

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, June 27, 1995***SENATE***Tuesday, June 27, 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. Prof. John Spence to be absent from sittings of the Senate during the period June 25 to July 17 as he would be out of the country on university business and vacation leave. I have also granted leave to Sen. Ainsley Mark, the Vice-President of the Senate, to be absent from sittings of the Senate during the period June 25 to June 29 as he would be out of the country. I have granted leave to Sen. Carol Mahadeo to be absent from sittings of the Senate during the period July 1 to September 2 as she would be out of the country for medical reasons.

**SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I have been advised that His Excellency the President has appointed Mr. Sankar Mahabirsingh to be a temporary Senator with effect from June 26 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Sen. Ainsley Mark.

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE**

*Sen. Sankar Mahabirsingh took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.*

**MR. SELWYN RICHARDSON****(Death of)**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, before we continue with the rest of the business on the Order Paper, this is the first time we are meeting since the death of a former colleague, Selwyn Richardson, who actually died within a couple hours after the end of the sitting last week. I invite Members who would like to pay tribute to the former Senator and Government Minister to do so.

Hon. Senators, it is with great sadness that I stand before you today to pay tribute to a former parliamentarian, the late Mr. Selwyn Richardson, who was brutally assassinated approximately one week ago. Mr. Richardson began his

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parliamentary life in this very House when he was sworn in as a Senator in 1976, and served as the Attorney General during his senatorial stewardship. It is ironic that while he served with distinction in his many portfolios, he also suffered publicly and privately in his unrelenting fight to transform our country through a well-formed moral conscience.

The circumstances surrounding his death remain a mystery. In attempting to grapple with this barbaric act, one could only surmise that it was the very characteristics of resolve, steadfastness, forthrightness, courage and commitment which distinguished him in public life, that could have swung that someone to commit this ghastly act that led to his demise.

It would be a fitting tribute to the late Selwyn Richardson if fellow parliamentarians would try to emulate some of the noble attributes of this son of the soil, in an effort to arrest the crime situation in this country. Let us take time to use this occasion to indulge in some introspection and to examine our roles as exemplars in our beloved country. Let it be a full awakening of our moral and social responsibilities to set standards of discipline and respect for law and order. Let us demonstrate that conflicts can be settled through peaceful and lawful means and that our citizens can live free from fear of the barrel of the gun.

It is my prayer and hope that amidst the evil and uncertainties of life, we can all be propelled into action that would redirect the hearts and minds of those whose evil ways have permeated the length and breadth of our beloved country. The advice of His Excellency the President of India, Dr. Shankar Deyal Sharma, is well worth recalling.

"Today you are a new generation reaping the fruits of your ancestors. Tomorrow our successors will reap what we sow now."

I extend my heartfelt condolences to his widow, Mrs. Joyce Richardson, and his children with whom he enjoyed a beautiful relationship, as well as other bereaved relatives. May they take courage from the fact that he died in battle, remembering that freedom is never free, and that he has paid the ultimate price for trying to uphold a virtue that seems lost—virtue of honesty in a society that cries out for men of integrity, sincerity and forthrightness.

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith):** Mr. President, as you indicated, the late Selwyn Richardson started his parliamentary career in this House. I therefore wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the Senators on the Government benches to associate ourselves with the

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remarks and sentiments expressed by the hon. Prime Minister at the sitting of the House of Representatives on Friday last, and to convey to Mr. Richardson's widow and family our deepest sympathy and condolences on his tragic and untimely death.

Thank you.

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Mr. President, we on this side of the Senate join in expressing our grief and regret over the undignified passing of the late Selwyn Richardson, former Attorney General and Minister of National Security. The political culture of democracy for which the UNC has always stood and struggled is not going to be sidetracked by this unacceptable act in the political culture of our country.

**1.40 p.m.**

We are committed to making sure that his manner of passing alerts our party and the people of this country to possibilities of mayhem and disorder, if the realities surrounding the death of people like the late Michael Hercules, the attack on the presidential vehicle, as well as other recent murders, with particular reference to the murder of the late Selwyn Richardson, were to go unattended and unchallenged. For us, democratic principles are not just mere words. No one can be happy today with the state of affairs in our beloved country where none appears to be safe either inside or outside one's home whether one lives in a palace or in a hut.

It may be a mystery who the perpetrators are, but the incident is no mystery. I do not speak in parables when I say that the chickens are coming home to roost, particularly when account is taken of the many sins of omission and commission by successive administrations in this country.

A man's death should not be politicized, but Selwyn Richardson was a politician. The social chaos and economic instability cannot be separated from the untimely passing of Mr. Richardson. Fanatics of one kind or another litter the world landscape and Trinidad and Tobago is certainly not short of its share.

Billions of dollars are being promised whilst one million people in this country live on the borderline and are slowly perishing. Our society is producing criminal elements at the highest and lowest levels. Dead rats are smelling everywhere, and holding our noses is not enough to arrest this tide of despair and growing terror in our country.

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We wish to use this opportunity, not only to sympathize with the bereaved family of Selwyn Richardson, but also to sympathize with all those who have met undignified deaths at the hands of conscienceless gunmen in our country. Gunman rule has no place in the lives of honest, hard-working people of this Republic. Those who are responsible for the society are the real creators of these modern-day hitmen and assassins. The interest and welfare of the people can never be comprised, brokered or subverted on the altar of terror and brutality.

Those who are responsible should realize that today it is Richardson, tomorrow it might be some other citizen, but the next day it might well be they. Where will it end, Mr. President let us work towards the construction of a just, equal and integrated society in which all are included and none is excluded, marginalized and/or discriminated against. There is no other way.

May the soul of the late Selwyn Richardson rest in peace.

**Sen. Michael Mansoor:** Mr. President, we on this bench join our voices to the many who mourn the passing of Selwyn Richardson. We cry for the man; we cry for the country; we seethe with rage at the impotence of our men, our women and our children and indeed the seeming impotence of our systems and institutions against the senseless savagery of the violent few among us. How many more must die? How many more of our leaders must die—Selwyn Richardson was one of our distinguished leaders—before love and sanity return to this land.

Selwyn Richardson was a humble man of humble beginnings. He was hard-working, visionary, fired by his passion for country and his compulsion to serve the people he loved. He performed with distinction in two governments and was relentless in his efforts against corruption in all its forms. I remember him well in the preceding Parliament, coming to this House about Government's business. He impressed and inspired us all with his dedication to cause, his kind engaging manner, his ever-present sense of humour and, most importantly, his sincerity of purpose. His death at a relatively youthful age is truly a national loss, and the manner of his death, a cold and grizzly murder, forever and shamefully stigmatizes the society of which he was such a vibrant, productive part.

We mourn you Selwyn. We shall remember you always. We comfort those close to you. May you rest in peace.

**Mr. President:** Before we proceed, I ask all those present in the Chamber to stand for one minute's silence as a mark of respect for a former Member of this Parliament.

*The Senate stood.*

**MISCELLANEOUS TAXES (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Miscellaneous Taxes Act, Chap. 77:01, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

*Motion made*, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [*Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Mr. President, you will recall that when the Treasury Notes Bill was read for the first time, we had raised the issue, according to a commitment given to us by the Government to have the debate on the joint select committee report on Public Holidays continue. Now that this Bill has been introduced, it is to be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. I would like to seek your guidance on this matter. We would like the hon. Leader of Government Business to recognize that we will support the measure but we want to get from the Government a commitment to give some priority to the conclusion of this debate next week.

**Mr. President:** Senator, as I have told you many times in the past, there are some matters that are easily settled—in parliamentary language—behind the Speaker's chair. Last week I reminded you that due to an amendment which was made in the Senate some time in 1988, probably before you came to the Senate, Bills are required to have 15 days between the First and Second Readings. I do not want to comment on the wisdom or otherwise of that amendment.

**1.50 p.m.**

All I can tell you, from my own experience is that there is great danger of such a bill being lost and forgotten. It has changed what existed for the 17 years before that and what has always existed in the other place that a period of 5 days should elapse between First and Second Readings. I have always said that I have not known any government that has refused any reasonable request for further time to consider a Bill of importance or that is large, and this is a routine.

Government Business is put down in the order in which the Leader of Government would require it. There are two other Bills being given a First Reading today and the same motion—I am sure—would be moved. What order the Leader of Government Business would want is anybody's guess, but it is his right. Today is Private Member's Day and Private Member's Business would take precedence over Government Business. If there is to be any variation in the order of business as required by the Standing Orders, the best thing would be for the

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Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of Government Business and probably the leader of the Independent Senators to get together to discuss the matter to see if they could reach an agreeable compromise. Is this fair enough?

*Question put and agreed to.*

**PAPERS LAID**

1. The Public Sector (Arrears of Emoluments) (Bonds) Regulations, 1995. [*The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith)*].
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Chaguaramas Development Authority for the year ended December 31, 1992. (*Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith*).

**ATTACHMENT OF EARNINGS (MAINTENANCE)**

**(AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Attachment of Earnings (Maintenance) Act [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]; 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.*

**PETROLEUM (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Petroleum Act, [*The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries*]; read the first time.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**ANTI-DUMPING AND COUNTERVAILING DUTIES**

**(AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Duties Act [*The Minister of Trade and Industry*]; read the first time.

*Motion made*, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [*Dr. The Hon. L. Saith*].

*Question put and agreed to.*

## ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith):** Mr. President, I beg to move that at this stage the item appearing under "Bills—Committee Stage" be taken prior to the resumption of the debate on by Sen. Daly's motion.

*Agreed to.*

## COUNTING UNREMUNERATED WORK BILL

[Third Day]

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole Senate.*

*Senate in committee.*

*Clause 1.*

*Question proposed,* That clause 1 stand part of the Bill.

**Sen. Mansoor:** Mr. Chairman, I have been asked by Sen. Prof. Spence, who is not with us today, to agitate on behalf of his amendment. There is an amendment to the long title. Does that come first or does clause 1 come first?

**Mr. Chairman:** We do not amend the long title; if it is necessary to change it we would do so.

**Sen. Mansoor:** Mr. Chairman, I think the matter is very easy. Sen. Prof. Spence has, in fact, discussed these amendments with the mover of the Bill, Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt and he has, in fact, agreed to withdraw the long title amendments. I just thought I would do this and then hand over to Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt to talk on his amendments.

**Mr. Chairman:** It would not be taken but if there is need to change the title as a result of any amendments, we will do so.

**Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt:** Mr. Chairman, in relation to clause 1, the recommended amendment is:

"Insert between the words 'the' and 'Counting' appearing in line one, the words 'Household Survey and'."

The reason for this is to strengthen the Bill to cover more aspects of unremunerated work and to make sure that some of the necessary statistics which were referred to during the debate do, in fact, get taken. At the present time there are household surveys but they are very few and far between. I think the last one was done four to five years ago. We feel to include that would strengthen the Bill.

**Sen. Yuille-Williams:** Mr. Chairman, we have no difficulty with that amendment.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill*

*Clause 2.*

*Question proposed, That clause 2 stand part of the Bill.*

**Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt:** Mr. Chairman, there is an amendment also to clause 2 as listed in the amendments proposed:

"Insert a new paragraph (a) to read as follows:

'(a) conduct periodic household surveys, not less frequently than once every three years, to assess household incomes and breakdown of expenditures;'"

This is consistent with the proposed amendment in clause 1. The consequent amendments to that would be:

"B Reletter existing paragraphs (a) to (c) as (b) to (d) respectively.

C In the relettered paragraph (d), substitute for the words 'these quantifications' appearing in line one, the words 'the quantifications in paragraphs (b) and (c).'"

These are really drafting things but they are necessary, consequent on the first amendment.

**2.00 p.m.**

**Sen. Huggins:** Mr. Chairman, there is one slight difficulty with just the wording of the amendment. I wonder whether the acting mover will have any problems with simply saying "conduct periodic household surveys, at least once every three years".

**Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt:** I agree, in fact, that the language is better that way than it is in this—

**Sen. Huggins:** It is legislatively inelegant.

**Mr. Chairman:** The proposed new paragraph (a) should now read as follows:

"(a) conduct periodic household surveys, at least once every three years to assess household incomes and breakdown of expenditures;"



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*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 3.*

*Question proposed, That clause 3 stand part of the Bill.*

**Mr. Chairman:** The amendments listed in the appendix to the report of the committee, I take it, have all been accepted without any further modifications. So that the Bill is amended subject to the amendments we just agreed to, and the amendments contained in the appendix to the report of the committee which would also change slightly the long title.

**Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt:** We do not need to change the long title, Mr. Chairman; we had agreed that there was no real need for that, so that is withdrawn.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you are deleting that proposed amendment by the committee—leave the long title as it is. What about the preamble?

**Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt:** The preamble stays as it is, too. That has already been changed in the committee.

**Mr. Chairman:** There are two proposed amendments to the preamble in the appendix to the report. Are you going through with those?

**Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, we would like to have those as appeared in the committee report.

**Mr. Chairman:** As well as the amendments to clause 2?

**Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt:** Yes, Sir.

*Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill*

*Question put and agreed to, That the Bill, as amended, be reported to the Senate.*

*Senate resumed.*

*Bill reported, with amendment; read the third time and passed.*

#### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**Mr. President:** We will now resume the normal business, Private Member's Business, the motion by Sen. Daly.

*Business of the Senate*  
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Before I catch the next speaker's eyes, I cannot let this opportunity go without letting Senators know that they have shared in a very historic occasion. During my long years of service in the Parliament it is the first time, within my knowledge, that a private Member has brought a Bill and has been successful in getting it passed into law. *[Applause]*

I want to congratulate Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt on her initiative and I hope that others would emulate the standard that she has set. Like Selwyn Richardson, be achievers, get things done, and be men of action and less words.

Thank you very much.

**INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT  
(Refurbishment of Piarco Airport)**

[Second Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [Tuesday, May 23, 1995]:*

*Be It Resolved* that Government:

- (i) move, without further delay, to have Piarco International Airport refurbished and expanded realistically to suit the needs of the country; and
- (ii) present a credible plan for the survival of BWIA as an international and regional air carrier. *[Sen. M. Daly]*

*Question again proposed.*

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Mr. President, we would want to say a few words on this matter. First of all, an attempt was made to address this motion last week or at the last sitting of this Senate under "Private Member's Business."

**2.10 p.m.**

I must admit that the hon. Minister of Works and Transport provided us with much talk and we did not get very far in coming down to specifics based on the context of the motion that is before this Senate. In a word, the motion seeks to have the Government provide this Senate with some commitment that it would seek to have Piarco International Airport refurbished and expanded realistically to suit the needs of the country and present a credible plan for the survival of BWIA as an international and regional air carrier.

I listened very carefully to the Minister's presentation and I have not been able to discern from it any attempt to present this Senate with any kind of credible plan for the survival of BWIA, particularly in the context of its recent privatization.

As the mover of the Motion indicated in the second recital:

"...market forces in commercial aviation are not fully sensitive to the requirements of the Caribbean region:"

The whole question of the refurbishing and expansion of Piarco has a long and distinguished history. Many people still remain confused because not sufficient information has been provided to the country by the Government. This whole expansion and refurbishing exercise was captured under the heading "Project Pride", and that is what the Government was seeking to project some time in 1992, although the Minister admitted that the engineering works and feasibility studies to have Piarco expanded and refurbished have been going on for some 20 years. Apparently, in 1992, it got some fillip and the Government was able to trigger its mechanism in an effort to get the system functioning.

Project Pride, like the recent execution of the late Selwyn Richardson, remains a mystery. It is shrouded in glib talk, cover-ups and lack of genuine information on the part of the authorities. Most importantly, nothing meaningful has taken place to get this refurbishing and expansion exercise off the ground. All we get are pie in the sky promises. The Government seems to be caught up in providing and advancing pie in the sky to the country.

We were promised a new expanded airport and we had expressed our reservations about the approach that the Government had taken in attempting to get the Piarco International Airport refurbished and expanded. We never felt, and we still do not believe, that we ought to put the international airport of our country into the hands of buccaneers and international pirates. We still have a strong objection to that kind of arrangement that was attempted and is still being attempted today.

If there was an information Act established in this country, whereby the Government could be compelled under legislation to produce appropriate information relevant to critical matters of state, this motion that is before the Senate probably would not have been here. The mere fact that it is here bears testimony to the fact that this Government continues to play hide and seek with vital information on the critical question of the Piarco expansion project captured under the broad heading "Project Pride."

*International Air Transport*  
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Mr. President, there have been many queries, mysteries and suspicions surrounding this project. Hon. Senators would recall that some time ago when this project was in its hey day, a scandal erupted in which all kinds of inquiries had to be conducted and key government personnel were implicated. Serious allegations were laid at the feet of many senior key government personnel and officials. As we speak, we are not any wiser as to what has taken place because two reports were submitted to the Government of this country by the Collymore Committee; one was produced in Parliament, which was a false report, and the true report never saw the light of day. The nation is yet to see the real report surrounding all the misgivings, allegations and suspicions that surrounded this very important project.

In the same way the Government seems to be seeking to get notes of evidence to take action in a particular matter, we need all the notes of evidence here in this Parliament so that we can have appropriate information on this particular matter. We want all the information that surrounds this project called Pride. The PNM Government refuses to even entertain the establishment, via legislation, of an information Act, but that is part of the uncivilized behaviour and conduct of a regime that speaks about democracy but practises constitutional dictatorship.

All the circumstances surrounding the expansion and refurbishing of Piarco International Airport ought to be the subject of a public independent commission of inquiry so that the country would be able to get to the root of all the strange circumstances surrounding this very important development project that was supposed to start three years ago but every time it was supposed to get off the ground there was a postponement—some excuse coming from the lips of the hon. Minister of Works and Transport who is not here today and is probably engaged in some sod-turning ceremony at some other point.

We believe that it is necessary not just to respond to this motion but to go further and to establish a public and independent commission of inquiry into all the facts and circumstances surrounding this mysterious project that is yet to get off the ground as we enter 1996 very shortly.

In the Minister's statement, we were promised—again promises; always on promises and advice—that by the end of 1995 there should be some construction taking place on Project Pride and the expansion project at Piarco should be realizable in 1996.

The preferred developer is the problem, and the Government must level with the country. Firstly, it was Pegasus Associates. That was the first group that came out of thin air. We never heard about Pegasus or Mr. James Alderson.

**2.20 p.m.**

Mr. President, we have moved from a scandal involving Pegasus Associates and we have gone to another body called the Hughes Consortium. But as Sen. Martin Daly pointed out on the last occasion, there is absolutely no distinction, no real difference, between Pegasus Associates and Hughes Consortium. It is the same bowl of soup; no distinction. In other words, Hughes Consortium and Pegasus Associates are one and the same person. So when we thought we got rid of Pegasus in this Project Pride scandal, Pegasus came through the back door again, posing this time as Hughes Consortium.

It is against this background we are asking the Government of this country to level with the population. Why has it taken so long to get a project off the ground? The same preferred developer, as I would point out, is engaging in all sorts of activities inconsistent with a true preferred developer. Why is it that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago continues to retain this developer called Hughes Consortium, better known as Pegasus? I think the Government needs to answer these questions. The Minister of Works and Transport spent a whole hour trotting up and down and was not able to give the Senate any real information surrounding this particular project.

When we examine the latest body in question—because as you know, this project was supposed to cost Trinidad and Tobago some US \$80 million. That is Project Pride. The man responsible for raising this sum of money, as I said, was no other person than a chap called Mr. James Alderson.

I have a document here in which this company called Pegasus Associates was incorporated in what is called, the State of Texas. This so-called Pegasus which was supposed to have all this wide experience in airport development, airport planning; this particular associate incorporated body of Texas, located in the United States, came on stream, based on the evidence I have here, on March 23, 1992. In other words, this so-called Pegasus Associates Incorporation which we were told had this broad and wide experience in airport development, airport expansion and engineering, turned out to be a fly-by-night organization that was incorporated, according to the State of Texas document, on September 16, 1992.

So where did Pegasus Associates come from? What is most interesting is that when we examine it even closer; we look at Article X of this document, and it reads:

"The number of directors constituting the initial board of directors is one, and the name and address of the person who is to serve as director until the first

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annual meeting of shareholders or until his successor is elected and qualified, is Mr. Jim Alderson."

This is a one-man paper company that was actually brought into existence at an appropriate time, maybe, to achieve appropriate objectives. We do not know, because all sorts of allegations surround this mysterious project called Project Pride that has not got off the ground after some four years of "ole talk" and promises by the Manning regime, particularly the Minister of Works and Transport, who, I am very sorry, is not here today.

These are some of the questions we would like the hon. Minister of Planning and Development to answer, because he will have to speak. Seeing that the Minister of Works and Transport was able to respond so rapidly to Sen. Daly's motion, we have some queries, too, and we would like the Government to respond to them. The Minister of Planning and Development is one of those key personnel who would know more about Project Pride than many of us, so we think that he would need to give us some explanation as to what is really involved in this matter.

This same person, Mr. Alderson, once filed for bankruptcy in Texas and he has been the subject of some five civil suits, one including the American Bank of Dallas. So the question we have to ask this gentleman who is the key mover and shaker—the same way our Prime Minister went to Hong Kong and met the movers and shakers of Hong Kong—Mr. Alderson is, in fact, the shaker and mover of this paper company called Hughes Consortium, and he is a declared bankrupt. He has five civil suits pending in the United States. That is the man that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has vested with the responsibility of raising some US \$80 million to get the Piarco International Airport refurbished and expanded.

Members opposite are dealing with crooks, pirates and buccaneers. This Government needs to investigate carefully the background, the bona fides of these people, because it is not the PNM Government alone that looks bad, it is the entire nation, when these things happen.

This is an area on which we really feel that the hon. Minister of Planning and Development should give us some explanation because we cannot understand how this same Gentleman could be the key mover. This is the same Gentleman who has now given the Minister of Works and Transport, who was speaking in optimistic terms the last time we debated this question, as he has been speaking for the last three years—the same person who has carried him around in circles is

the same person who continues to carry the country around in circles. We believe that the Government owes this Parliament and the nation a serious explanation as to what is really happening.

**2.30 p.m.**

Mr. President, we are not convinced that the Minister, in his feeble attempt to give us some justification for the propulsion of this project, has been able to provide any concrete information or evidence of his renewed optimism in respect of this Project Pride.

If one looks at the Minister's contribution in *Hansard* one would see that the Minister speaks, very surprisingly, in language and in terms that further confuse the Parliament. I quote from the Minister's contribution to this Senate in the *Hansard* between 3.10 and 3.20 p.m. on May 23, 1995.

"What I am leading to is that this unusual confluence of events..."

and he pointed out the confluence of events:—

"—the pull-out of three major airlines; the divestment of BWIA; the whole changed structure of BWIA and the appearance of low-cost charter operators prompted a review of the project."

Mr. President, it is either the Minister is of the view that the parliamentarians and the people of this country are fools, or he just does not understand what he is saying. He is telling the country that the whole project has undergone review, and he went on to say towards the end of 1994. But hear what are the factors that caused this review: the privatization of BWIA.

The privatization of BWIA was one of the conditionalities agreed to by the NAR government when it entered into a structural adjustment loan with the World Bank in the year 1989. So the liberalization and privatization of BWIA was something on the drawing board since 1989. It did not happen in the year 1994. So, when the Minister comes to this Parliament and says, "Look, parliamentarians, one of the reasons we have to review this plan is the privatization of BWIA."— Mr. President, this has been on the agenda for years now; almost about six years. In particular, the PNM Government placed it on the agenda almost three years ago. As soon as it came into power it spoke about getting rid of BWIA.

In other words, what kind of planning is taking place in the Government? What kind of forecasting is taking place? What kind of strategic initiative and planning is taking place, apart from the promise of a strategic plan to solve unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago? Another pie in the sky. Dreamers!

**Sen. Barrack:** Jokers!

**Sen. W. Mark:** And jokers.

When we look at the evidence we realize that the Government is really attempting to mislead this country and the Parliament. This is not the real reason. That is why we are calling on the Government to launch a public independent inquiry into all the facts and circumstances surrounding this dubious Project Pride. What we are being told is certainly not the truth. I think last week the Minister was being careless with the truth when he told us what he told us here. There is absolutely no basis for this.

There were forecasts—and the Government would know it—that some of the airlines were going to pull out. It knew that. This did not happen overnight; to come and tell the country, "Look, this thing, because of the pulling out of three international airlines we have had to review the project," is amusing.

What is even more interesting is that the Government tells us that it has reviewed the project. The Parliament of this country, the representatives of the people, have not been privy to any kind of document that these are the issues of this process. This review which the Minister indicated later on in his statement—and I quote from page 1 of this *Hansard* report—he says that:

"...the Airports Authority and the developer, have..."

in fact, been looking at giving us the same quality and same size airport at a lower price. So, the initial cost was US \$80 million; they have now re-engineered the whole project; they have now reviewed the whole project but we have not been told, as a Parliament, how much the project is now going to cost the country. What is the investment going to be like? It has been reduced from US \$80 million, but we are not given any figures. All we are told is that the quality would remain the same and the size of the airport, in terms of the projection, would also remain the same.

The Government has to take the Parliament seriously when it is coming with these kinds of statements. Absolutely horrendous for anybody to believe that these could be factors leading to this sudden review of this matter.

Why is the Government sticking with Pegasus? What is the deal behind Pegasus and the PNM? Why is it that Pegasus changed its name to Hughes Consortium with the same one-man paper company in the United States of America?



**Sen. Capildeo:** A 10-cents company.

**Sen. W. Mark:** A 10-cents company.

**Sen. Capildeo:** One cent per share.

**Sen. W. Mark:** One cent per share. This is what the Government must answer. We believe there is more in the mortar than the pestle. This calls for an independent public commission of inquiry to uncover all the circumstances surrounding this deal that has cost this country much so far, but only promises are being given to the country.

As Sen. Daly mentioned in his contribution, Piarco International Airport is a national disgrace. Barbados and other countries like Jamaica, are upgrading and expanding; they are getting their act together. We are moving towards the transportation hub of the region. We are moving towards becoming the financial centre of the Caribbean. We are told that we are going to be the Athens of the region. But look at the state of the airport. And the Government continues to twiddle and twist while the airport continues to be run down and really cannot service the kind of objectives that we are seeking to advance.

The Minister of Works and Transport is really a truly amazing, incredible person, in more than one way. When we look at page 4 of the *Hansard* report, we see where the Minister discovers overnight, that in the review—it was not there before—there was an opportunity to look at greater use of local materials because another thing happened not so long ago—the floating of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar. So, the Airports Authority decided to examine the project to see whether there could be greater use of local materials and, therefore, achieve some savings.

The Prime Minister of this country, as soon as the PNM came into power on December 16, 1991, in January, 1992, again put his foot in his mouth and told the whole country that the Trinidad and Tobago dollar was going to be floated. That happened since 1992. I remember the late Dr. Kuarsingh at a lecture session at the University of the West Indies apologizing, saying that the Prime Minister did not say what he was reported to have said, and somebody asked him if he had the authority to speak on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Mr. President, the floating of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar was not an accident. So, why is the Minister trying to fool the country? The Government had taken a decision since in Opposition—because its entire manifesto was prepared for it by international monetarists who are glued to the neoclassical approach to

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economic development: the orthodox approach; the conventional wisdom—that is what it is glued to. So, it knew it was going to free-up, liberalize, privatize and deregulate the economy. One of the prices that it must deregulate and liberalize is the price of foreign exchange.

The Government knew before that it was going to float the dollar, so, how can the Minister now tell us that the reason for reviewing the project is the floating of the dollar, and that this floatation would result in the Government saving some cost if it used local raw materials? "Mamaguying" the population. This Government is utterly dishonest, and ought to resign on simple issues like these. This Government ought to resign because it has misled this Parliament, not once, but on many occasions in the past.

**2.40 p.m.**

We are not convinced by what the Government has been saying. We want to know, if the Government is going to review this project as it claims to have decided; why not tell the Parliament what is the new cost? The initial cost was US \$80 million. International certifiers came and told the Government that it was on the right track and to go ahead; the investors got the green light to invest; what is the sum of money to be invested? Is it \$50 million as stated by the Minister in the last debate? What is the final cost? We do not know.

As was pointed out by Sen. Martin Daly—and I have been able to confirm this—sometime in September 1994, the Airports Authority held an emergency meeting at which the board of directors took a decision to terminate its relationship with Hughes Consortium. We are being told that at the end of 1994, the same Airports Authority which took that decision and put in place what it called "Plan B" for damage control is now being advanced as the agency that has agreed to scale down the operation, to review the plan to deliver the same quality, same size airport but at a lower price. With the same crook, the same buccaneer, the same pirate; the same people who, in the first instance, were not keeping promises in terms of delivery.

We are at a loss. The whole project, as Sen. Martin Daly said, became untenable. I must admit that the Airports Authority had gone out completely to convince the population that everything was okay with Project Pride, but there came a time when it could no longer defend the indefensible and it took a decision in December 1994, to terminate its relationship with Hughes Consortium. There is something in the mortar besides the pestle.

The Minister had the authority to turn down the decision or to accept the decision. Obviously the Minister turned down the decision. Why does the Government, through the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Cabinet of this country, continue to protect Pegasus/Hughes Consortium? This is why we need a public inquiry so that if we have to lock up anybody let them be locked up. We want a public enquiry into this scandalous situation that has taken place under "Project Pride."

We have given a commitment to the country that we shall be reviewing many things that have taken place under this Government, this dubious regime, and whether they are in Panama, in Canada or in the United States, or Costa Rica, we are sending Interpol for those people, whoever they may be. Too many people are suffering in this country as a result of the waste, mismanagement, corruption and extravagance of this Government.

Mr. President, I want to bring to your attention some of the problems that this developer posed to the Airports Authority. That is why the CEO decided to terminate the relationship with that agency, that body.

Hughes Consortium or Pegasus repeatedly failed to tender payments to contractors and consultants in accordance with an agreement that was signed in 1994. Cheques were being bounced all over the place. That was one of the reasons that the Airports Authority decided to terminate its relationship with this company called Hughes Consortium. They were supposed to provide US \$2 million interim financing to allow for the continuation of the detail, design and construction works. They failed to come up with the US \$2 million that they were supposed to provide. As I said, they also failed to stop the practice of issuing cheques to contractors; cheques have bounced on more than one occasion. These are very serious matters. Why has the Government of the PNM, this so-called caring Government, this incorruptible Government, not fired this company? What is behind the retention of Hughes Consortium, better known as Pegasus? We must never forget that Pegasus and Hughes Consortium are one and the same company, and one and the same person.

When the Government told us there had been a big inquiry and it had gone through the whole process, at the end of the day who got the contract; who was the preferred developer after the national scandal involving all that I have said earlier? Hughes Consortium. Pegasus went through one door and emerged again at the front door. We need a public inquiry into this matter. This matter is extremely dangerous.

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Mr. President, every time the Government of this country misappropriates a million dollars it denies children the right to sit on benches in schools. Whenever a million dollars is misappropriated people cannot get a bed to sleep on in the hospitals, they cannot get pharmaceutical products to deal with their illness. The waste, extravagance and corruption are causing crime in this country.

Mr. Richardson—may his soul rest in peace—is just a victim of a kind of cycle that has been almost nurtured by past administrations. When I say the chickens are coming home to roost, I am saying it was Mr. Richardson last week; it could be me tomorrow; it could be the Leader of the Opposition the next day; it could be the Prime Minister the following day. This is the state of affairs we have reached in this country. Every time the Government 'tief' money in this country, every time it misappropriates money, it creates more bandits and more criminals in the country. It is setting up the country. It is setting me up, as well. When the Government does what it is doing every day, everybody gets to saying politicians are the same. Everybody classifies us as the same. We are in the same boat. We are not excluded from being the marksman's target. The marksman could be targetting us, too. These are very dangerous times that we are living in and we cannot treat lightly matters like this. This is deadly business.

**2.50 p.m.**

We need to get some clarification and information from the Government. The Government cannot wash its hands as if nothing exists. It has a responsibility to stop musical chairs with the lives of people.

If one looks at this Minister's contribution in *Hansard*, 3.20–3.30 p.m., one will see what he says. It is another amazing and incredulous statement coming from the lips of the Minister of Works and Transport. This is what he says as a justification for the review of this whole project called Pride.

"The fact of the matter is, Mr. President, Sen. Daly is aware—he is a knowledgeable man, he is up-to-date with the financial situation worldwide—that the international banking scenario has changed radically over the last three to four years. International lending agencies are no longer prepared to finance projects of this magnitude, projects of this nature, without either a strong equity participation by the borrower or a sovereign guarantee. This is something that has happened in the international financial market over the last three to four years. The fact is, that there has been an international debt crisis and a number of countries have defaulted on their debts, a number of international banks have had to eat a lot of debt, and the entire international financial market has hardened over the last three to four years."

To whom does the Minister of Works and Transport believe he is speaking? A child in elementary school knows that there was a major debt crisis in the 1980s when Mexico defaulted on paying, and that sent shivers and chills up the arteries and blood stream of the international banking community. It took certain measures to bail out Mexico. That is when Reagan and Thatcher decided to privatize the Third World. Never again would we have an international debt crisis. Our whole economic apparatus is being organized to ensure that the first claim to our national wealth and income is debt repayment. It is honouring our foreign debt. That is why the IMF, the World Bank and the IADB have been in all those developing countries. They are engaging in surveillance and they are supervising.

As is known, last week our humble Minister of Finance indicated to the whole country that he was acting under the instructions of the International Monetary Fund staffers to mop up the excess liquidity in the system. We have over \$75 million in the system and an IMF staffer has to leave Washington to tell the hon. Minister of Finance to mop up the operations. That is the extent of the kind of spinelessness that we have developed in this country.

When the Minister came here and told the Senate that it was the debt crisis that caused him to review his project, and that was why he could not get it off the ground, that is not so. I am saying to this Parliament that the banking scenario did not change radically over the last three to four years. The international banking scenario changed long before three to four years ago. It was almost 20 years ago. Lending agencies were no longer prepared to finance projects of this magnitude without a strong equity participation by the borrower or a sovereign guarantee. When he came to this Parliament and told us that these things were happening overnight and that was why he could not get off the ground, he is fooling the population. That is what the PNM Government is doing.

**Mr. President:** Sen. Mark, your speaking time has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. W. Mark:** If we look again at the Minister's contribution between 3.30 and 3.40 p.m. we would see what the Minister told the country.

"The fact is that the information that I have received is that the project is now bankable"

This is about the fifth time this same project is bankable—

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"and that the full financing will be raised. All the problems with regard to the cash structure of the project have now been resolved.

Discussions are now underway with all the final partners in the financing package—a number of different international financial institutions and perhaps even some local institutions—with regard to either debt or equity contributions to this project.

...I am going to be very careful of what I am saying. From the information that I have at this point, I am fairly satisfied that the financing for this project will be raised before the end of 1995. From what I have seen, in terms of the restructured project, in terms of the additional equity, and expressions of interest and various commitments given by international funding agencies, I am fairly satisfied that the financing for this project will be raised before the end of 1995."

The Prime Minister when he was in Opposition, had a blueprint to solve unemployment. Two weeks before the election he told the population, particularly the young people, to vote for him. I remember Sen. Rahael and the hon. Minister of Finance being a member of that committee. It came and "mamagued" the population that it had a blueprint to solve unemployment. It was careless again with the truth. It misled the population and when it got into power it realized that it was bankrupt of any developmental ideas.

What did it do? It called the masses of people, the source of wisdom in any country, and they came in their hundreds and provided hundreds of solutions. In 1992, the Government held a symposium and it got hundreds of solutions. Again, it made false promises to the people and to this day not a single one of those ideas—

**Sen. Rahael:** What about UNC? Does it have any solution?

**Sen. W. Mark:** You cannot trap us with that. I know NATUC has put extensive proposals. None has been implemented. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. President:** Have pity on the poor reporters.

**Sen. W. Mark:** The point I am making here is that we are getting another commitment from the Minister of Works and Transport that at the end of 1995 into 1996, we are going to have a brand new airport and everything would be put in place at the end of 1995. The people have reached their limit with this Government. This Government is full of false promises. Its delivery is very limited and inadequate. Here it comes to this Parliament once again, and gives a

commitment that it is going to put in place the refurbishing and expansion of the airport and that should take place in 1995.

The Minister of Works and Transport, I understand, will not be contesting the next general election. I understand that Mr. Gordon Draper has now been drafted from Arima and he is now pointing to Diego Martin East. Already we know that the Minister of Works and Transport will not be a candidate in the PNM line up in the next election.

As far as we are concerned, this motion in the name of Sen. Martin Daly is quite appropriate and timely. I do not believe that the Government is going to provide any serious answers to some of the questions that have been raised and it will continue to engage in its normal musical chairs. It will continue to come with misleading statements; it will continue to engage in glib talk, and at the end of the day, the mystery which surrounds Project Pride will continue to haunt our nation.

**3.00 p.m.**

The sooner the masses can get the Government, either through some kind of inspiration, maybe some spiritual inspiration, to ring the bell, and call election—and call it fast—the better. The masses can then take a decision and put the PNM before the bar of justice and determine its guilt or innocence. I think that the time has come for us to recognize that the Government is unable, incapable, incompetent and Project Pride is only one of the many projects that it has embarked upon that have not borne fruit for the nation.

We would like to give our support to the motion that is before this Senate in the name of Sen. Martin Daly. We hope that the hon. Minister of Planning and Development would grace us by providing some clarification later in the proceedings and giving this Senate a commitment that his Government has nothing to hide. Since his Government has nothing to hide, since there is nothing in the mortar besides the pestle, the Government of the PNM will not hesitate to launch a public, independent commission of inquiry into all the facts and circumstances surrounding this dubious and scandalous project called Pride.

With these few words, I take my seat.

**Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt:** Mr. President, I, also, wish to support this motion put forward by Sen. Daly. I think, as Sen. Daly obviously does, that it is high time that we did something about the condition of Piarco International

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Airport. In fact, if the need was great when this project was first conceived, it is even greater now. I do hope that when the plans are finalized, whenever that may be, something would be done about the situation, where there is no seating for people who have to wait between flights. We frequently see children, aged people, pregnant women and people who are disabled without seats, unless they go into one of the commercial establishments where they feel that they have to buy food in order to sit. I hope that will be corrected when we do get our new facility.

Like Sen. Daly, I have some questions about the whole project which I feel need answering. I am sorry that Minister Imbert is not here, but I am sure that Sen. Saith can provide the answers that are necessary. In Minister Imbert's speech he pointed out several times that in spite of the pull-out of the three major scheduled airline services, we had seen low-cost charters filling the void with the same number of passenger enplanements, but at a lower cost. He pointed out that there was no decrease in the overall traffic. I am unclear, in reading the *Hansard* record of his contribution, why it was necessary, if there had been no decrease or diminution in traffic, to restructure the plan. Does the restructuring of the plan refer to fewer bays for planes to land? In what way was this restructured?

I understand the point about the finance and the wisdom of re-examining the whole plan in the light of the floating of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar. As the project was originally budgeted in US dollars, with the floatation of the dollar, obviously there will be changes. I think that as with many businesses, they have had to look at those plans because of the floating of the dollar. I just do not understand, apart from the financial side of it, why there was need for restructuring in the light of his own statement that there was no change in the number of passenger enplanements, either coming or going.

There is a second point which worried me somewhat in the Minister's reply to Sen. Daly. I think we would all like to feel confident about the financial wisdom of those in Government who are spending our money. One of the things which Minister Imbert did say was that one of the reasons why the plans had to be looked at was that there had been a number of tentative agreements reached with the old BWIA. It seems strange to me that the plans for the expansion of the airport which were as extensive and detailed as those of the Project Pride would have been done on tentative promises from BWIA. The tentative nature of that makes me uneasy and I wondered, in the light of the fact that Government still has a



substantial ownership in BWIA, whether the Government could still hold BWIA to those promises made in relation to those plans.

There is another point which I would like to have cleared up. I was glad to see, in the Minister's presentation, that he is not very confident that all of the money for the project will be available by the end of 1995. He said that there was a reasonable chance that all the money could be raised in 1995 and that construction will resume in 1995. I was very glad to see that the Minister used the words "there is a reasonable chance." I think that we ought to be able to have confidence in our leaders in this country. We have, in the press, heard the chairman of Project Pride repeatedly and heatedly assuring doubting Thomases in this country that financing had been agreed and that everything was about to go ahead. I think that because these accounts, as Sen. Daly pointed out, came to nought, that did a considerable amount of damage to the confidence which people had in Government in terms of its believability in carrying out projects. That the Minister has been honest enough to say that there is a reasonable chance that the money can be raised in 1995, at least no longer puts us in a position of sitting and waiting to find out whether or not another promise is going to be broken.

### **3.10 p.m.**

Mr. President, I have one last point before I close. I was not here when the Minister of Works and Transport spoke in response to Sen. Daly and I did not understand from the *Hansard* report what he meant in relation to the question raised by Sen. Prof. Spence about re-bidding for the project. Since the project has been restructured and the restructuring is going to save us money—which, again, I think is something that the Minister should be complimented on—I think if we could have more projects restructured so that they could save us money the country would breathe a sigh of relief. I realize that the Minister takes this very seriously having read his spread in the press this weekend in relation to the prison. It seems that the restructuring is going to be substantial. Is there not a legal or moral obligation to allow the other people who had bid originally to at least have a chance to tender again?

I do understand the point that they do not want to waste the two years we have been sitting, waiting for it to start, and that it is better to lose nine months than two years. That I understand very well. However, in light of the considerable involvement of—I believe it was Ernst & Young at the time—in the actual process of the bidding and the attempts to keep it very transparent and above

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board, which got much publicity, I would hate to think that our credibility is being looked at doubtfully because the transaction did not undergo what might have been, either in the construction industry or internationally in terms of such bids, the legal or ethical process.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith):** Mr. President, I will try to keep the debate at the level to which Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt has fortunately brought it back, that is the discussion of the issue, and not deal with the rantings, ravings, allegations and innuendoes that were so characteristic of Sen. Wade Mark's contribution in this Senate.

The Government—in a sense—agrees with Sen. Daly's motion which says that the provision of air transport and air transport facilities is a vital element in the development of the country. Taking that on board, one has to move—as he put it—to have the Piarco Airport refurbished and expanded realistically to suit the needs of the country. As strange as it may seem, Mr. President, that objective has been the driving force behind the way the Government has tried to improve the Piarco International Airport.

The present terminal building at the Piarco International Airport was opened in 1962. A 1968 Transportation Study done by Parker, Parsons and Brinkerhoff indicated that expansion of the terminal building was required because the facilities were at that time nearing their capacity limits. In their study they made recommendations and provided a master plan for the redevelopment of the Piarco International Airport. One of the things that study indicated—and many studies which followed—was that by siting the terminal—as it was then—on the southern side of the runway, we had put it in a position where expansion on that side was extremely difficult, and any future development at the Piarco International Airport, in terms of a significant new capacity, had to be a new terminal building and it had to be located on the northern side.

Since 1968, successive Governments have been dealing with this question of the improvement of the Piarco International Airport. Unfortunately, a new terminal building has yet to be constructed. The way Governments have dealt with the problems at Piarco has been to make a series of ad hoc additions to the existing terminal building, bearing in mind that in the first place, it is the wrong place if we want to increase capacity, to site the terminal building. I give some examples.

In 1976, a new customs baggage area was built; in 1979, a holding lounge area was built; in 1985, an expansion was done for BWIA's check-in terminal, and

the diplomatic lounge was rebuilt; in 1986, new meteorological offices; in 1987, they expanded the terminal building at the front and continued work on that project in 1990; in 1992, a new immigration area was built and the new duty-free shopping centre was built and work was also done on the roof.

The way we have tackled the Piarco International Airport since 1968—when it was quite clear that we should be looking at a new terminal building—has been, in fact, to do some ad hoc arrangements on the existing terminal building. The result is there for all to see: it is not satisfactory; it is not the kind of airport that will serve the needs of this country both in terms of its own development—if we want to be serious about tourism or even industrial development—it just does not suit the country.

Arising out of this, the Airports Authority which came into being in 1979, began work on new airport facilities. In 1985, the first master plan of the Airports Authority was prepared. In March 1987, the Government of the day accepted that master plan which was the genesis of Project Pride. In June 1987, the Airports Authority put out a request for proposals to develop this master plan. In August 1987, the request for proposals was put out and people were invited to submit proposals for development of the master plan. The Authority went through the process of getting proposals in February, evaluating those proposals in June and announcing the first ranked consortium in June 1988. Reading my notes I cannot help but smile, because in August 1988, 'the first ranked consortium fails to satisfy conditions precedent to contract award. Negotiations terminated. Negotiations pursued with the second ranked consortium headed by Bechtel.' There seems to be a history of this project not being able to move very quickly.

Suffice it to say that by August 1989, roughly one year later, the master plan was prepared, the feasibility study completed and submitted to the Airports Authority. One year later, in April 1990, an agreement was signed with Zipperly Hardage Associates for pre-construction work on the airport. In December of 1991 based on that work, a final master plan was developed. Pre-construction engineering designs and studies were carried out on Project Pride by a Florida-based firm and the project was now in a form for implementation.

### **3.20 p.m.**

When this Government came into office in 1991 it immediately began to address the question of the master plan, Project Pride, as it was then called. The Government found that we had a master plan, a feasibility study, and a desire by the Airports Authority to proceed with this project, which at that time consisted,

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and still consists, of a new terminal building on the north side, new air cargo facilities, new taxiways to connect the terminal building onto the existing runway; aircraft refuelling facilities and the associated infrastructure work. The Airports Authority wanted to proceed with this plan, saying that the analysis indicated that this project was commercially viable, there was a revenue stream that would justify the expenditure, and that the Government should seek to finance it.

The Government was of the view then—given all the other demands for infrastructure development, some of which one could not finance out of revenue streams; in other words, if one needed a road one could not finance it out of its revenue streams—that it should not put its limited resources into the airport project. If there was an infrastructure project, a development project that had a revenue stream that would make it commercially viable, then the Authority should seek to fund it, build it, on purely commercial terms, without the Government being involved in its financing or in guaranteeing its financing.

Therefore, in February 1992 the Government said to the Airports Authority, "Yes, you may proceed with this project, but on the basis that it satisfies commercial viability, you can go out there and satisfy commercial bank lenders that the project is viable and that there is a revenue stream that will enable the project to pay its way. The Government would concentrate on using its guarantee or its ability to raise funds for projects such as water, highways, schools and so forth.

As a result of that decision, the Airports Authority then commissioned a further study using ICAO, which is the International Civil Aviation Organization, to look at the project, because it had now moved from where the Government had been asked to finance it to going out on commercial terms. That study looked at the detail plan to determine the cost benefit, it looked at projections of traffic, it looked at the financing arrangement, as well as the environmental impact. Based on the ICAO study which indicated that there was viability in the project and could go to commercial bankers, the Authority proceeded to request proposals from developers for this project. This was done in April 1992.

The history of that first effort is well known. It resulted in the selection by the Airports Authority of a preferred developer. Suffice it to say that by February 1993, which was one year later, the Government took the decision to terminate that process and to ask the Airports Authority to proceed again to see whether it could develop this project using the same principle—which is the principle that the Government will neither fund nor give a guarantee, and that it must be a

commercially viable project and the revenue stream from this project must satisfy the lenders of the project's viability.

By taking that decision, the Government was in fact forcing the Airports Authority and developers to come up with proposals and with a project which would satisfy those from whom it was seeking finance for the project. The easiest thing in the world would have been to say the Government must guarantee it and once that was done the project could proceed. It was the view of the Government then, and is still to some extent, that if the project is realistic, then the Authority should be able to convince people to put money into it without the Government's guarantee.

In March 1993, a reconstituted Airports Authority was asked to proceed again with requests for proposals from developers to have this project done. The Airports Authority reviewed its documents and put out proposals and conditions, and set up a system of evaluation using independent consultants to evaluate proposals.

In September 1993, based on such analysis, the Airports Authority recommended to Government that it be allowed to proceed with a selected developer, having gone through this process, the developer being Hughes Airport System, which is a division of the Hughes Aircraft Company. The Government agreed that the Authority would now proceed to negotiate with Hughes Airport System on the basis of its proposals which, as I understand it, consisted of a business plan, a financial plan and a development plan. The proposal—like all bidders', contains two elements which the Minister of Works and Transport would refer to as "hard cost," which is the cost of the physical structure, and the "soft costs" which are the fees associated with the design, project management and so forth.

The purpose of the negotiations is for the Airports Authority and the Government to be satisfied that in respect of the hard cost, the figures were realistic and in respect of the soft costs they were reasonable; whether in fact, the costs should be accepted, or whether they could be negotiated down. This is the normal way. There is the best bid, but then one may begin negotiations to try to make it better if one can. That has been going on since October 1993. In the meantime the environment keeps changing and, therefore, at all times in their negotiations with the bankers this has to be kept in mind and one has to review and analyse what is going on in the industry.

The developers have, as their responsibility, not only to provide a project at a fixed cost and price within a given time, but they also have the responsibility to

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put whatever equity is required into this project and raise whatever loan funds are required for the project. Therefore, it is their responsibility to do these things to comply with the requests for proposals. It has not been an easy task. Obviously, their assessment of the capital markets, assessment of the equity requirements, and the ability of lenders to make money available to this project were over-optimistic and the negotiations have been hard and tough.

**3.30 p.m.**

By September 1994 it was clear that the project-financing package had to be looked at again and that the bankers were expecting a larger portion of equity involvement in this project than had been originally planned. The Government was of the view, at that time, that the developer should, within a reasonable time frame, address these problems and convince the Government that it was prepared to look at its financial plan again and if it required more equity, put in more equity to satisfy the loan requirement of the lenders, otherwise there would be no project.

If the developer had come back and had said that it did not believe it could have put this package together, or it was not prepared to put more equity into the project, then the project would have been terminated at that time.

The reality is that towards the end of 1994, the Government was faced with a developer who said, "I am prepared to look again at the equity situation, I am prepared to put more equity if it is necessary and I believe that I can put together a financial package which would satisfy the bankers and be able to move this project forward."

The Government had to make a judgment on whether to stop the project at that time, understanding that the process by which people had originally been asked to submit proposals—without Government guarantee and with the commercial viability being satisfied—if we stick to that position, then the next bidder or bidders would go out in the market place and find the same problems. It was not a problem of credibility; it was a problem of equity, and none of the proposals which were originally submitted by bidders, were proposals with any large equity in them. Therefore, unless they themselves were prepared to put a larger amount of equity then the project would run into this problem.

It was the Government's considered opinion at that time that we should make one more effort to allow the preferred developer to put the package together and if that did not happen then the Government would have to terminate the process. And then, we would also have to decide whether that was the way the Government wished to proceed with the development of the airport or whether the Government

would go back to the traditional method of financing for infrastructural development, that is, the Government borrowing the money and putting it in its capital programme and pushing out some other development project at the time. As you know, there is a limit to the amount of the capital budget each year and to put this project in, another one would have to be put out.

At the end of 1994, the Government took the decision to continue negotiations, since the developers had indicated that they were prepared to change their financing plan, and to renew the project in light of existing conditions to take the opportunity of seeing whether the project could still be financed on a commercial basis without Government's involvement in its financing. As a result, certain deadlines were set by which certain things had to be done.

The situation remains as the Minister of Works and Transport indicated, but given the progress that has been made, there is a reasonable chance that the project can in fact be financed under this arrangement. This however is not open-ended. During the rest of this year, if that package is not put in place, the Government would have to terminate this arrangement and review its entire strategy in respect of how it would develop the airport and whether, given the conditions as they exist now, it would want to finance it through a purely commercial arrangement or as part of its development programme.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**Sen. Daly:** Mr. President, can the Minister indicate positively whether the Government received a recommendation from the Airports Authority to terminate its relationship with the preferred bidder and whether it did so. My information is September 1994.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Mr. President, my understanding is that discussions have been going on between the ministry and the Airports Authority at various times. At one time the ministry was saying that it should terminate and the Airports Authority was saying it thought it could have something going. In September the Airports Authority said that it should be terminated and the ministry may have said, no; whatever options are available, plan B, plan C. That kind of dialogue has been going on.

**Sen. Daly:** Thank you.

**Sen. Dr. Chameley:** Mr. President, before the Minister sits, can he tell us whether or not the accusations made by Sen. Wade Mark are really

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unsubstantiated? He said that James Alderson is part and parcel of both Pegasus and Hughes Consortium. He also said that the gentleman has filed for bankruptcy in Texas and that he has five civil suits pending in the USA. Has this been investigated?

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Mr. President, I cannot comment on the allegations made about Mr. Alderson. If the Senator made those allegations, I am sure he has evidence. In respect of the work which is going on now, the Government and the Airports Authority are dealing with Hughes Airports Systems and any conversation which we have had with the developer has been with Hughes Airports Systems.

**Mr. President:** Is there anybody else who wants to join the debate? Sen. Daly.

**Sen. Martin Daly:** Mr. President, it became obvious in the two sessions we have had that this project is a considerable embarrassment to the Government but it does not wish to admit it. I am very sorry that Minister Saith chose to dismiss the contribution of Sen. Wade Mark as innuendoes. The fact is that every leniency has been shown to the preferred developer and we hear the now fashionable phrase "within a reasonable time-frame". That seems to be the phrase for everything now, whether it relates to jobs or finance.

There is a situation where, on the accounts given by both Ministers, the preferred developer simply has not come up with the goods. We are being told, by implication, that the reasonable time frame will come to an end by the end of this year. That means in a situation where the Government accepts that there is urgent need for the airport to be refurbished, the preferred developer was given from September 1993 to December 1995 to fulfil its obligations to put in equity and to raise any loan capital that is required. The Government knows that that kind of time frame is quite unreasonable. Now we know that the leniency towards this developer will come to an end at the end of this year; I suppose the answer is that the longest rope has an end.

I find it unprecedented that this kind of leniency should have been shown to the preferred developer and I believe that the question asked by Sen. Wade Mark—what is the reason for it?—has not been satisfactorily answered, particularly as we now know that, whether it is in the form of a dialogue or not, there came a point where the Airports Authority would have preferred to deal with someone other than the preferred developer.



**3.40 p.m.**

It is scandalous that I should give the Minister, not only the date of that decision, but also the number of the minute and he should shrug it off and say, "I must provide the evidence." He is the person who can call the Airports Authority if he does not have the answer. He is the person who can call the Airports Authority to produce its minute book or a certified copy of the minute; not me. I do not have those facilities.

**Mr. Imbert:** Just on a point of clarification. It is the same Airports Authority that is engaged in negotiations with the preferred developer at this time. Secondly, the matter of which he speaks was a reference to an alleged recommendation by the Airports Authority to go to developer number two, and no such recommendation was made. It was in that context that I said that if the Senator had a copy of the minute where that exists I would be most grateful to see it.

**Sen. M. Daly:** I maintain it is not my business to provide the minute. It is the Minister's business to call for it to see if what we are saying is true. Just as it is the business of the Government to find out whether Alderson is connected with Hughes, and whether or not Alderson has been the subject of bankruptcy action. They are the Executive and it is their job to trace those things, not ours.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. President, on a point of information. I have checked the minutes. No such minute exists.

**Sen. M. Daly:** What about checking on Mr. Alderson's connection with Hughes and whether he is the subject of five civil suits and a bankruptcy. Has he checked that?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. President, the Airports Authority is dealing with Hughes Airport Systems as the preferred developer and no one else.

**Sen. M. Daly:** Mr. President, the Minister well knows that Hughes Airport Systems must act through people and we need to know who those people are and whether one of those people representing Hughes is Mr. Alderson. It is very simple.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. President, my understanding is that the Airports Authority has been dealing with a number of senior managers within the Hughes organization. Mr. Alderson is not an employee of Hughes.

**Sen. M. Daly:** Mr. President, to stop all this bobbing up and down, let me make the point this way. The Minister was slightly upset that I would not give him the name of the reporter. He was not satisfied when I told him I was reading

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from the Express. He wanted the name of the reporter. Well, I am not satisfied that they are dealing with Hughes and I want the names of the people.

I have the minute. The copy of the minute I have—and I have already given the reference:

"Purpose of emergency meeting to report to the board on Project Pride's relationship with the Hughes Consortium which has become so untenable as to warrant a recommendation of termination of such relationship by the management and to seek board approval to do so. The relevant resolution to effect this decision will be subject to the concurrence of the Minister. Background to the relationships—"

And there is cited a series of reasons why the Authority was of that view, and one of them was:

"Failure to raise the requisite cash equity contribution which is a condition precedent to the CIBC commitment letter now signed by all parties. "

We know from the contribution of Minister Saith today that a principal responsibility of the developer was to put equity into the project and on the basis of failure to do that, my information is, the Airports Authority recommended the termination of the relationship with Hughes. If this Minister thinks it is my business to chase that up, then he has got a completely wrong-headed idea of what his job is as a member of the Executive of this country. That is my information.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. President, on the previous occasion I was very careful about what I said. I said on different occasions both the Government and the Airports Authority recommended that the relationship between the Airports Authority and the developer be terminated. On one occasion we asked the Airports Authority to terminate the relationship, and on other occasions they asked us to terminate the relationship. I made that absolutely clear on the last occasion. The point I made is, while all of this was going on, we almost reached the point where we terminated. When we asked the Airports Authority to terminate, it said, "No, wait, we believe there is still some chance yet." When it asked us to terminate, we said, "Hold on; let us look at this again." Eventually we reached the point where we nearly terminated and then the developer was able to raise the required equity. I made that absolutely clear on the last occasion. There is nothing in all of this. I really do not understand it.

**Sen. M. Daly:** Mr. President, those listening to the debate in the exchange will make their own judgment. The fact is, I am raising all of this in the context of

the situation where, from September 1993 to December 1995, we are going to continue to be leaning with a developer who, at various times, both the Government and the Airports Authority wanted to terminate. So at various times neither of them found this developer suitable but they are still giving that developer until December 1995.

So it does not matter how they put it—and this is going to be one of my criticisms of the deficiencies in the Minister's contribution. These are the facts, and to suggest that there are persons in the media who maliciously set out to undermine the success of the project raises many questions about the handling of this project and the handling of Government's business, and I am going to come to that. But I raise it now to demonstrate that no one asking the questions which I am asking could conceivably be trying to undermine the success of anything. There is absolutely no success to undermine.

Therefore, we are having here a situation where, as this Government sometimes has, a complete conflict between illusion and reality. The illusion was that this project was a success. I do not want to repeat my main contribution where I showed you the pictures of everyone "gallerying" himself about a success which simply has not been achieved. So it is no good blaming the media. Facts, as the lawyers say, are stubborn things, and the facts are that they have not succeeded in getting this project off the ground and they have not succeeded in getting the finance, however they try to put it or package it. They may or may not persuade certain people to put headlines in the newspapers that Pride is back on track, but the fact is, it is not back on track. All we now have is the hope of a much more careful statement about whether it will be a reality.

I do not blame the Minister for this. It is no good the Minister saying he must be careful of what he says because I have taken exception to the giving of assurances. Persons who give Ministers material or information on the basis of which they induce them to give the Parliament assurances, should be dealt with by "Fax," because you cannot come to the Parliament and give an assurance if you do not have reasonable grounds for doing so, and you cannot then come later when you are challenged and say, "Oh well! I am going to be very careful; I am going to downgrade my statement from an assurance to an expression that there are reasonable prospects."

One of the things I am complaining about is that the country was repeatedly misled by the information that was being provided to the Minister, inducing him to give assurances which he has now got to downgrade. That is not his fault.

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Instead he should not be protecting the people who gave him that wrong information and induced him to give those assurances; he should deal with them.

So this, by any stretch of the imagination, has been an extraordinary sequence of events. We have pulled it out like a dentist pulling teeth, but we now have the story piece by piece and it is a very sad story indeed. There is no success and there is nothing to boast about here and there is nothing to put people's pictures in the newspaper about. If anything, they are the people who should be dealt with for causing the Parliament of the country to be misled.

May I, just very briefly, identify some of the other deficiencies in the explanations which we have been given. I repeat again that I do not think it is tenable to suggest that this project has been a victim of mischief, not unless it was the mischief of false public relations. There has been no success to undermine and that is also not an appropriate explanation for this Parliament. I agree with Sen. Wade Mark that to talk about an unusual confluence of events, namely the pull-out of three major airlines to divestment of BWIA and the whole structure of BWIA, is not a credible explanation, simply because the Government would have known from day-one that BWIA was to be divested.

When it was announced that the airlines were pulling out, what happened? In the *Sunday Express* of June 5, 1994, Mr. Moore of Project Pride said categorically in the context of the British Airways and American Airlines pull-out, that he did not expect the cutbacks in airline traffic to affect Project Pride. So who is right? Was the project adversely affected by the pull-out of the three major airlines, or was it not?

**3.50 p.m.**

That is a perfect example of the persons who are running the project giving information that apparently is not correct. The Minister has told us that that was an important event and implied that it adversely affected Project Pride, but here is one of the "gallery" men telling us something completely different because it is important to project success, at any cost, even if success is an illusion. Even if success is an illusion, we must project it.

This is not the point at which to raise it, but we are in great danger of projecting other illusions with regard to jobs, crime and other issues in the society. Maybe, this debate would provoke some thought on the part of the Government about the importance of not projecting illusionary success. Very important.

Then, the Minister said that it was unfair of me to say that whoever recommended that the project proceed without a guarantee should receive a fax.

Yet he tells us that it was known for three or four years that we were not likely to get financing without strong equity participation or a sovereign guarantee. If that was known for three or four years, then it was a wrong decision to proceed on the basis of no government guarantee, unless, of course, you could get the strong equity participation. However, according to the minute to which I have referred, that was the principal failure of the preferred developer; mainly, his failure to get strong equity participation. But, we are going to continue playing footsie with him until December, 1995.

Finally, another matter from which we still have not been able to pull the whole row of teeth. One of the things we were told in an answer to an oral question which I raised, which concerned the preparatory site works, which is another slide in the projection of this illusionary success—Well, it was all right to be doing these preliminary site works because it was going to be paid for by the preferred developer.

The Minister tells us that most of that money has been paid. When I asked how much was the equity, or what was "most," there seemed to be some concern that I was somehow trying to obstruct the good work of the Government. It is important to know what "most" means. An answer to a question put down for oral answer was given, not that they would be paying most, but that they would be paying it. So long as I am here, I would expect answers given to questions which I—or any other Senator—put down, would be accurate. Not partially accurate, particularly at a time when an illusion of success was being projected.

This is not an academic matter. It seems that the Parliament is dealt with, is sometimes treated as an academic matter. It is not entirely academic because it is suggested that one of the things that the Airports Authority was upset about with the preferred developer was this failure to provide US \$2 million for interim financing to allow the continuation of detail, design and construction works. I do not know whether those construction works included the preparatory site works. I simply do not know and the Minister has not told us.

Is this another area where the Government is being lenient with this developer? That is to say, tell the Parliament, in response to a question put down for oral answer, that they are providing the finance for the site works, and then it turns out that they are providing only "most," whatever that is. One can assume it is 51 per cent or more. We simply have not been told. Is this another area of leniency with this developer?

I, therefore, do not accept that it is innuendo to ask why the Government is so lenient and appears to be wedded to this developer. Why, as Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt

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suggested in her contribution, it does not remain an alternative to the Airports Authority to go to the second bidder and say, "In this new market, which we described, the first developer has not been able to raise the necessary equity, can you?" And, they may be given six, eight or whatever number of weeks desirable to raise that money.

I still do not understand why the alternatives are to go with the preferred developer, whose performance has been disappointing, and terminating the project. What is wrong with going to the second or third bidder and saying, "These are the market conditions; the first bidder cannot make it, can you?" What is wrong with that? All of that is what worries us about this apparent indissoluble marriage to the preferred developer. That is very worrying.

I take strong objection—it is a matter for him, I cannot tell him how to run his Government—if it is a fact, as has been reported in the newspapers, that the Prime Minister has been meeting with Hughes top brass in an effort to salvage the project; if he wants to do it that is a matter for him, but I do not think he should be lured into something like that. It is either the project is commercially viable and he has competent negotiations, or he does not. But, at every stage in these illusions, they have brought in the Prime Minister. This is one illusion that I cannot say the Prime Minister is responsible for creating. They have lured him into it each time. I do not know why they are luring him into this. I simply do not know.

It appears that there will be a positive vote on my motion because the Government agrees that the airport must be refurbished. If, as I say, there is some amendment forthcoming concerning BWIA, which is now a *fait accompli*, I would have no difficulty, but I am not going to move an amendment to my own motion. I do not mind doing the amendments for the Government when the legislation is bad, and I do not mind giving the Government the ground work for an investigation, but I am not going to propose an amendment to my own motion, particularly, as the Government has congratulated me on bringing it. The least it can do, if it does not want to read the minutes and investigate the matters raised by Sen. Chamley, is to move the amendment. The Airports Authority is not doing any work about this; perhaps someone can do something about proposing the amendment.

Mr. President, to summarize it all, what is the position? We have general agreement that the Piarco International Airport must be refurbished realistically to suit the needs of the country without further delay. We have general agreement on that. We have a situation where the Government has taken a decision that that

project must be commercially viable and must go forward without a Government guarantee and with the appropriate capital injection by a preferred developer.

The Government has played along with the preferred developer since September, 1993 and is prepared to give the preferred developer until December, 1995. The Government has absolutely blinded itself, contrary to a recommendation made at least once by the Airports Authority, to the proposal that it should move to the second bidder, and we have had no explanation as to why.

The bottom line is simply this. This is still a project about which I am very cynical and I would only stop being cynical about it when the leniency that is being shown to the preferred developer comes to an end. I certainly recommend—it is not part of my motion, but these facts have emerged in the course of the debate—very strongly to the Government that before it terminates the whole project, it should go to the second, third or fourth bidder, if there is one, to see whether they could raise the necessary equity. It is not necessary to simply say, "Oh, Betty goatee! the first developer could not do it so we are going to terminate with everybody".

I think the country deserves the opportunity to have the subsequent bidders—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. President, before Sen. Daly finishes, let me just say that my reading of that Airports Authority minutes, was that the recommendation was not that we go to the second bidder, but that we scrap the entire process and start all over again using a different approach. I just thought the Senator should know.

**Sen. M. Daly:** Mr. President, I have not suggested that. All I said is that the Airports Authority said that the position with the preferred developer is untenable; U-N-T-E-N-A-B-L-E. That is what I am complaining about.

Notwithstanding that, the Government is giving this person—whose relationship was described as untenable—the opportunity to go to December, 1995. I understand the Minister's sensitivity, because this leniency has to come to an end. Whether they like it or not, on the basis of what has been said in this debate, and its obvious discomfort, it is not going to be able to prolong this agony, whether it is doing it out of bad business sense or for some other reason that has not been disclosed. Whatever it says, it is either it is going to make a positive announcement about this project by the end of the year, or it would simply have to fold up its tents. It is not going to be able, by my reading of the situation, to simply treat it as some kind of public relations game and start to project illusionary success into 1996.

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**4.00 p.m.**

It is quite clear, on the basis of what the Government had said, that the reasonable time frame comes to an end in December 1995. I hope, certainly, that the reasonable time frame with jobs and crime is similar. I hope so. We will see, since the Minister says, "Wait and see".

We cannot take important matters to the country, whether it is crime; whether it is jobs; whether it is the development of the airport and simply talk in this wishy-washy way about reasonable time frame.

I am satisfied that this motion has served several useful purposes, one of which is that we know the pussyfooting with this developer will have to come to an end by December 1995, unless, of course, we are going to have a new projection of illusory success into 1996 concerning this airport. I think it is very important. Perhaps, the Minister is sometimes contaminated by the games that the Airports Authority plays—putting all these pictures in the newspapers about success and chest beating, and and being photographed with the Prime Minister. Perhaps, his good sense is sometimes temporarily contaminated by that.

Mr. President, we now have an idea of where we stand with Project Pride and the country will be able better to test the actions of the Government with regard to this project in the future.

I beg to move.

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Gordon Draper):** Mr. President, I rise to move an amendment to the motion before us, recognizing the divestment of BWIA and, therefore, the work that has been done in terms of ensuring that BWIA has been put on a path of survival. We therefore propose the deletion of paragraph (ii) of the motion which reads:

"present a credible plan for the survival of BWIA as an international and regional air carrier."

I beg to move.

*Seconded by Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith*

**Mr. President:** I do not know if anyone wants to speak on the amendment. If no one wants to speak on the amendment, I will have to put the amendment first before putting the original question.



*Question proposed,*

That the Resolution be amended by deleting the words in the second part thereof, that is, the words "present a credible plan for the survival of BWIA as an international and regional air career."

*Question put and agreed to.**Question on amended motion put.**Question put and agreed to.**Resolved:*

That Government move, without further delay, to have Piarco International Airport refurbished and expanded realistically to suit the needs of the country.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith):** Mr. President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, July 4, 1995 at 1.30 p.m., at which time the Government wishes to start the debate on the Miscellaneous Taxes (Amdt.) Bill. On completion of that debate, we will then move to the motion under "Private Business" to debate the report of the joint select committee on the matter of public holidays.

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Mr. President, I wish to strongly object to the motion to adjourn this Senate at 4.05 p.m. when we have 2 1/2 hours to go.

I feel very strongly about this matter particularly in terms of what has been happening. I object to the motion to adjourn this Senate at this time.

**Mr. President:** The motion is made in accordance with the Standing Orders. The Chair has no alternative but to put a motion when moved by a Minister to adjourn the Senate at any time.

*Question put.*

*The Senate divided:*    Ayes:    14    Noes:    11

**AYES**

Saith, Dr. The Hon.L.

Barnes, Hon. B.

Yuille-Williams, Hon. J.

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Draper, Hon. G.  
Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.  
Callender, S.  
Ojah-Maharaj, D.  
Elder, Miss J.  
Rahael, J.  
Gosine, Pundit R.  
Hassim, A.  
Maloney, A.  
Mahabirsingh, S.  
Rooks, J.

**NOES**

Mark, W.  
Capildeo, S.  
Barrack, J  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Gray-Burke, Rev. B.  
Mejias, O-ga E.  
Daly, M.  
Mahabir-Wyatt, Mrs. D.  
Ali, H.  
Teelucksingh, Rev. D.  
Chamely, Dr. E.  
*Sen. M. Mansoor abstained.*  
*Question agreed to.*  
*Senate adjourned accordingly.*  
*Adjourned at 4.10 p.m.*