should do is to seek to source the water as close to the point of delivery as we can. I think that Sen. Hosein well knows, since he has so many friends at WASA, that the Penal wellfield has been refurbished and brought back into operation; that the Freeport wellfield has been refurbished; additional wells have been drilled and the production there has been increased from just under 500,000 gallons per day to 1.8 million gallons per day. He knows that work is going on the two wells in Clarke Road; he knows that the Arima wellfield has been put back into operation; he knows that the two wells in the Fyzabad wellfield have been put back in operation; he knows that WASA is working in Mayaro right now; he knows that

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King George V Park Wellfield has been brought back; he knows that the St. Clair wells have been brought back, and he knows that there is a drilling rig in the savannah right at this moment.

He probably knows that the first new 12,000,000 gallons per day pump has been put into WASA at Caroni/Arena last Sunday, with an additional pump coming in mid-April and two additional ones at the end of April, to restore the heart and the ability of WASA to maintain supplies.

6.05 p.m.

But let me go on.

Sen. Barrack: Again?

Sen. A. Mark: Sit down and listen.

Sen. The Hon. B. Barnes: The fundamental relief—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Barrack: Mr. President, I thought the hon. Senator had two minutes more?

Sen. The Hon. B. Barnes: Well it might have been two minutes. *[Interruption]* The fundamental short-term thrust has to be on pipe replacement. Ductile iron is the chosen medium of pipe. The first shipments of ductile iron will arrive in Trinidad in April and with the best will and intention in the world, there is nobody that can run pipes until they have them. Once the pipe arrive we would see the transmission *[Inaudible]*

Mr. President, I thank you. *[Applause] [Desk thumping]*

Sen. Hosein: Mr. President, I have to ask the Minister, because he has not— In the first place I do not know all the answers to the questions that he told me that I know. *[Laughter]* He told me I know! I do not know those things. I want to know if he knows that the Prime Minister promised the people of El Socorro South that he was going to send truck-borne water for them and he has not sent it? *[Interruption]* Does he also know that he has not addressed the idea that these people want to put in their own pipes and he has not done anything about it? Tell us that!

Mr. President: Senator, I thought you knew the rules of the Senate by now. I have been on my feet for some time.

Sen. Hosein: I did not see you, Sir.

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Mr. President: What I know is that you had 15 minutes and the Minister had 15 minutes, so that the debate is finished. *[Interruption]* Senator, please contain yourself.

This Red House was destroyed 90 years ago because of water riots *[Laughter]* and I do not want a repeat of it. I do not want any fire to be ignited here this evening. *[Laughter]* We may not have water to cool it down. *[Laughter]*

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.08 p.m.