

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

SENATE

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Vice-President: Hon Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins, who will be out of the country during the period July 24 to August 06, 1995.

I have also granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Gordon Draper who is out of the country on Government business for the period July 23 to July 29, 1995.

Sen. The Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis is unwell and she has been granted leave of absence from today's sitting.

Sen. Surendranath Capildeo has been granted leave of absence. He is out of the country for the period July 22 to July 29, 1995.

LATE ARRIVAL

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Michael Mansoor has advised that he will be a little late.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I have been advised that His Excellency the Acting President has appointed Mrs. Norma Lewis-Phillip to be a temporary Senator with effect from July 24, 1995 and continuing during the period Mr. Joseph Emmanuel Carter acts as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I have also been advised that His Excellency the President has appointed Mr. Sankar Mahabirsingh to be a temporary Senator with effect from July 24, 1995 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Sen. Russell Huggins.

I have also been advised that His Excellency the Acting President has appointed Mrs. Eloise Bertrand to be a temporary Senator with effect from July 24, 1995 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Sen. Gordon Draper.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The following Senators took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law: Norma Lewis-Phillip, Sankar Mahabirsingh and Eloise Bertrand.

Oath of Allegiance

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, there is a fourth Senator to be sworn in at a later stage of the proceedings.

Assent indicated.

PAPERS LAID

1. Special Report of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago No. 2/1995. [*The Minister of Planning and Development. (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith)*]
2. Loan Agreement (Southern Roads Development) between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Caribbean Development Bank. [*Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith*]
3. Loan Agreement (Beetham Sewerage Facilities Rehabilitation) between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean Development Bank and Water and Sewerage Authority. [*Sen. Dr. The Hon. L. Saith*]

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

Presentation

Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny (Inc'n) Bill

Sen. John Rahael: Mr. Vice-President, I wish to present the report of the special select committee of the Senate appointed to consider and report on a private bill for the incorporation of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny.

Trustees of the Port of Spain Chapter

(Amorc) (Inc'n) Bill

Sen. Deodath Ojah-Maharaj: Mr. Vice-President, I wish to present the report of the special select committee of the Senate appointed to consider and report on a private bill for the incorporation of the Port of Spain Chapter (AMORC).

1.40 p.m.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate now consider Motions Nos. 5 and 6 under "Private Business."

Leave granted.

Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny (Inc'n) Bill

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

Adoption

Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny (Inc'n) Bill

Sen. John Rahael: Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate adopt the report of the special select committee appointed by the Senate to consider and report on a private Bill for the incorporation of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny and matters incidental thereto.

Seconded by Sen. Andre Maloney.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be now read the third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

**Trustees of the Port of Spain Chapter
(Amorc) (Inc'n) Bill**

Sen. Deodath Ojah-Maharaj: Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that this Senate adopt the report of the special select committee appointed by the Senate to consider and report on a private Bill to amend the Port of Spain Chapter (AMORC) Incorporation Bill.

Seconded by Sen. Jean Elder.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be now read the third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that the Senate now consider Motion No. 4, on completion of which we will go to Motion No.1.

Leave granted.

JSC Report (Public Holidays)
[SEN. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT
(PUBLIC HOLIDAYS)**

Adoption

[Fourth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [June 13, 1995]:

Be it resolved that this Senate adopt the report of the joint select committee appointed by the Senate and the House of Representatives to consider the entire question of public holidays and to report by March 31, 1995. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]

Question again proposed.

Sen. Kamla Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Vice-President, there are two reports which are before the Senate. Our decision with respect to this motion would be whether we reject or accept the majority report or the minority report, or put forward some other proposal. We on this side made it clear and we asked that the majority report be rejected, and in its place the minority report be accepted. In the first place, the majority report, regrettably, was not signed by the only Independent Senator who sat on that committee. Instead, there is that minority report which says that it does not accept the recommendations of the majority report.

Historically we have seen that the law can be used, and has been used, as an instrument for justice, democracy, equality, peace, order and good government. When we speak about the law, these are the qualities of the law that we are, in fact, espousing: that we use the law as an instrument for peace, order and good government in a democratic society committed to equality and justice.

History has shown us, and we must never forget, that the law can be wielded as a weapon of discrimination. That very law that we uphold for justice and equality can be used as a weapon of domination. We have seen the law used for domination and discrimination in our society and in others. That is why there could have been that foolish law, in my respectful view, an unjust law such as that in the United States, where it was legal for a man to beat his wife as long as the stick which he used was not thicker than the judge's thumb. Can you imagine that that was the law?

At one time in this country it was the law that only those with property had the franchise to vote. Thereafter, only men could have voted. There was discrimination against those without property. That is why I am saying that the law can be wielded and used as a weapon of domination.

Sen. Gray-Burke and Sen. Mejias on this side have ably demonstrated where the law in this country has been used as a weapon for domination and discrimination. With respect to the Spiritual Baptists, there was the Prohibition Ordinance, which denied them their religious and cultural rights. The law was then used as a weapon of domination and discrimination.

As Sen. Mejias pointed out, at present, the law in our law books is being used as a weapon of discrimination and domination, when in the Summary Offences Act there are certain offences which will call down the wrath of the law, when in fact those are practices of his faith and many members of his community.

1.50 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, it is unjust that the law which we say is just can be used for injustice. That is why we say, with the greatest respect to those who have spent time on the majority report, that we cannot accept it insofar as it seeks to prevent the Spiritual Baptists from getting a public holiday to celebrate and pay homage to the day when the repeal of the Prohibition Ordinance took place.

Holidays are used for several things in a society. The main purpose of the society is to live and bond together as one common unit. The law and holidays can be used either to disrupt that society or to resolve conflicting interests. The law can be used as a balancing factor. Holidays can be granted in cases where they are dealing with social cohesion with a religious purpose in mind. Therefore, we have religious holidays.

However, there are also holidays which are landmarks in the evolution of a people and their democracy. If there is one landmark in the history of this nation, this young nation which has so few heroes to call its own, so few struggles to call its own, the repeal of the Prohibition Ordinance is one such landmark that we cannot fail to pay homage to. That is why we ask that that day be granted as a public holiday.

So, too, it is when we speak of unity in diversity. We are committed, we say, to unity in diversity. This society is a plural society: one made up of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious groups, and we are proud wherever we go to say that Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most cosmopolitan countries in the world. We are proud to say that we can live side by side no matter how diverse we are in ethnic origin, religion or culture. No matter what our differences are, we are proud to stand and say that there is unity in diversity.

However, if we are truly committed to unity in diversity, then we must not be ashamed to acknowledge and name the diverse groups. We cannot hide in the semantics of language and say that we are granting a festival day, that we are granting an arrival day and yet be ashamed to acknowledge the diversity that is within this country.

JSC Report (Public Holidays)
[SEN. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

We would recognize that diversity only when we feel proud to call a spade a spade; when we feel proud to call a day we are calling "Arrival Day," "Indian Arrival Day"; to grant a festival day and not be ashamed to call it a day for the Spiritual Baptists; to grant a festival day and not be ashamed to call it Lord Sango Day. Why do we deny those words? Is it that we are ashamed of that very diversity of which we are proud?

If we cannot accept each group that makes up the fabric of this society, we would be doomed. How do we avoid this? In my view, this starts by recognizing and acknowledging the various groups. We do it by giving each group its identity. We must respect each group in the society if the society is to continue to live united in diversity.

So it is that we cannot adopt that majority report because to do so would be saying, throw out our historical origin! Throw out our cultural roots! Have instead a blanket festival day! Have instead a blanket arrival day! Others on this side have asked, and with your leave, Sir, I repeat: Why are we granting an arrival day, when we all know that from the time that day was celebrated, it was Indian Arrival Day? Why are we ashamed to leave the word "Indian" in it? Is there something stigmatizing about the word "Indian" in this nation? Why are we ashamed to use the words "Spiritual Baptists" when we refer to that day?

Mr. Vice-President, I will not spend much more time on this because our Senators have spoken. I ask that if we are committed to unity in diversity, and if we are truly committed to the words "every creed and race finds an equal place" then we can do nothing but reject that majority report.

I so say and thank you.

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams): Mr. Vice-President, this debate has gone over quite a few weeks. I had no intention of getting involved in it, however, I would like to make just a few comments on what has happened so far.

I have just listened to Sen. Persad-Bissessar and I will start where she ended in terms of unity in diversity. Sen. Persad-Bissessar was moving in a direction which I felt if she had continued, she would have arrived at the same solution as advanced in the majority report.

I start with Indian Arrival Day. As Senators would know from history—and this is where I say there is no discrimination where the Government is concerned—we have all arrived. Chinese, Syrian, Lebanese, African—and someone said Christopher Columbus—have all arrived. Clearly, therefore, if the Senator had continued her trend, she would have seen the reason for "Arrival Day." It is nothing against the East Indians. That is not

the point. The point is Government's recognition of all the ethnic groups in the society, their contribution to the overall development of the country, and the recognition that we have all arrived.

Arrival Day, therefore, should give us the opportunity of bringing all our people together—Indian, Chinese, Syrian, Lebanese. Anything less would be discrimination because at the end of the day, the Africans can ask for an African Arrival Day and the Chinese, Lebanese and others can do likewise.

Clearly, we have to see beyond ourselves. We have to look at this nation as a whole and keep in focus what we are trying to do. One of the considerations, therefore, is that we have a national celebration projecting the various ethnic groups in the areas of industry, culture and religion. That would be good for this nation. It would solidify the idea of every creed and race having an equal place in this republic.

With the present state of anxiety and threat of dominance of some ethnic groups, as some people say, I think that Government needs to address this position and therefore the report which says "Arrival Day" should stand. Yes, the Indians have been celebrating Indian Arrival Day over the years, but 10 or 15 years from now, we will all be celebrating as one. That is where we are going. I am saying that this is non-discriminatory and I fully support the term "Arrival Day."

I spoke with some of the major groups in the society even before this report came up and they said that they did not have a problem with the words "Arrival Day". They were going to celebrate in any case. I said, "Why do we not all celebrate?" This is what I am saying at this point. If we look at what has happened this year, we would see that it is a special year. Everyone joined and will continue to join our celebration. I think that Trinidad and Tobago will send a signal to the rest of the world so that they see us as one.

2.00 p.m.

Therefore, as I said before, we will support fully the term 'Arrival Day' and hope that we will get all our people involved in it. In fact, there is another day in every year called "World Culture Day" which was set up by the United Nations. We have been celebrating this in a very special way. On World Culture Day all the different cultures, and peoples in Trinidad and Tobago are supposed to come together. Here we have a second and bigger opportunity to celebrate 'Arrival Day' throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

In terms of the other two areas, where I think much notice has been put, in fact, I read from the report of the committee where much information was elicited from those who appeared before the committee, and members of that committee also did detailed research. Since that time, I have before me correspondence from an Ethnomusicologist/Folklorist,

JSC Report (Public Holidays)
[SEN. THE HON. J. YUILE-WILLIAMS]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

and another from a member of the Orisha faith—one of the high priestesses. There are people in those religions speaking against the public holiday.

I want to tell this Senate something which I gathered in relation to Lord Sango Day.

"John S. Mbiti, Kenyan theologian...speaking of African Traditional Religions and Philosophy noted that of the 'one thousand African peoples (tribes) each has its own religious system.'

Many have tried to explain the dominance of the Yoruba-derived Orisha (oreeshah) form of worship and reference to the Faith as 'Sango'. Sango, the god of thunder and lightning, represents one of the major deities of the Yoruba Belief System."

My folklorist who did the research—and this was done as a thesis as well—says:

"Throughout the years there has been no reference to Sango as 'Lord' in any of the Yoruba related groups,..."

He named a number of them and continued in that vein.

If I were to follow his advice, we might not have reached as far as the Government has reached. But again, we have reached a stage, as one would say of, "non-discrimination." He said that we were in error to say, "Lord Sango" because in all his research he never came up on the term "Lord Sango". He also said—and I am subject to correction—that there are eight deities, Sango being just one of them. Even within Trinidad and Tobago there were a number of the other groupings who had others as their leaders.

I looked at the report which he sent in and because of the nature of the person who did this research, I am moved to believe what he has written. Clearly, therefore, the committee had gone some distance in recognizing Lord Sango Day as a public festival. It had gone some distance in that recognition and some of the literature is now telling us something slightly different.

A certain section of the population, again, will be benefiting. Someone drew to my attention just before I came here—as I said before, I was not really prepared to speak on this today—that one of our Senators—and I am subject to correction—who is a member of the Orisha faith had just this weekend ordained a Baptist Bishop or something like that.

Sen. Gray-Burke: I am the person who had the ordination.

Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: These are the things that did come up, but clearly what is noted here is the Orisha, the strength of the deities, and that there are several little

pockets even here in Trinidad and Tobago. As I have said before, the committee seems to have gone a little beyond and had been—as is said here—very generous in moving to have Lord Sango Day as a public festival.

The second bit of information I have here from one who is occupying a very high position within the faith, clearly demonstrates that this person would not have gone in that direction. But what we are debating, therefore, is the majority report and I need not call the name of the person.

However, I am trying to show that the committee itself did not set out to discriminate against anybody and when we go back—as some people spent some time looking at what is a public holiday as against a public festival—if one really went into those terms one might have found out that the committee might not have even agreed to the public festival. I think that it was meeting a group which had made a strong representation for some kind of recognition.

I do not want anyone to think that I have anything against, either the Orisha or the Baptists; in fact, I may say that my father was a Spiritual Baptist, he died as one. I also want to say at this point that I spoke to some members of the Baptist faith on the whole idea of a festival as against a public holiday. The committee's thoughts—I remember looking at some notes from the committee—in looking at the connotation of the term "festival." Some people said they got the feeling of either feting or festive activities, but trust that it is much more than that.

What the Baptists were looking forward to is some kind of recognition, an opportunity, for recognizing the work that they have done, or recognizing what happened to them as they came through. It was a time when they had been liberated, they had been allowed to practise their religion and they were about to move centre stage.

Well, a public festival can do just that. It is on their calendar; it gives to the members of that religion the opportunity to celebrate—and I do not want to use the word "celebrate" in terms of how they are using it—in a way that one would like to have it done.

I remember that when we first celebrated Divali with a public holiday, certain sections of the community were saying that they were against those people who advertised, "a Divali fete at so-and-so place." I remember all the things that happened with Divali: "Divali break-down at Manzanilla." They were against it, because they felt that this was a religious festival and it should have been celebrated in a different way. But we cannot tell people what to do on a public holiday.

JSC Report (Public Holidays)
[SEN. THE HON. J. YUILE-WILLIAMS]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

Therefore, why worry about the nation getting the holiday or whether it is a public festival. What is important here is that there is recognition. The Baptists will celebrate; we know that they have contributed. This is not the time for beach limes and so on; this is a time for serious understanding.

I will read this note which I have before me from the folklorist:

"Recognition of Shouters as 'Trinidad's first indigenous religion' could be better demonstrated by the following compensatory and more meaningful contributions by Government."

2.10 p.m.

He said:

"Provision of land in a dignified setting for the erection of a Cathedral;"

This was written on July 13, 1995. I am sure that it is well known to this Senate that the Prime Minister himself at the laying of the foundation stone for the theological college at La Brea, has promised that that will be fulfilled—that the Spiritual Baptists will be given land. What he, in fact, said was:

"—in a dignified setting for the erection of a Cathedral;"

My researcher felt this was the best way to indicate the meaningful contribution by the Spiritual Baptists. In addition to the cathedral, there is the public festival or that particular day for the recognition. He said:

"The indigenous nature of the Shouters Faith is of much significance in terms of our National Cultural Heritage."

He did not talk about members, because he says:

"Whereas the Shouters membership do not represent a great majority in the demographic make-up of this country and cannot be considered a national religion *per se*, Government could consider the idea of..."

some form of compensation and more meaningful contributions.

And he himself alluded to the fact that we should give the cathedral, something which had been done. I could go on to repeat what he said, it is very—

Sen. Persad-Bissessar: On a point of clarification. The cathedral of which the Minister is speaking, is it going to be given to the Spiritual Baptists? As I understand it, this is an entirely different organization that was incorporated by Act 24 of 1949 which deals with the West Indian United Baptists Sacred Order. Are we speaking about the

Spiritual Shouter Baptists? Or, are we speaking about a different group completely when we speak about the cathedral?

Sen. The Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: Mr. Vice-President, this was a public announcement and I am sure the Senator would have read it—I am not looking at the different factions—my information is that the Baptists will have a cathedral and that was given out at the laying of the foundation stone.

I just wanted to make those few points. I want to go a little further to say that the overall policy of the Government is non-discriminatory, that I support the majority report and I do so because I feel that an attempt has been made to show that the Government, according to the Constitution and according to the words of our anthem that "Here every creed and race finds an equal place"—I want to support the work of the committee. The committee sat—I understand that there were about 15 meetings. Of course, there was a minority report.

Those 15 meetings gave the committee an opportunity to study as closely as possible the information that was brought to it, and as a result the committee agreed to have Arrival Day and public festivals instead of a public holiday, as some people would have thought, for the Orishas and the Baptists. One of the holidays, Whit Monday, has been removed from the calendar.

In fact, some people had been saying, and the ministry has correspondence from groups throughout Trinidad and Tobago—One would understand that almost every religion sent something to the ministry asking for support for some kind of recognition, not necessarily a public holiday. In fact, some religions also asked: Why should these groups be singled out? When one is thinking that the recognition is not there, there might be some others who are very jealous of the recognition to some as recommended in the committee report

These are just a few points that I would like to add and I firmly support the recommendations of the majority report of the committee.

Sen. Pundit Ramcharan Gosine: Mr. Vice-President, I rise to join the debate on the report of the committee appointed by Parliament to study the entire question of public holidays.

Having been a member of that august committee, I must say that I spent many agonizing moments in coming to decisions in respect of the varied and compelling presentations made by organizations and individuals who presented their particular positions and their requests for holidays.

JSC Report (Public Holidays)
[SEN. PUNDIT GOSINE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

Sir, it was a very difficult task for me to listen to compelling arguments for the days mentioned at 13.1 of page 6 of the majority report where we listed the holidays which were requested as follows;

Indian Arrival Day

Phagwa;

Birth Date of Sango;

Day to commemorate the removal of prohibitions on the Spiritual Baptists (Shouter)

Day of Pentecost—Whit Monday to be retained,

Day to commemorate the start of the Mission of Baháulláh—Eid-ul-Adha

Day to commemorate the NJAC march from Port of Spain to Caroni, which aimed at fostering unity among the majority ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago.

Martyr's Day to commemorate citizens who were killed in pursuit of their religion and/or culture (coincides with Hosein Festival)

Day of National Rededication, Heritage, Thanksgiving Day,

Carnival Monday

Carnival Tuesday.

One would realize from that list how difficult it was, indeed, for the committee to come to some kind of conclusion.

Let me deal with some of the less troublesome requests, which in my view, were made relatively easier than others because of the views expressed by the presenters during questions by the committee on issues requiring further clarification.

I wish firstly to refer to the request for a change of Holiday of Eid-ul-Fitr for a holiday to celebrate Eid-ul-Adha, which the committee was told was the bigger Eid.

This request was later reinforced by another request to have Eid-ul-Adha declared a public holiday as well as the retention of Eid-ul-Fitr. This new request meant that the Muslim community was now in favour of having two national religious holidays. The committee was at pains to determine which of the Eid days would be generally acceptable if the committee was not in favour of granting another Muslim holiday.

We have heard the contribution of Senator Hydar Ali on this issue, and the Senator did reiterate the position that Eid-ul-Adha was the bigger Eid celebration. However, it was acknowledged that if the Muslim community were to remain with only one national

religious holiday then they would prefer it to be Eid-ul-Fitr as this festival had greater public appeal, and would, therefore, in a multi-religious society, be the more acceptable for national participation.

2.20 p.m.

The committee's work in this regard was made easy when the major Muslim organization proposed that should the committee be constrained to grant only one holiday to the Muslim community, they would prefer that Eid-ul-Fitr remain that holiday.

The second request to which I refer is for a Day of National Rededication (Heritage) Thanksgiving Day. As hon. Senators may have noted under "Recommendations" on page 8, item (b)—I will bring this recommendation to you. It says:

"The State invite religious bodies and relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations, to prepare an appropriate programme for the observance of Republic Day by the National Community as a day of Thanksgiving and Rededication".

In other words, the committee sought, in every way, to give satisfaction to all those groups which sought to have some kind of consideration given to them in their request for holidays, festival days and whatever.

The third request to which I wish to refer as a less troublesome one was the request by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha for Phagwa to be declared a national religious holiday, bringing the number of religious holidays of Hindus, the second largest religious group in the country, to two: Divali and Phagwa.

I am amazed that Sen. Capildeo—and I am sorry he is not here—a Brahmin of no mean stature, custodian of Hindu religious dogma, a prominent Hindu and executive member of the SDMS, the Hindu Organization which made the appeal for Phagwa to be declared a holiday did not utter one word in favour of the declaration of Phagwa as a Hindu religious holiday.

We ask, why? He would have done Hindus proud, including me, by simply raising the issue, but no. I will tell you why he did not raise the issue—two words—political expediency.

So intent was the hon. Senator on championing the cause of the Baptists and the Orishas, because these groups are strong supporters of the PNM we must remember—and make no mistake about it, they will continue to support the PNM—that he did not utter even one word for the declaration of another Hindu holiday. Instead, he went on to tell this Senate that the Orisha, Baptist and Hindu faiths had much in common because they all use lota and thariya flowers, put up colourful flags to deities and worship the elements.

JSC Report (Public Holidays)
[SEN. PUNDIT GOSINE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

Perhaps Sen. Capildeo, a scholar in the Vedas and Vedic traditions, would have done this Senate proud if he had sought to indicate the more subtle bonds that unite humanity and all religions. I refer to the dictum which traverses all religious beliefs, that God is Truth and that he should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Therefore, to identify the utensils of worship, flags and so forth as a ground of commonality, is to cheapen the high virtues and ideals of these great religions. I refer to the Hindu, Baptist and Orisha.

I now turn my attention to the very difficult requests which really caused the committee to spend many long hours in discussion and yet, had not been able to come to a unanimous decision. I refer to the requests in respect of a holiday to mark the occasion of the first arrival of East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago; a holiday to commemorate the liberation of the Spiritual Baptists and a religious holiday in honour of Lord Sango of the Orisha faith. These were the three that posed the greatest difficulty.

My own involvement in dealing with these requests was emotional in the first instance. That is, as one listened to the contributions supporting the various requests—indeed, to my own mind, they all had very valid cases. I recall, for example, the contribution of the presenters of the Baha'i faith for the granting of a religious holiday. A very stirring appeal no less in stature than those presented here by Sen. Archbishop Burke on behalf of the Baptists and Sen. Mejias on behalf of the Orishas.

Yet, the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Basdeo Panday, did not see it fit to appoint one of his members to present their case to the Senate, certainly a case of unequal opportunity because the Baptists and the Orishas can unwittingly assist the Opposition in creating and maintaining racial tension and pointing to the Indians in the PNM as *neemak harams*.

I am, therefore, saying that it is passing strange that the Opposition is seeking to champion the cause of the Baptists and the Orishas and completely neglecting the cause of the Hindus and the Baha'i, the major part of their base support.

I did say that arriving at decisions in the grant of holidays was agonizing and painful to me. It is, therefore, an understatement if I should say—given my confession of having strong emotions—that I would most certainly have granted a holiday to the Baptists, the Baha'is, the Orishas and an extra holiday each to the Hindus and Muslims, and that I would have retained Whit Monday following the very soul stirring presentation for the retention of this day by the Council of Evangelical Churches.

But, one should not make decisions based only on emotions. One must be guided by truth, justice, love of country, well-being of the nation and one's ability to come to terms with the national as well as the international environment and perspectives.

We can use the same argument. I listened to Sen. Kamla Persad-Bissessar making this very point but with a different overview. Listen to mine, Mr. Vice-President. Trinidad and Tobago is a multiracial, multicultural, multireligious society. Because of this we can claim to be rich in diversity. Our biggest challenge, therefore, is how to make this diversity work for us.

Our work must, therefore, be to create in the diaspora harmony, goodwill and love as only then peace will prevail and the truth of our national anthem will be manifested. "Here every creed and race finds an equal place." This will become evident to all. We can then enjoy that golden ideal of unity in diversity.

It is for these reasons that I spent many agonizing moments before coming to conclusions and recommendations as given above my signature in the majority report.

Of significance is the consideration of our present actions on generations to come. Our actions must, therefore, be considered, taking into account all the ramifications.

It is true that the holiday granted—Arrival Day, May 30th—is at the moment significant only to the population of East Indian origin. One may argue, naively, that there is no real or good reason for omitting the word 'Indian,' and that the holiday should rightly be called Indian Arrival Day. In this regard, I wish to quote a prominent Hindu activist who claimed that because the majority of people who organized and participated in this celebration are Hindus, the day should rightly be called Hindu Arrival Day. Views like these are naive and myopic for several reasons, some more evident than others.

The first is the responsibility of the Parliament and parliamentarians not to use epithets that may, in the long run, encourage, suggest or promote segregation of the races in this country. All must feel an equal right to participate if they so wish.

History records the efforts of those who struggled for the event. For example, our African brothers have struggled for Emancipation Day, and on Emancipation Day any national of Trinidad and Tobago who, for one reason or the other, feels himself emancipated, can join in celebration in his or her own way on Emancipation Day.

In a similar manner, citizens of East Indian origin have struggled to have a day declared Arrival Day to celebrate their citizenship and a commitment of their sense of belonging to Trinidad and Tobago. On that day, now and in the future, every other race within the national community who wishes to celebrate his or her citizenship and commitment to nation, must be able to do so without any feelings of alienation or without the need to have another such day declared for them.

JSC Report (Public Holidays)
[SEN. PUNDIT GOSINE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

It is my considered view that by calling the day Arrival Day, other races will recognize the same sense of belonging and citizenship and would join in Arrival Day celebrations on a day belonging to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Since we all arrived here, whether as masters, slaves, or indentured immigrants, we can all celebrate in the way we wish.

2.30 p.m.

Finally, I would like hon. Senators to note that the committee in its deliberations did take into account many of the considerations and the arguments raised in this Senate and that the conclusions arrived at were not reached easily. It is therefore my submission that this honourable Senate should support the majority report.

I beg to move.

Question put.

The Senate divided: Ayes 16 Noes 6

AYES

Saith, Sen. Dr. The Hon. L.

Barnes, Hon. B.

Yuille-Williams, Sen. The Hon. J.

Callender, S.

Ojar-Maharaj, D.

Elder, Miss J.

Rahael, J.

Gosine. Pundit R.

Hassim, A.

Maloney, A.

Nanga, J.

Lewis-Phillip, Mrs. N.

Bertrand, Mrs. E.

Mahabirsingh, S.

Rooks, J.

St. Cyr. Sen. Dr. E.

NOES

Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.

Gray-Burke, Rev. G.

Mejias, E.

Richards, V.

Ali. H.

Dean, E.

Senators Prof. J. Spence and D. Mahabir-Wyatt abstained.

Question agreed to.

Report adopted.

NIHERST

(Creation of Technical University)

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Mr. Vice President, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name which reads as follows:

Whereas the provisions of the 1977 White Paper which led to the establishment of the National Institute of Higher Education Research Science and Technology (Niherst) have not been fully implemented; and

Whereas there is growing recognition of the need to upgrade the tertiary and higher education system in the region with UWI playing the role of a hub in the system; and

Whereas the proportion 20-24 age group in tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago is about 7 per cent which is far below the proportion in Latin America and North America; and

Whereas the Government has stated its intention that Trinidad and Tobago enter fully into the global village that is the modern world, and become the business and financial centre of the Caribbean, and the gateway to Latin America;

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

Be it resolved that the Senate urge the Government to expedite the full implementation of the 1977 White Paper on Niherst so that a technical university of Trinidad and Tobago be created having functional relationships with the University of the West Indies.

Sir, I intend to approach the introduction of this motion on the assumption that I shall have the opportunity of responding to any other contributions later, and on the basis of trying to remind us of what took place in 1977 when that White Paper was presented by the then Government.

Before doing so, I just want to make one or two comments with respect to the need for higher education. I am going to make these comments by way of quoting from a recent World Bank publication.

I do this deliberately because I know that very much in recent times we have been relying upon the World Bank to advise us on how we should approach our economic development. In addition to that, of course, it may well be that we may have to go to the World Bank in order to access loans for any developments that we want to make in higher education and, therefore, I think it is appropriate for us to understand the way that the World Bank is thinking with respect to higher education and the way that its money may be loaned.

I would come back to this document again in winding up later on. This document is called *Development in Practice, Higher Education. The Lessons of Experience*. It is a World Bank publication of 1994—just to read an introductory paragraph:

"The development of higher education is correlated with economic development; enrollment ratios in higher education average 51 percent in the countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), compared with 21 percent in middle-income countries and 6 percent in low-income countries."

I do not think Trinidad and Tobago could be referred to as a low income country. Perhaps we are bordering on a middle-income. We certainly were some years ago. But nevertheless our proportion seems to be about 7 per cent.

In addition to that, the World Bank document goes on to state:

"Estimated social rates of return of 10 percent or more in many developing countries also indicate that investments in higher education contribute to increases in labour productivity and to higher long-term economic growth, which are essential for poverty alleviation."

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

So clearly the World Bank is in support of investing in higher education as a means of furthering economic development. In analyzing the present situation in developing countries, it states:

"While the rapid growth of enrollments has led to increased access to higher education for traditionally less privileged populations, including women and students of rural origin, higher education generally remains elitist, with the majority of students coming from wealthier families."

I think this is also true of Trinidad and Tobago. It is something that we should take note of.

One of the problems that the World Bank analyses—I will not read again from the document—is the problem of allocation of resources to education, and that is the allocation between pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary, in some documents divided into tertiary, non-university and tertiary university.

One of the problems is how we allocate the resources to the demands of these various sectors and the inter-relationship between the sectors, because if we have a poor secondary educational system, then we may have problems with tertiary and higher educational systems. So we need to make a balance between the allocations to the various subsectors. Of course, one of the issues is that if secondary education is very much in need of upgrading, then the rate of return, social benefits, the increase in employability of the population, may be greater by investing in secondary education.

I do not think that is quite the case in Trinidad and Tobago, because on the whole we have a well developed secondary educational system. It may need attention; it may need modification; it may need repairing, but certainly on the whole compared to many other countries, we have a very strong secondary educational system.

So with that introduction, what I should like to do now is to read a bit from the 1977 White Paper on Niherst, particularly for us to see the vision that this country had at that time. I want to make the point that had that vision been realized, we would now be in a much better position to face the realities of liberalization, of competition, of having to meet market forces and live in the world in which we now find ourselves.

The Bill to establish Niherst was introduced in 1984, although the actual Paper had been prepared in 1977 and actually laid in Parliament in 1978, but there seems to have been no debate on the White Paper at that time. My involvement in this subject dates back to 1975 and 1976 when I was appointed chairman of the National Council for Technology in Development, and indeed, Dr. Saith was deputy chairman. At the time I was also appointed Chairman of Cariri, again with Dr. Saith as deputy chairman.

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

2.40 p.m.

In 1977 the Cabinet appointed a committee under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, to discuss and advise on the development of science and technology and to advise on the restructuring of the university. The committee included Sir Harold Robinson, Mr. Frank Barsotti, Mr. George Chambers, Dr. Cuthbert Joseph—who was then Minister of Education and I think Mr. Chambers was the Minister of Finance—Prof. Ken Julien and me.

Part I of the White Paper examined science and technology and the status of Trinidad and Tobago as it was then. I shall read extracts from that part to indicate the thinking at that time. I particularly would like Senators to consider whether they see any change in the problems that we were addressing then compared to the problems we face in 1995.

Just to say a few words on the second part of the White Paper—that is the part which addressed the university—basically, the issue was whether the management structure of the university's structure was appropriate for it to respond meaningfully, and rapidly, to the requirements of the national system as opposed to the requirements of the regional system.

Really, what the White Paper proposed with respect to the university, was management by line authority rather than management by committee as the university then was structured to be managed; and, indeed, still is.

The university went through a period of soul-searching and restructuring, but, in fact—in my opinion at least—there was not a great deal of change in the system of management.

It is interesting that only now, 18 years after, at the urging of the present Vice-Chancellor, there has been another look at restructuring and, indeed, I believe the structural change which is now occurring would lead more to the conclusion that we made in 1977 than has been the case over the last 18 years. I believe there is now, in fact, the possibility of full-time deans who are administrators in the respective faculties, as we proposed then.

What I would like to do is to read some extracts from the conclusions of the White Paper of 1977. The first extract I would read, in fact, is itself from the Prime Minister in his 1976 proposals to Cabinet on the formation of a National Council for Technology in Development. This is what the Prime Minister said at that time:

"The future development of Trinidad and Tobago will rely heavily on science and technology. Whether it is the provision of badly needed infrastructure..."

Sounds familiar?

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

"(water, health service, housing, power, communications, transportation systems, etc.) whether it is in the proposed development of hydrocarbon resources or their utilization, whether it is in improvement of performance of the agricultural sector, or whether it is in the deepening of certain areas of the manufacturing sector (food processing, textiles, electronics, tool and die), technology in its various forms will have to be applied with efficiency and confidence."

Clearly, one would recognize the problems that we had with our infrastructure, with our different sectors in the productive sector and the need to upgrade our science and technology and our educational system if we were to address those issues.

I ask: Is it not the case that in 1995 there are exactly the same problems, except that they are worse? Our infrastructure has deteriorated more than in 1977; our agricultural sector is certainly less efficient that it was then; our manufacturing sector is going through the trauma of trying to cope with a new economic structure without having had the benefit of the input of science and technology and education it should have had over the last 18 years, and so there is still the problem of applying this science and technology with efficiency and confidence.

An analysis of the scene in science and technology at that time had the following to say:

"...Trinidad and Tobago's...main characteristics, as summarized by the Prime Minister in his 1976 Proposals on Technology, are:—"

I believe still are—

"absence of a policy for technology related to national objectives;
a complete lack of coordination of the national effort in technology;
the growing tendency towards individual effort of both persons and organizations;
the proliferation of new institutions, new advisory groups, councils, committees, etc;
lack of relationships between the education plan and national needs;"

Perhaps, this is being addressed by the recent educational plan—

"lack of a coherent plan for education oriented towards technology;"

I think this still has to be addressed—

"absence of an environment that places science and technology in its proper perspective;

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

a continuing and increasing dependence on imported technology with all the worst features of the traffic in technology;"

Is it not now happening more than ever?

"complete neglect by local business of research and development; it hardly ever appears as a legitimate cost in local operations"

Are our business entities any more now inclined than then to invest in research and development? Are we not now more dependent upon external sources for our technology? What has happened recently with respect to our public utilities? Who would have thought that in 1994 we would have found ourselves unable to manage the electricity generating plant, and, we would have had to invite foreign technologists? Are we not having the same thing in 1995? Who would have thought in 1977 that we would not be able to run our Water and Sewerage Authority?

I admit we cannot. Having not yet heard the arguments, but when I hear them, I may say all right but at the moment I, myself, am inclined to support the external management of our Water and Sewerage Authority because we cannot do it. Why? With that foresight and vision in 1977, why can we not do it now? Because, in fact, we did not act. We had the vision and foresight, but we did not act.

Quoting again from the document referring to 1977:

"12. The major reasons for this unsatisfactory state lie with the historical development of these various activities, leading to a pattern which continues to exist. These various activities (R&D, STS and higher Technical Education) were influenced on the one hand by the establishment of the University of the West Indies and on the other, by the absence of any meaningful indigenous activities within the private sector in this area.

Substantial resources were channelled into the university with the hope that its efforts in the medical sciences, engineering, education and management would be adequate to meet the demands of the country. The industrial sector, dominated by the transnational corporations, relied exclusively on imported technology for its own needs. Such foreign knowledge was applied without being absorbed by the internal technological infrastructure."

What we were saying then was that we had not, in fact, established our national system and we felt that the University of the West Indies would be able to do everything. My fear—this is why I feel very strongly about having this discussion at this stage—is that what the Government is now saying is, "We are the facilitators; we would not do it.

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

The private sector would do it." Just as it was not done by the University of the West Indies, so, in my opinion, it would not be done by the private sector.

Therefore, we have to find a way forward which would certainly utilize the resources of the private sector, but would have the leadership and the institutional framework set by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is my opinion that if we look at the situation as it was then and which still is now—I would not read any more from the document; I would just summarize very briefly. We had a number of separate teaching institutions. There were John S. Donaldson Technical Institute; San Fernando Technical Institute; the Cipriani Labour College; Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry and the Language Institute at the time. All of these dealt with non-university tertiary education.

On the research side of science and technology to deliver certain services, R & D activities and science and technology services, there were the Institute of Marine Affairs; Cariri; Research Division of the Ministry of Agriculture—these three being the major ones. There was also the Standards Bureau which delivered services and so forth.

The concept, as was put forward in 1977, was that the proliferation of these small institutions created an uncoordinated effort in science and technology, was wasteful of resources and was not achieving the objective that could be achieved if they were integrated in a single entity. One of the problems is that the capability to manage an R&D institution or a science and technology institution, is much the same, whether one is managing a unit of five or 500 people, and has a scarcity of persons with that capability. The smaller the country, the fewer are the people.

2.50 p.m.

If the system is breaking up into small units, it means that one has to find leadership capability of that sort. Instead of finding one person, one would have to find 10. Of course, the likelihood of finding 10 is not very great and so one would end up with the problem, quite apart from anything else, that many of these institutions are badly led because we do not have the capability to manage and to lead them. However, if one is able to integrate them into a common system, at least one has dealt with that problem of management.

But one has also dealt with the problem of duplication of resources. Each of these institutions will have its own library, each will have its own analytical equipment for scientific work, its own computer systems. In those days there were probably not many that were computerized, but in these days, institutions have their own computer systems and each of these will be duplicated.

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

There is the problem of institutions, for example, with some analytical equipment in a certain sphere, each one has one machine and when that machine goes out of order, then the activity stops for a period. If a second institution has the same machine, it cannot be used in the first institution because they are a separate management structure.

In 1977, when we were trying to implement the proposal which had been put forward in the White Paper, I had the task of addressing some of the separate institutions on the concept being developed. I remember going to one of the institutions—I would not name it at this stage—and speaking to the board and the council. This institution was small and at the time it had no scientific staff to speak of—two or three persons—but had a board of 12 persons and a council of like number. Indeed, the first two annual reports for that institution showed a greater expenditure on board and council remunerations than expenditure on the institution itself. It was perfectly clear to me the problem that we were dealing with was entirely one of turf.

This institution was being set up by the board and a council whose members felt that they had a loyalty to the institution which they had to defend. So no concept of the national good could get through that barrier of resistance of the personnel—not the scientists who were in charge of the institute. Nevertheless, the White Paper was laid and the steering committee was set up for creating the institute Niherst.

A group of persons was appointed to be the steering committee, including me, led by Victor Bruce, and we were then asked to visit various countries in Europe and North America looking at similar structures for institutional development. This we did and reported to Cabinet.

We were then asked to prepare a brief for an attorney to draft the Bill. This we did. A private attorney was contracted by Government to draft the Bill and it was drafted in accordance with the original concept and White Paper for Niherst. This now brought us to about 1980 or 1981 and at that stage, unfortunately, perhaps for the development of science and technology and I suppose, unfortunately for the nation, the Prime Minister, Eric Williams, died. The matter was then put on hold for a couple of years and eventually introduced in 1984 in completely modified form.

The irony is that the Minister who introduced it at that stage was the same attorney previously in private practice who had drafted the original Bill. He then had to introduce a much emasculated version of the Niherst Bill because he had joined the Government and became a Minister. I do not think it is necessary to name him.

It is interesting to read the *Hansard* of that debate on the introduction of the Niherst Bill. Sen. Furness-Smith asked some very penetrating questions which the then Minister had much difficulty in answering because, quite frankly, it was a weak draft. His two

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

main responses were in trying to explain the difference between the original concept for Niherst and the concept that was being put forward in the Bill, because this Bill now no longer gave Niherst the responsibility for integrating all of these different efforts in science and technology, the teaching effort and the research effort; it merely gave it what seemed to be some sort of co-ordinating role without, in fact, the power to co-ordinate—a very nebulous situation.

Indeed, I may say I had some thought of this when we were discussing the Environmental Management Agency Bill and I asked the question of the committee that was looking at this before the Bill was introduced, how they were going to co-ordinate if they did not have any power to do so. I wait with interest to see how the EMA would function. Probably, it would have no better fate than did Niherst.

The first point that the Minister then made was that the Government did not have the money. Of course, if this was indeed the case—I suspect this was just an excuse—it meant that one really misread the whole concept, because the idea of the integration of these institutions was to build from the bottom up, not to impose a superstructure at the top. What the hon. Minister at that time suggested was that this superstructure that we were creating would be very costly. That really was not what one would do. What one needs to do is to have these institutions which have commonalities, sit down with one another and decide how they themselves would develop a management system.

The university, does not have a superstructure which is away from the rest of the university. The management system, good or bad, is made up of the personnel in the institution who then get together and set up a series of committees to manage. I think one wants to get away from that but, nevertheless, the building must be from bottom up and not with a large superstructure.

The second point that he made was that the university had by then been restructured and this was the major rationale for the setting up of Niherst. This was suggested to me at the time, that Dr. Williams had, in fact, gone through all the struggle just to force the university to do certain things. That, I cannot really accept.

Nothing in the discussions that we had for a period when that committee was meeting would, in any way, suggest that that may be so. That may have been the thought after he died, but certainly not in my opinion—but in any event the university has not been restructured. Any careful look at the university as it was in 1984 would have indicated that that was the case. The university in 1984 was in no better position to respond to the needs of Trinidad and Tobago than it had been in 1977.

That is not the point in any case, because even though the restructuring section of the White Paper dealt with the university's response to national effort, it did not mean that if

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

the university was responding better, one would not also have a national system. In fact, the concept was, and still is, that they should be complementary, with different aims and different objectives but complementary to each other in addressing the issue of the role of science and technology in one's economic system.

Sure, we still need the University of the West Indies; we still need the regional concept that the university has; we still need the academic orientation that the university has, but we also need a national institution which has a more applied thrust, which has an orientation which responds almost day to day to the needs of one's national system. The two reasons given by the then Minister, I do not think, really hold water.

What is interesting—and I will read some extracts from the *Hansard* of that time—the response given by the then Opposition. The main response I am going to read was from Dr. Brinsley Samaroo, who was then, I believe, a DLP Senator. I am hoping that some of this would have filtered through to the successor organizations to the DLP and there may be some support, not only from the Government benches, but also from the Opposition benches, in respect of this Motion. Dr. Samaroo started off by saying:

"We on this side are in full agreement with the hon. Minister and with the Government about the need to establish an institution such as Niherst, which we are seeking to establish today.

I wish to make it very clear that we are fully committed to the principle of the establishment of such an institution. On the larger question of the need for such an institution or of the necessity for people like ourselves to enter into this advancing technological world, to develop a scientific capability, I would just like to make a few small points..."

3.00 p.m.

Basically, he said that they were in support of the idea. He then commented on the points made by Dr. Williams. He said:

"In the meantime, in the Budget Speech of 1978, the decision was announced to set up Niherst and in April, Cabinet agreed on a proposal for the setting up of a board of governors at such time when Niherst would have come into being. That was in 1980 and we are now in 1984. So that this noble vision for Niherst was long in the offing at great cost and at considerable thought.

The noble vision for Niherst is as a co-ordinating and executive body, taking under its wing all scientific and technical institutions outside of the university, as is stated in the White Paper...the White Paper names 15 such institutions—I want you to

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

remember that, Mr. Vice-President—and I shall indicate in a little while how emasculated this skeleton of Niherst has become—emasculated from 15 to 6, and we shall talk in a little while about the nature of the six."

He was pointing out just what I have been saying, that the original concept of Niherst as an institution which will integrate these various sectors has been emasculated, and what eventually came to Parliament was this watered down version which meant that the institution would have a co-ordinating form. I may say that many of us who had been involved in the original proposal were greatly disappointed with the way things have gone. I believe even the hon. Minister of Planning and Local Government at that time would have been in support of the science and technology effort.

What has been the position since the establishment of Niherst in 1984? I will say that Niherst, within its confines has struggled to fulfil some of the original mandate. It was never given the authority or the resources to do that. It had to look for opportunities. Within that context, I would say that Mr. Frank Rampersad and Mrs Maureen Manchook, who gave him able support are to be congratulated on the way in which they have tried to develop a niche for Niherst. Niherst is supporting new areas of research which in fact were not being developed, but which were badly needed in the country.

With the greatest use of very small funding biotechnology, research was started, the institution was able to sponsor this area in the university on which we are now building. They have also funded some activity in petroleum research and on asphalt.

Those are small efforts but important because we are strategically pointed. It developed new teaching areas in languages, banking, nursing and information sciences. Niherst is one of the first institutions, apart from Fatima College, to sponsor the introduction of computers in the secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. I think that they did well with the resources that they had. There is no doubt that they could have done very little with respect to the original concept of the White Paper.

The NAR Government took steps to revive the idea when they first established a committee to consider the creation of a community college. I believe this community college was intended to incorporate all the teaching institutions which the original White Paper had set out. A teaching institution was supposed to be incorporated in the community college.

I do not think that the NAR Government had addressed the question of the development of Niherst in terms of the research and development institutes, although I believe they had been discussing a science and technology policy. Of course they went out of government and so that never saw the light of day. I am not aware as yet of any science and technology policy emanating from the present Government.

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

What is the view of the new PNM, the present Government? Do we now have the vision of Eric Williams? Have the circumstances changed so much that we do not need the system? I have been arguing the reverse. We need them now more than we did in 1977. What is very sad is that here is a country that had a vision, the resources and the analytical mind to set out what needed to be done but did not do it.

Now, we find ourselves, in 1995, still drifting in the same way that we did in 1977. We now have less money to do it with than we did in 1977. We have liberalization which means that the pressure is greater on us to get something done and there is more competition. I fear that we might have a real stumbling block.

We have the concept of a Government as facilitator and the concept that the private sector should do it. In Trinidad and Tobago today there are small additional institutions developed by various facets of the private sector coming on stream with very little monitoring of quality, a great deal of duplication of effort and no integration for a complete and comprehensive thrust to address the problems that we have. It is happening already.

A few days ago in the newspapers the Seventh-Day Adventist College suggested that they want to start a university. I have been approached by Roytec to sponsor a Bill in Parliament so that they would have the authority to grant degrees. There are a number of other private institutions that are involved, not that there is anything wrong with the private sector being involved. I think we need to develop a system that would allow them to contribute and allow a marriage or an alliance between the public and the private sectors in this regard. Whatever we say, in most countries of the world and still in Trinidad and Tobago, the greatest funder of tertiary education and higher education is the Government. The Government may shift away from that a bit but nevertheless I think this will be the case.

The World Bank gives two extreme examples of structures that one may set up with respect to Government involvement. One is the example of Spain where there is a great deal of government regulation on the whole system including the private sector institutions; and the other example in the other extreme is Chile where there is very little or no interference by Government in the way that these institutions develop. They both may have their attributes and reasons for supporting them.

I suppose if one looks at the economic role, Chile may be in a better position than Spain at the moment, so perhaps we could say that system works better. I suggest that we need to look at our own system and decide how we need to involve those two partners in the development of a structure in science and technology.

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

With respect to the role of UWI, if we were to go back to the concept of integrating all our tertiary institutions into a technical university of Trinidad and Tobago, would this mean doing anything to the disadvantage of the University of the West Indies? I do not think so and it need not be the case. The present Vice Chancellor is in support of that thrust. From the Eric Williams memorial address which I think was given in 1988, I would like to quote what was said at that time which indicated his support for the system. We have to look increasingly towards science, and technology management and organizational schemes of the development process. He said:

"In the field of science and technology itself, the region is far behind. To give one example: according to the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook for 1987, Trinidad and Tobago with a population of 1.1 million, had in 1985 a total of 1,226 students enrolled at the tertiary level in Science, Mathematics, Computer Science and Engineering. Compare this with Singapore, which with a population of 2.6 million, had in 1984 over 18,000 students enrolled in those fields."

If we double the Trinidad and Tobago figure to 2,400, that cannot be compared with 18,000 in Singapore.

"This may be a rather dramatic comparison, but examination of available data for other fast-growing developing countries confirms that the region is lagging behind."

3.10 p.m.

I was really saddened some months ago to look at the "National Report" on the visit to Hong Kong, on television, to see how impressed we were with the setting up of the technological University of Hong Kong. We had the concept of setting up such an institution at least 10 years before that one was set up in Hong Kong. All we had to do was to go back and read past documentation. We did not have to go to Hong Kong to discover that. Perhaps having visited there we will now be impressed and will move forward in this regard. But it really does make one a little sad.

The Vice-Chancellor also had this to say:

"The university is also discussing how far an expansion of numbers can be achieved through more systematic networking with existing tertiary level institutions in the region.

Virtually all of the contributing territories have one or more tertiary institutions which can be upgraded to provide at least first-year work in some subjects and certificate and diploma training in certain fields. Some of them may even be suitable for extension to second and third-year courses. It is obvious that full advantage should

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. PROF. SPENCE]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

be taken of these possibilities in order to cut both the cost and time involved in securing a university education, and to bring the university into a closer relationship with the communities that it serves.

It is necessary, however, to guard against the dangers of institutional proliferation. In tertiary education, critical minimum size and economies of scale are extremely important considerations. Experience, even in the Caribbean itself, shows that it is extremely difficult to provide high quality instruction on a sustained basis in national institutions operating under the handicap of small teaching units."

So the problem again, when you split up into the small units is viability for each of the units. There is one lecturer in a certain field; he goes off for six months on study leave and there is no one to teach the course and so on and so forth.

"It is inevitable that such institutions find it very difficult to recruit and retain high quality staff, if they are to be restricted to teaching a limited range of general courses with very little opportunities for intellectual interaction, and with a poorly equipped infrastructure in the form of libraries, laboratories, and equipment. The University of the West Indies itself is struggling against great odds to maintain its academic standards in the light of financial constraints.

The idea of consolidating existing tertiary units into a single national institution may be a good one, if the new structure is linked to a strong support system. Without the latter, it might end up as a mere exercise in re-labeling. Such support can best come from an institution with experience of local conditions and needs. In any case, it should come from an institution of substantiated academic standing. ...

In the perspective of the next 40 years, who knows whether the University of the West Indies might not emerge as principally a "topping-up" and graduate institution at the apex of the network of associated undergraduate colleges? This is an exciting prospect, but for it to be realized, the foundations have to be carefully laid by thorough preparatory work and planning."

The Vice-Chancellor has accepted that fact and, indeed, some of the countries are moving in that direction even now. For many years the College of Arts, Science and Technology in Jamaica has had a very good reputation of operating at a tertiary level, non-university. Now CAST has been redesignated as a technical university. The Jamaicans have gone forward ahead of us, although, as I said, we had the concept many years before. They, perhaps, have spent less time in talking about it and more time in action. CAST has had its reputation developed for some considerable time. I do not think there

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

will be any conflict or difficulty with respect to the University of the West Indies if we decide to move in this direction.

It is extremely important that we discuss this issue thoroughly. I hope for an opportunity later on to bring some more concrete proposals on how we might move forward and also to respond, particularly to what the Government may have to say with regard to the proposal for a University of Trinidad and Tobago.

It seems to me that we have very few issues on which, as a country, we can move forward together; very few issues on which we do not find divisiveness; very few issues, these days, which we can be really proud. What are we proud of in Trinidad? Carnival, I suppose. Our steelband; a transient support of our football team; a transient support in some of our cricketers, until they start failing. Surely, the development of a well-established University of Trinidad and Tobago can be something that we can all put our minds and effort behind and develop an institution of which we can be proud, one which will be complementary to the University of the West Indies.

For a long time in Trinidad and Tobago we have had this concept of academic excellence. That is why we still have open scholarships. As you know, Sir, I have my reservations about open scholarships, but it is maintained in Trinidad and Tobago because we have this strong feeling about education. All the ethnic groups have it—that this is the way we move forward. Formerly, it was the way we moved forward within the society. Now it is the way we move forward as a society. Surely this is something that we can get excited about, that we can think about together, and that we can have as our national objective.

As I said, there are so few issues about which, as a country, we can really get excited and put our effort into. I feel that if we are able to move forward this concept, we can indeed look at it as a national objective, away from party lines. As I tried to point out, even in 1984 the Opposition clearly was in support of the concept. I am quite sure that Sen. Capildeo's brother, Dr. Rudranath Capildeo, would have been very strongly in support of this type of approach.

Let us not fool ourselves. If we allow the proliferation of a number of sub-standard institutions, there is no doubt that we would not be competitive in the world that we now face and our prospects would be nothing as good as if we were really able to organize our economic affairs properly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President.

Seconded by Sen. Hydar Ali.

Senator's Appointment
[MR. VICE PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, earlier in our sitting we took a decision that a new Senator will be sworn in later in the proceedings.

I have been advised that the Acting President has appointed Dave Nigel Cowie to be temporarily a Senator, with immediate effect and continuing, during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Sen. Surendranath Capildeo. I now ask you to stand while Mr. Cowie is sworn in.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

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

3.20 p.m.

NIHERST

(Creation of Technical University)

Question proposed.

Mr. Vice-President: Before you start, Sen. Maloney, may I take this opportunity to recognize Sen. Junior Barrack sitting in the chair of the Senate Minority Leader.

Sen. Andre Maloney: Mr. Vice-President, clearly it is an opportunity to contribute on real issues in this Senate. It is noteworthy that for the past few months we have been sort of moving off track. I think it is an opportunity to contribute to the real issues in our society and on this, I congratulate the mover of the motion, Sen. Prof. John Spence.

This motion articulates a Government which, as a matter of fact, is well intentioned to enter the global village. We see a Government moving from stabilization to growth, a completely refashioned economy, one that is bold, risk-taking and enterprising; a Government with a vision beyond the year 2,000.

In setting this stage, what are the facts? As a business centre, clearly, there is an increased emphasis on technical education, coupled with a serious thrust towards increased foreign investment as never seen before in this country; strong foreign reserves for the first time in a very long period; increased methanol production and heavy capital intensive industries. In essence, the motion calls for the establishment of a Technical University of Trinidad and Tobago with functional relationships with the University of the West Indies. The necessary cost for moving technical education clearly means setting,

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

as a first priority, a strong economic front. This has to be the driving force towards increased economic competitiveness. I see this motion as an investment in the future, an investment in true educational opportunities. The Government, it is recognized, has demonstrated one of the most consistent track records in the Caribbean in providing educational opportunities at the highest level to all members of society.

The issues of the 1970s provided a totally different picture with the establishment of the National Institute of Higher Education (Research Science and Technology) recognizing even way back then, that this Government had that vision, as was outlined by Sen. Prof. John Spence, and it provided that direction allowing an institution to be established.

As we seek to redefine this role today, we are approaching an era of rapid changes where we demand greater effectiveness, a dynamic organization to suit present and future needs, synergies with private enterprise, Government and even foreign universities; a need also to update our technology, support by private institutions involving technical education, a move contrary to what many people may think but which I fully support; a need for organizations like UWI to be much more proactive than reactive.

Clearly, in these times of great constraints and where resources need to be placed in many other areas, there is need for a clear rationalization to secure efficiency, effectiveness along with a competitive system. Yes, I agree also that it must be backed by a sound policy direction which is the content of the draft paper *Towards The Year 2,005*.

As we prepare to face new challenges we must understand that our role as a Government may change over time. I want to assure everyone, even the young population, that that commitment remains the same. Investment in our young people is one that must take into account today a partnership between Government and private enterprise, and a commitment, *moreso*, of our students. We must take note of those changes.

There is much evidence to support the measure introducing private institutions or what I call private universities, into the body. I stated that from the outset: that as a young person I give my personal support. I take into account the same issue raised by Sen. Prof. Spence regarding the Caribbean Union College seeking university status. I think the CUC has moved significantly over the years.

Based on my personal relationship with colleagues of UWI, I know that graduates of the Engineering Department—at least four of whom I know personally—opted to take up programmes of the MBA at the CUC which is an affiliate of Andrews University in

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. MALONEY]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

Michigan. One might ask why engineering students from UWI took up the challenge to seek an affiliation with the CUC.

In these competitive times young people have to search for areas where the opportunities lie at the best possible advantage to themselves. They are paying a lot of money for these courses also and one must recognize also that there is the opportunity to liaise with foreign students; there is an opportunity to have increased access to technology and yet recognize where one's foundation came from, which was UWI. The Caribbean Union College clearly outlines that in its article where it says:

"Under the college's "Vision 2000" plan, ... the CUC is also looking towards increased academic outreach by setting up non-traditional evening programmes ... "

In addition, pointing to utilizing greater space and extending the services of the university.

I went into this issue to highlight that there are many other facets as to why a private institution must be encouraged, but I clearly stated from the outset that it must be backed by sound policy, sound observance of the process and making sure that standards are met at all stages.

I think the issue was also raised by Sen. Prof. John Spence regarding support of all races, support of all ethnic groups, commonly seeking the goal of education as their greatest asset for moving this country forward.

3.30 p.m.

I wish to share an issue raised by Sen. Surendranath Capildeo at an Indian Arrival Day celebration, where he signalled in an interview in an article published in the *Newsday* that he believed that the real opportunities lie in Trinidad and Tobago for the young Indian population. It is a view which I would like to fully support because I think one hears many comments that within the UNC there is the feeling of alienation, but even at the outset—he projects himself as being the Great Capildeo—he says that there are real opportunities for all ethnic groups.

Even to my Baptist elders, though I recognize my culture and traditions, I remember many issues raised during their debate and I personally felt that sometimes there needs to be a little more emphasis. Where do we go from here?

I wish to add that there are many of us today who are liberated because we are no longer looking inward and insular; we are liberated today because our minds are free to innovate and create; we are liberated today because we have a degree of freedom, a freedom that comes with responsibility. As we approach Emancipation Day, let us

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

provide the unlocking of the human mind to greater potential, unleashing that knowledge of self-reliance, and sound advice to our people.

Today, young people are faced with a fiercely competitive environment. My personal support for alternatives to UWI is that ability to adapt to that constantly changing environment. Against this backdrop, I would urge the higher proportion of my age group to become involved in tertiary education. Clearly, our young people are thirsting for technology; they understand the tasks in the face of those great tides of change. Many private institutions provide programmes of training and we must recognize these institutions for providing these opportunities.

There are many negative effects and pictures which have a strong bearing on public perception against many ranks of students joining tertiary education. Prof. John Spence referred to the World Bank, where there is the perception that it is only the wealthy families who take up positions in universities.

I would like to see that picture totally reversed. I would also like to hear strong and enlightening comments even from my fellow UNC colleague, Sen Junior Barrack, who takes a totally different end and sends strong signals to many people in taking a particular stance. I hope that contributions to this debate will lead to a more enlightened approach. That misconception that tertiary education is only for the select few must be changed in all communities; the barriers must start to break down. We must approach this in new and innovative ways.

Clearly, as a responsible Government, we recognize these challenges. The education policy paper, together with the direct execution, has led to many programmes. The role of Niherst, I may add, has been very commendable. There have been significant developments in the curriculum and educational developments in health, key institutions involved in the development of technology, and programmes of advanced computer training. And even in our thrust towards the Latin America gateway—as outlined in the motion—there has been a great role by Niherst in presenting many programmes relating to languages. I think all will recognize that Niherst needs to form a strategic alliance with many institutions to increase its role and functions. I am sure the Leader of Government Business in the Senate, Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith, will tackle these issues as we go along.

As developmental changes in the educational system have taken place, this Government has clearly implemented many key programmes in the Metal Industries Company and the Master Craftsman Programme, where the Germans are involved in training. At this stage, our Government believes that the future of a well-trained workforce is a very important catalyst for economic development. Furthermore, there are

Niherst (Tech. University)
[SEN. MALONEY]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

initiatives with respect to development of high technology programmes to address the needs of advanced industries. I must add that in this regard there is ongoing research to determine the manpower and training needs of all these industries to come on stream.

As the education system begins to focus on improving quality training to suit contemporary and future needs, one must keep in mind the financial investment this Government is presently making in educational development. I will return to that question later, because there will come a time when we will really need to try to rationalize these many institutions and try to avoid duplication.

Sen. Prof. Spence raised these issues—focus on areas that would suit not only the manpower needs, but also produce young tertiary graduates who will show a clear bias towards entrepreneurship, an entrepreneurship in its broadest sense across the entire educational system, critically changing organizational culture of the many schools that provide education, and retraining of teachers to suit our present needs. Tertiary learning institutions must also rethink their role, and finally, projects of these graduates must show potential for marketing products.

Embracing this vision of entrepreneurship, I believe is one of the critical factors in moving our country at any stage. This, I believe, is a new and serious focus by this Government. This vision will result in the unleashing of the human mind to its greatest potential, effecting new values sustained through creative imagination, gradually driving self-reliance, discipline, temperament foresight and self-command. Clearly, a vision we must all embrace as educators. There must be that thrust towards that end.

3.40 p.m.

The functional relationship between the University of the West Indies and other institutions is the critical factor towards any developmental process. As I stated, our Government's commitment in this area is beyond question. I refer to the University Students (Guarantee Fund) which was passed in this Senate; the expansion of UWI over a significant period; and I wish to add—even as we analyze our own educational system and the whole question of cost.

I turn now to an article "An End to UWI's Free Education:"

"Free education at the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies may well be over."

Explaining how UWI costs have become unmanageable in Barbados over the past three years. Barbados paid UWI almost \$150 million to educate 2,400 students annually. Conversely, the cost of primary schooling for 28,000 pupils was \$60 million and another

Niherst (Tech. University)

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

\$60 million for 22,000 secondary school students. Clearly, we must all understand the cost involved in tertiary education.

Our Government is sincerely committed to the goal of tertiary education and development at this time, but we must understand its relationship to cost. I will not regard it as cost; it is an investment towards our future. I wish to support the recommendations as articulated in the White Paper, where the need to form closer linkages with the various bodies of the educational sector—the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, the San Fernando Technical Institute, the Hotel School, ECIAF and the University of the West Indies—all in line with providing further opportunities.

Mr. Vice-President, as a Government, we remain committed to impress upon our students the critical importance of education as the vehicle for future development. I wish to add that that commitment remains the same, even as we march forward to the year 2000.

I wish to thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Mr. Vice-President, it is with some trepidation that I move the adjournment of the Senate, but I nevertheless beg to move that the Senate be now adjourned to a date to be fixed by the President.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 3.47 p.m.