

SENATE

Tuesday, March 5, 1996.

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 of absence from today's sitting to Sen. Danny Montano. I have also granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have been advised that His Excellency the President has appointed Mr. Verne Richards a temporary Senator, with effect from March 5, 1996 and continuing, during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

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

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Carnegie Free Library for the year ended December 31, 1993. [*The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Carnegie Free Library for the year ended December 31, 1994. (*Hon. B. Kuei Tung*)
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Public Utilities Commission for the year ended December 31, 1994. (*Hon. B. Kuei Tung*)
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority for the year ended December 31, 1994. (*Hon. B. Kuei Tung*)

5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Industrial Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1983.
(Hon. B. Kuei Tung)
6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Industrial Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1987.
(Hon. B. Kuei Tung)s
7. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Committee of the Naparima Bowl Board for the year ended December 31, 1989.
(Hon. B. Kuei Tung)
8. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Committee of the Naparima Bowl Board for the year ended December 31, 1990.
(Hon. B. Kuei Tung)
9. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Committee of the Naparima Bowl Board for the year ended December 31, 1991.
Hon. B. Kuei Tung)
10. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Committee of the Naparima Bowl Board for the year ended December 31, 1992.
(Hon. B. Kuei Tung)
11. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Committee of the Naparima Bowl Board for the year ended December 31, 1993.
(Hon. B. Kuei Tung)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny:

UNDP Project TRI/94/G81/A/3G/99

2. Could the hon. Minister of Planning and Development inform the Senate whether all United Nations Capacity 21 Funding provided for UNDP Project TRI/94/G81/A/3G/99 has been fully utilized and whether all six project tasks have been satisfactorily completed?

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. President, I have sought and obtained leave from Sen. Prof. Kenny to have this question deferred for a period of two weeks.

Question, by leave, deferred.

WATER DISTRIBUTION POLICY (WASA)**WASA POLICY**

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [February 22, 1996]:

Be it resolved that the Government make a full statement to this House disclosing its timetable for renegotiation and its policy concerning water distribution. [*Sen. M. Daly*]

Question again proposed.

Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny: Mr. President, we have already had a statement from the Minister of Public Utilities on the status of the contract. It is now in effect, so events have now overtaken the Motion in part. However, the Motion also calls for a statement on Government's policy regarding distribution of water.

1.40 p.m.

I propose to deal with one aspect of water policy. I am sure that many Senators here know of the problems that affect people with respect to the availability of water in different parts of the country, and I am sure they will speak about it. The distribution of water has one element which I think this Senate must consider, that is the quality of water that is distributed. There is very little comfort in learning about improved distribution as one is dying of bladder cancer, colorectal cancer or descending into the hell of Alzheimer's syndrome, but the evidence is there and it is indicated in other parts of the world that water quality does contribute to these conditions. I suggest, therefore, that we must really look at this issue of water quality in some depth to see whether the Government of this country, first of all, recognizes the nature of the problem, and more importantly, whether this new arrangement with Severn Trent/Wimpey will address this particular problem.

Mr. President, all countries, including the developing countries, attempt to deliver water according to standards, and certainly, there are standards in the European Union, the United States of America and Canada. The World Health Organization also has an established standard which I have before me and we are supposed to employ this standard in the water which is distributed throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

I do not wish to be an alarmist in any respect but there are many parts of Trinidad and Tobago with a water supply which is perfectly adequate to drink with barely any chlorination. Anyone living in a valley or rural area where there is a

bore hole into an aquifer can drink the water without any treatment at all. Even the water coming from major reservoirs such as Hollis, Hillsborough or Navet and so on are of a very good quality. However, there is one fact that we must bear in mind and that is that 40 per cent of the potable water supplied to the citizens of this country comes from the Caroni Water Treatment Plant at Piarco.

This Plant has been in existence for some time and has been the subject of technical studies of one kind or another. In 1988, the Pan American Health Organization and the Wessex Water Authority in Britain did a technical study on the Caroni Water Treatment Plant. Before I go into some of the details of this, I would like to make a few observations with respect to the water about which concerns are felt worldwide.

There are five main areas of concern about water quality, plus the generic area of pesticides. Aluminium in the water is something of considerable concern. In fact, the standards used by the European Union have been lowered because there is now very good evidence that aluminium levels in the water may, in fact, cause Alzheimer's syndrome. Nobody knows how it is caused any more than anyone knows how smoking cigarettes causes lung cancer, but the statistical evidence is there from the developed countries. A study done by the Friends of the Earth and reported in the *National Press* in the United Kingdom shows that in one part of the country there are approximately two million people at risk of developing Alzheimer's syndrome because the aluminium levels in the water are way beyond the European Union standard.

Lead is the other substance in water which is of great concern. We ingest lead in a variety of ways because we use lead in gasoline. When we walk around the Queen's Park Savannah or drive on the public roads in Trinidad and Tobago, we ingest these particles. Adults, of course, have certain levels of tolerance to lead poisoning. Lead has an unfortunate effect on the developing human being in that it attacks the nervous system causing mental retardation; in fact, it can cause death. We also get lead in our water, and it might surprise Members of this Senate to know that in the home country of Seven Trent, one of the major concerns is lead in the water, partly because lead pipes are still in use. In some of the water in Trinidad and Tobago we find lead levels in excess of the European Union standards.

There is also concern for nitrates. We know of nitrates as a fertilizer, but when it gets into the water, if one ingests too much of it, in time, the indications are that

one may develop blood disorders as well as malignancies, particularly in the stomach of the adult.

The other substance of concern is, in fact, a product of the process which we employ in making water suitable for human consumption. When we use chlorine in the water it will combine with organic material to produce substances such as trihalomethanes which have been indicated as causing bladder cancer, colo-rectal cancers and so on; at least, in animals.

The final group of substances of major concern are pesticides. We are great users of pesticides and great users of cocktails of pesticides. I mentioned these in part to set the background to this study which was commissioned and effected eight years ago and done by a water authority in the United Kingdom. I would like to summarize the conclusions of this study. Firstly, the Caroni Water Treatment Plant supplies 40 per cent of the country's drinking water. Secondly—and this is most important—it operates continuously at near maximum design capacity. This report says that there is a flow-through in this system and there is no storage. If one has an accident up-stream, there is no way one can correct the accident because it enters the system. One would have to shut down 40 per cent of the drinking water of the country.

Thirdly, the Caroni Water Treatment Plant uses conventional treatment procedures—alum and lime—to flocculate all the suspended materials out of the water and then the water is filtered through fine sand filter beds over which there is a layer of activated charcoal which will take out all these obnoxious chemicals.

1.50 p.m.

The report continues to say:

- "(d) Six of the ten tributaries are heavily polluted with industrial and farm discharge.
- (e) The discharges of the tributaries are in urgent need of control and the quality of the Caroni River of sources of potable water cannot be assumed."

In other words, they are saying in 1988 there was a serious problem and the quality can not be assumed.

The final point made in the report states:

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- (f) "If industrial activity resumes to previous levels, it is assumed that the quality of rivers could decrease further. Action is required now to prepare industry, agriculture and WASA to avoid greater and more serious problems in the future."

Mr. President, I would like to just simply take some of the detail out of the report, and to point out that analyses were done over a period of about six or eight weeks, both in Trinidad within WASA's capability, in Cariri within Cariri's capability and also in the United Kingdom at the Wessex Laboratories. The standard things that one measures in water such as the hardness and so forth, and heavy metals were measured. It also looked at biological pollution, faecal coliforms; in other words bacteria, and briefly, it also looked at pesticides.

The conclusion of this is that the raw water—we are using river water collected from all those streams such as south of Arima and into the Central Range where farming activities take place—falls somewhere between the A2 or A3 standard in the European Union, meaning it is marginal. In fact, later on in the report it goes on to say that it is just barely within acceptable standards in 1988 as a source of raw water. We are not talking about the finished product.

It goes on to point out the excessive levels of lead, aluminium and a range of heavy metals coming out of O'Meara Industrial Estate. This was determined by the authorities at Wessex. Coming out of O'Meara they found a wide range of organic substances including solvents, fuel, aromatic hydrocarbons, pesticides and several unidentified compounds. Chemicals used in mercerizing fabrics, dye stuffs and so forth, anything that one could imagine was in the raw water.

The conclusion of this states that:

"The Caroni River is bordering on the lowest quality ranges of water intended for potable use."

The report went on to point out that the method of using alum in water treatment now, was suspect ten years ago. The report actually recommended to WASA that they consider using another substance, an alternative chemical for this purpose.

Mr. President, in this report there are detailed recommendations on what is needed to be done, and not the least of which is to refer to the powers that WASA have under their founding statute which enables WASA to do something about the problem. It observed that whilst control powers are and have for many years been available, they have been little used. This is the history of our country; laws on the books or powers on the books and no attempt to use them.

Mr. President, I painted an alarming picture; it is a serious picture but what to me, is more serious than this is that the finished water coming out of the treatment plant, that is, after WASA has done all the treatment, just in the limited sampling done, indicated levels of aluminium in one sample about four times the EU standard. They also noted with concern that the levels of copper in the finished water were significantly higher than the raw water coming in. In other words, something was happening in the plant. They also found aromatic hydrocarbons, pesticide residues and trihalomethanes in the finished product which is a signal to WASA that there is something very wrong—Mr. President, I would not like anyone in WASA to think that I am hammering WASA. I know many of the people involved, especially the technical people, some I have taught in the past, but they know the problem and they know what is needed and they need the wherewithal to correct these problems which have been identified in the Wessex Report.

They went on to suggest certain technical changes. If one goes out to this area one will notice that the water runs into an inlet, goes to the processing plant and then it is pumped out to the consumer. Wessex has recommended establishing a separate ponding system to store water so that one avoids the problem when there is a major accident such as a spillage; and spillages have taken place in watersheds. One solves the problem by having water in storage before it is distributed to the public. The Wessex Report also recommends a boom to protect the inlet against oil-spills. At the O'Meara Industrial Estate and elsewhere there are diesel fuel, lubricating oils—you name it—going into the rivers. The details are in there for any Minister of Public Utilities. The fact that I have a copy—this is not in wide circulation, but there are people in WASA who feel that members of the public who have an interest in this subject should be given the facts. I think that this report may not, in fact, even have been seen at ministerial level.

This raises my concern here and when this contract is signed and it is now operating there are certain performance targets. The facts are if the performance targets are only insofar as quantities delivered to customers, then I think that the arrangement is defective, if the terms of the contract require the contractor to do something urgently about the Caroni Water Treatment Plant then I feel that I would sleep a little easier.

2.00 p.m.

In summarizing what I am saying; to translate it into the language—I hope I do not insult anyone here, we will leave out all the technical details—what the Caroni treatment plant does, is that it cleans up everybody else's mess at a great cost. In

1988, the cost for chemicals alone was approximately \$10 million. Now we are having increased economic activity, we expect to see more washing of gravel and rivers which means more alum is used to remove the silt. There is more manufacturing activity—more solvents going out; there are more lead batteries being recycled—we see more lead going into the system and so forth. What the private sector, outside the farming and industrial communities, is doing is putting an incredible load on WASA because the water that is coming out may not be to my taste, but it is better than the raw water. But why should a public utility just accept everybody else's mess and rubbish and try to work it into a product which would be acceptable? This is my main concern.

In this report I referred to the subject of the WASA Act. The report actually spells out bye-laws and WASA's bye-laws can be passed by WASA to regulate what the people upstream do. They propose systems of licensing and systems of quantities and standards of effluence. This is not done today so we are transferring the cost of cleaning up this mess unto WASA. I do not think that is fair to the taxpayers of this country. I think the people who actually make the mess, the polluters, are the ones who have to be brought to accurate. I do not necessarily mean in a court of law, but they have to be made responsible, by paying out of their pockets for the damage they are doing.

I do not think anyone on this side knows the details of it, but I think that the Government will really have to address this matter. It is all there telling you there is a serious problem and to get on with it. Plus they will, of course, need an upgrade of their analytical facilities. WASA does not monitor pesticides in the water which it sends out to consumers. It only monitors heavy metals through another Government agency on a monthly basis. It does the normal water quality such as pH, oxygen and alkalinity and turbidity; it does a few others also, but it does not do organo-metals, and pesticides. WASA needs to have facilities right there at the treatment plant sensing what is going on with that water before it passes it out to the consuming public.

I would like to digress slightly and to commend the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries for his statement on what the Environmental Management Authority will do, and he made it quite clear that this Government has departed from the previous Government's stand. It was said in public before, both in Parliament as well as in public forum, that the EMA (Environmental Management Authority) would not use the command and control approach in managing the environment. In other words, the EMA, when it was set up, decided amongst itself

to persuade the people who are polluting the Couva River to stop doing it. "Now please, do not pollute the river, we are not going to fine anyone, just try to encourage people not to pollute the river." So I think we have had a major departure here and the Government must be commended. I assume that this is an official Government policy that it is going to come down very strong on managing the environment.

Mr. President, the EMA Act gives certain powers to the EMA in that it can impose control on any new development but in this respect, my concern is for the old factory. The EMA cannot really, at present, do very much about them, it has to do a retrofit. In other words, EMA as it stands, even with its powers, will be able to regulate any new development of what it will be permitted to do but the old polluters can continue for some time. My point here is that I think at this stage, especially with this problem of the Caroni Water Treatment Plant, it is absolutely essential that the EMA be brought in to organize with WASA what it will do concerning the sources of the water being treated at Caroni. It is essential that the EMA, with WASA, address this issue now and forget about many other things that it has been telling us, about advertizing its new logo. I do not think that is important, or telling us about saving turtles. Turtles are not a major problem in Trinidad. I think the major problem is the level to which we have descended in terms of the destruction of our environment and its pollution. The EMA started its advertisements by saying the time is now to clear the air. It is true, but that time was years ago. It was eight years ago when this report was written, so my suggestion is that it really requires urgent attention.

May I close by saying I would like to reassure people, I do not want to alarm them too much, but we continue like this and the problems develop, we do nothing about them, we talk and debate about them and so forth. Here is one of vital importance to the health of 40 per cent of the people of Trinidad and here is something which was crying out for attention eight years ago. There must be a policy statement on water quality, or the distribution of water with particular reference to the quality of the product being distributed.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh: Mr. President, allow me to congratulate Sen. Daly for providing this honourable Senate with an opportunity, through the Motion he has proposed, to examine even in a limited way, an issue dating back to the fading days of the past regime. That Severn Trent/Wimpey water management contract continues to be equally mystifying as it is controversial. It has not been

easy putting my thoughts together on this Motion. Most of the time I felt disillusioned, depressed and disconsolate knowing that this subject matter is a *fait accompli*. Furthermore, so much time, has elapsed since the signing of the interim operating agreement between the last Government and Severn Trent/Wimpey, but as yet why has the nation, or its Parliament not been informed as to the indecent haste in the finalizing of that deal a mere five days before a general election amidst vociferous protest from various sections of our society?

2.10 p.m.

Mr. President, it is that kind of conclusive action, nefarious and detestable, absurd and injudicious, that continues to keep us down as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Oftentimes when certain important matters are queried either by the population or the Parliament, decision makers use the well-known cliché that such matters are commercially sensitive therefore the need for secrecy. For many years I have heard that term; it has been a smokescreen for secrecy. All these things have been commercially sensitive and those who have the secrets of things which were commercially sensitive, some of them are not in the Parliament, they may not be in the country, they may be out of this world too. They go with those secrets, and I am worried about that. I am very skeptical and very uncomfortable with that disguise, particularly in matters of national significance, where decisions which are binding and mandatory are made. Shades of the 20-year natural gas contract some years ago between Amoco and our government are still in the twilight zone. Things sensitive!

Mr. President, I continue to hold the view that the signing of that water agreement by the former regime in October, 1995 was full of indiscretion. It was imprudent, contemptuous and, possibly as the BWIA/Acker deal, a disaster area.

There are indices which I would list to indicate that what we have here before us is not a fire sale, it is a giveaway. I will summarize what I have to say under two simple questions: What did we offer to Severn Trent/Wimpey as a government and a people? And, what did the consortium bring?

Firstly, what did we offer? The Government of the day provided that company with all the water needed, and that is important. Supplies from WASA's 1995 water winning installations remembering, as Prof. Kenny just reminded us, that Caroni/Arena reservoir alone produces 40 per cent of the country's water output which amounts to 150 million gallons per day, Severn Trent/Wimpey does not have to worry about water at all. This has been supported faithfully by the Navet, Hollis and Hillsborough reservoirs. Let us not forget we are giving them all the

water. Let us not forget \$240 million will be expended in a three-year period on 21 private contracts to eight operators for the repair and operation of about 130 ground water wells. This has been reported in the press for several months. I am subject to correction but then the entire population would have been misled by many articles in the press over the last few months about the winning of water from these ground water wells. The new consortium is getting much water, massive spending, \$6.6 million per month to produce another 20 million gallons of water.

Mr. President, listen to this: Severn Trent/Wimpey says, “you see that expenditure of \$240 million to find 20 million gallons more water, it is not our business, that is Government’s burden.” They are saying, “the water is okay, most welcomed—anyhow, that is our business—but that is Government’s bill.”

Secondly, Mr. President, the previous Government, anxious to dispose of WASA, came forward as the prime negotiator in that loan of \$450 million underwritten by City Bank—a government-guaranteed loan. I quote from the hon. Minister in the other place where he said about that loan:

“The loan removes any financial risks to Severn Trent/Wimpey which ultimately ensures that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has the liability for the loan. This method of securing the loan is certainly equivalent to a government guarantee.”

So, what we have before us? Severn Trent/Wimpey gets all the water they want and they are getting all the money, too. This is something I cannot understand. Did somebody say recently that our government is expected to make an issue of bonds which will be placed in a sinking fund to ensure that the \$450 million loan will be repaid?

Added to this, I think there might be more financial guarantee to the new consortium. The hon. Minister has kindly revealed that there will be a government-guaranteed overdraft facility to be capped at \$30 million. The sum of this is that, that kind of generosity matches only stupidity.

Thirdly, Mr. President, we provided for the preferred partner a debt-free company when the then Government gave the assurance to Severn Trent/Wimpey that the Government will take over all of WASA’s liabilities and accumulated debt to the central government in the vicinity of \$3.5 billion.

Fourthly, more concessions to come in the establishment of the Severn Trent/Wimpey contract. Severn Trent was allowed its own procurement unit—that

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is a new word to me—purchasing all goods, equipment, materials, consumable items and services and one can be sure, the rules have been changed to keep out the Central Tenders Board. They can import from anywhere at any price even ignoring the local market and the way we have been operating for years, I would not be surprised if all their imports are vat free. We are accustomed to giving that kind of freeness.

Fifthly, Mr. President, Severn Trent/Wimpey will receive US \$9,083,210 in management fees. Sen. Daly did say in his presentation that that is a whopping sum. It was reported in the press this year, January 19, 1996, and I quote:

“Although Severn Trent/Wimpey has not yet assumed ...”

That was January!

“... the management of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), the consortium has submitted bills totalling more than \$7 million ...”

To what is this amounting? A claim of TT \$4.5 million for work done during the pre-project preparation and TT \$2.4 million for work done under the Interim Operating Agreement. The consortium also claimed \$900,000 in other expenses. The sum of \$7 million in two and a half months! Is it not fair to ask what kind of work was done in two and a half months costing taxpayers of this country \$7 million? Commercially sensitive, you know; nobody to tell.

Sixthly, what have we provided for the preferred partner? We have provided for them a willing and faithful clientele with some of them who have been trained to pay their WASA bills even when they do not receive any water. And that is important! A company is coming here with a faithful clientele always paying bills. Very fortunate company, you know. They are going to receive a reliable guaranteed revenue base from this population.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. President, it is most embarrassing when I look at the next part of my question. It may not be so long because I cannot find answers. What did Severn Trent/Wimpey contribute to this agreement? Firstly, they provided twelve managers. Mr. President, do you remember the management fees? US \$9 million! for the twelve managers. That is what they contributed.

WASA has an estimated 60 engineers, all university graduates. The utility has a legal department, a commercial department, a personnel department—a labour force that knows its job. We have all of that. By importing twelve managers

costing millions of dollars in taxpayers' funds, someone has placed us among the most backward countries in this hemisphere. Mr. President, it is ironical that twelve managers must be here when so many of WASA's workers are university graduates. My Government has agreed to that: an insult to our people's intelligence. What did Severn Trent/Wimpey contribute to this agreement?

Mr. President, in addition to twelve managers, Severn Trent/Wimpey brought their great experience in water management. What is this experience, Mr. President? The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in search of loans to upgrade WASA sourced funds from agencies as the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank; and one of the conditionalities, we are told, is that Government must find, and I quote: "an experienced international firm to manage WASA".

Here is our first problem. I have said this before, and I repeat it. Those who lend us money say we are irresponsible and inefficient; so without an international manager we are going to die of thirst. So whom do we find? We find a company charged with supplying contaminated domestic drinking water in some place called Worcester on some river called Severn. Mr. President, they fought their case. They still lost and had to pay about £114,000 in fines and costs. We know that they explained that another company had discharged chemicals in the river. That case they also lost.

So anxious had the previous Government been to secure that loan, the Trinidad and Tobago Government sent investigators to check out Severn Trent's story. Our international salesmen were on first class flights again! I want to ask: who paid the team who visited England to investigate Severn Trent? I want to ask, what is the cost, and I would not be surprised if somebody tells me that that is "commercially sensitive".

Mr. President, there has been no transparency at all. None. But we are talking about a search for someone to manage WASA 'with international experience'. It is reported, Mr. President, that the Trinidad and Tobago deal is only the second water management contract by the preferred partner. So much for "an experienced international firm." Mr. President, let me briefly summarize as I close.

What did the Trinidad and Tobago Government provide for Severn Trent/Wimpey? All the water they need; all the money they need; more expertise than they can supply. We provided them with a debt-free company, a workforce with supporting infrastructure; a guaranteed revenue base of clients; freedom to import from their own company without interference or competition.

And the preferred partner? With the twelve managers a staggering, unbelievable management bill? And furthermore, they had another request that was used a lot in the election hustings of November. One of their requests was that the two standpipes in poverty-stricken Beetham should be removed. That is one of their conditionalities. They provided experience, Mr. President, that should make the World Bank bosses look foolish with their loan conditionalities.

I want to close by reminding this Government that our people have suffered for too long in this country for want of one of life's basic necessities. Do you know how many times schools have had to be closed? I am glad that children are here from the Spring Village Hindu School. I wish they get the chance to tell the Government about their experience—about filthy water tanks; about water trucks coming to supply them with water late, and the dry water taps in their yard. I wish they would get a chance to tell the Parliament “not Severn Trent/Wimpey”; to tell the Parliament how many times classes had to be dismissed early for lack of water; and they represent tens of thousands of children across this country who have suffered over the years.

Mr. President, I want to remind this Government that, whether it be Severn Trent/Wimpey or any other consortium, those children and the people of Trinidad and Tobago will hold the Government responsible for supplying them with water, and nobody else!

I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. President, I would like to join Sen. Teelucksingh in congratulating Sen. Daly for bringing this Motion before this honourable Senate; and like Sen. Teelucksingh I would like to join him in supporting this Motion. In Sen. Daly's presentation to us last week, he sang the praises of the Minister and I think he did so rightly. Obviously, the very fact that the Minister came out so quickly after elections and made a statement in the other place about the situation at WASA, does indicate that he intends to keep to his promises of transparency; and subsequent news reports have borne this out, in fact.

I think he should also be congratulated. I read today in the newspaper that even URP got off to a good start, which was not exactly expected, without any Muslimeen around to be seen. (I do not know who starts these rumours, but that one has been around since December).

Mr. President, I think that the call for transparency and openness in relation to this particular agreement for the generation and distribution of water should also

be extended to all state-owned enterprises, where the Government intends to either privatize or sell state-owned enterprises, or have management contracts, as in this case. I think that we should note that the country has not sold WASA to anybody. The people who are here are just here on a management contract and I think that is encouraging because, built into that contract, we have a certain leeway to examine how the contract is going to be carried out and, specifically, to evaluate performance all the way through. In the course of that evaluation, as the Minister pointed out in another place, one of the terms of the contract is that all obligations cease, in the event that the new management company does not perform. There are the specific performance management targets which have been drawn up and I would ask another question about that in a little while. I think the very fact that that exists is a good thing and something that, perhaps, gives us a little hope.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. President, I think we all understand that governments all over the world are getting out of the need or desire for the system that was so fashionable in the 1950s and 1960s of owning and managing the commanding heights of the economy. That was fashionable throughout the world and developing countries got hung on it. It was a disaster almost everywhere. Now, over the last 10 years governments have changed.

There is nothing wrong with that in itself but there are a couple of questions that I would like to ask in relation to this particular arrangement. Therefore, I am grateful to Sen. Daly for giving me the opportunity to be able to ask the Minister if he would address these when he is making his contribution. One of those questions has to do with the contract itself.

In the Minister's contribution he read a list of five international operators who were selected to submit proposals. These were Anglian Water International, Lyonnaise Des Eaux, Sair International, Severn Trent Water International/Wimpey and Thames Water International. He noted that no local private sector organization participated in the bidding process. I do not know whether this was because conditionalities that Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh just told us demanded that this could not be done. I wonder if the Minister could tell us whether any local group was even considered. Because, from what I recall operating at the time, there was a local group which had been formed from among citizens in Trinidad and Tobago—I think seconded from various bodies and seconded to WASA. I do not recall how long they were there. As I recall it would have been more than two years just to try to clean up some of the mess.

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In the records—anywhere and when his review groups spoke to the various people did they find out why this group or organization was not given the opportunity to at least submit a tender? It does seem strange that no local organization was even considered. They may not have won if they had applied but at least one would have thought that as a courtesy to the country itself, an opportunity would have been given to a local organization to at least submit a proposal.

I recognize that somebody will inevitably argue that we do not have the expertise in the country. WASA, obviously, was not operating at any sort of optimum level and therefore they do not have the expertise in the country.

Mr. President, expertise could be bought. One can buy consultants and expertise of all sorts and bring it into the country which, in fact, is what has been done under the aegis of Severn Trent/Wimpey rather than of a local group. I am wondering if the hon. Minister would be so kind as to give us some information in relation to this.

Of course, the other thing that people would argue when it comes to not giving such an opportunity to a local group is that the local group would not be able to raise the financing, or does not have the money to inject into the system, but there has been no foreign investment in relation to this particular contract, which brings me to my second point.

The Minister said, quite openly—and he is to be commended for it—that the method of securing the loan which was done by Severn Trent/Wimpey:

"...although not expressly guaranteed by Government, in fact, removes any financial risk to Severn Trent/Wimpey with respect to the repayment of the loan interest...This method of securing the loan is certainly equivalent to a government guarantee."

This has also been referred to by Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh.

Mr. President, in the *Water and Sewerage Authority Interim Operating Arrangement Request for Proposals* one of the points was that the operator, whoever was going to be chosen—this was before Severn Trent/Wimpey was chosen—

"...will be required to make available key staff for secondment as officers of WASA, to supply services, proven know-how and systems, to effect the agreed

deliverables including training, and to provide financing in the form of a non-guaranteed loan."

If part of the proposal was that it should be a non-guaranteed loan, I do not understand the inconsistency between the non-guaranteed loan and the fact that the method of securing the loan is equivalent to a Government guarantee. I wonder if we could get some guidance on this. If the reports are true—and Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh has referred to this; and I have received information that indicates that this money is going to be raised on the local market—I think it should be a bond issue as was mentioned.

This is going to be taking much of our liquid capital out of the system and would put many of our local business people at a great disadvantage because it means that that money which would be used to fix up WASA—which we all realize needs to be done—will not be available for the expansion of the local business sector at a time when unemployment is high and money is needed to expand the local business sector. Other ministries are doing their best to encourage the expansion of business, but to do that with one hand and then for Government to take the money which is needed to expand business away from the system on the other hand is troubling.

I am wondering whether the Minister could comment on this and say if, in fact, this is consistent with Government's policy. If not, could he indicate to us what his government intends to do about it, and specifically, comment on the methodology they intend to use in monitoring the financial aspects of this particular agreement.

In addition, Sen. Kenny said that he did not wish to be alarming, but I must admit that I am alarmed by what he has said. In fact, I am terrified, and I immediately stopped drinking water and put the cover on my glass of water which I would not touch. His description of what is going into our systems and the effects it can have on us is terrifying to me. The report he was reading from is eight years old, I believe he said. What has happened to us over the last eight years? And what is happening to us now? And what is happening to our young people and their developing brains is absolutely terrifying.

In asking those questions—and I would like to also get some indication from the Minister of what methodology they are going to use to ensure that WASA does observe the environmental controls which Sen. Finbar Gangar's Ministry is going to be overseeing. I would just like to know what the nexus is insofar as communication is concerned. So often, with so many governments in the past, we have seen one ministry busily doing one thing and another ministry doing

something slightly contradictory and very little communication between the two or very little co-ordination.

I hope that the hon. Minister can give us some reassurance on this point because the cost to the country is not just the cost of paying a management contract to manage the organization. I am not worried about that and I am not concerned about it, I do not even think it is that exorbitant in terms of what is normally paid for that kind of contract.

2.40 p.m.

What worries me is the cost to the country in medical bills. Our medical services are woefully under-supplied with resources. We all know this. It is going to put a strain on our medical budget which is going to be vastly multiplied or, probably has already been multiplied, over the last eight years because of the contamination that is in all of our systems. It is not just the medical cost, but it is also the cost of the lack of ability and the comment which was made about lead and aluminium affecting people's memories.

Mr. President, have you noticed lately how many people keep forgetting things? Even in the course of this debate Senators keep forgetting things and it just seems now that Sen. Prof. Kenny has got me completely terrified. I seem to recall that people around me kept saying, "I just cannot remember names anymore and I cannot remember things anymore." I am very frightened, indeed, and I would like to get some clarification. It is not just the cost of the medicine, it is the long-term cost of the lack of ability in people in the country and how it is affecting our development in all kinds of ways.

While I agree that the cost of cleaning the effluents from the water should not be WASA's, I also do not think it should be the consumers'.

Consumers in this country are paying enormous sums of money now to buy bottled water. In fact, I gather from recent reports that the bottled water industry is now a multi-million dollar industry in Trinidad with some 16 or 17 brands of bottled water being brought into the country. So, not only are we not getting foreign exchange at a time when we really need it through this management agreement and the bond issue which is being floated in order to pay for what Severn Trent/Wimpey really is going to do—but we are actually losing foreign exchange because we are so busy buying bottled water which has been brought in from Dominica, France, Quebec and from wherever, that I think it is a matter that should concern us all as well.

I congratulate the hon. Minister of Energy and Industries on his statements about our environmental control and the very active stance which he indicated that the environmental authority is going to take. I second Sen. Prof. Kenny's plea to "come down strongly" before we all start forgetting what it is we have to come down strongly about because I think that the whole health issue is a very serious one.

One last point that I would like to ask the hon. Minister, to comment on is, the issue of the procurement unit within WASA or within the Trinidad and Tobago Water Services Limited Organization which will function as a purchasing unit. I have great sympathy with the TTWS not wanting to have to go through the Central Tenders Board. We all know that it is a very lengthy process and it takes a long time just to get the Central Tenders Board to meet. I think the Central Tenders Board is vastly overworked because it really cannot keep up with the speed with which people need to make decisions and to make purchases these days if it is going to get a good price.

Like everyone else, I have a concern about how the contracts are going to be awarded, what monitoring mechanisms are going to be put in place—and this is specifically what I want to know—to ensure that "commissions" are not going to be paid on every purchasing contract or any other operating contract that is being awarded. What sort of methodology is going to be used to keep the money which should be going into WASA's system to avoid the international reputation which many developing countries have brought up over the past, of agencies like this accepting bribes or paying out "commissions" in order to award contracts of various sorts. I think that this is something this country really cannot afford to have any longer and internationally, as we know, countries like the United States and others have passed laws with heavy penalties to any company which in dealing with a developing country, does pay these kinds of "commissions". I respectfully request that the Minister give us some guidance on what sort of mechanism his ministry is going to put into effect in order to stop this.

Mr. President, in summing up I would just like to refer to Sen. Daly's original statement and the five points that he raised. I think they were very important. The first one has been commented on considerably, and that has to do with the propriety of any government entering into a binding contract during an election period and the advisability which I thought was an excellent suggestion that in any such agreement from now on or forever more, whether it is a Heads of Agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding, or if it is an actual contract, that there should

be a clause in that agreement saying that “this agreement is subject to affirmation subsequent to a general election,” if the agreement is signed within six to eight months of an election or expected election—although we do not always know when an election is coming up, as we have seen.

The second point which he made has to do with the question of the disclosure of terms of a contract, and that has already been raised. A third point has to do with how we do business with foreign investors in relation to public assets and public rights.

I echo the concern which has been expressed by other people about confidentiality clauses. We have got a virtual monopoly and whilst the supply of water is a monopoly to the point where I was appalled to discover that farmers who pump their own water into their own land and have their own pumps still have to pay WASA even though WASA has nothing to do with the generation or the distribution. That I cannot understand at all. Where it comes to a monopoly, I do not understand the need for this confidentiality clause. Unlike Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh, I do understand where it is dealing with a competitive situation and many of Government assets do have a competitive aspect to them. The wider distribution policy that Sen. Daly referred to I believe is one which we also hope would be very clearly laid out for the whole country to see. Not being able to have water for domestic or business purposes, is tantamount to endangering the entire system especially when it comes to public health. As was mentioned during the debate last week, in fact, I wrote it down because I thought it was so indicative of how these things are looked at. I believe the actual words were women and children having to tote water for long distances being a sad and appalling sight, if you notice, it was only the women and children who tote the water. It certainly does not help with the development of either women or children to have to live with this.

With these few words and with these few questions, I respectfully request the Minister to address some of the issues in his winding-up and I again express my congratulations to Sen. Daly for having raised this Motion so that we can have an idea about what is going on at WASA, the renegotiation of the contract and in what way this is going to be done.

Thank you, Mr. President.

2.50 p.m.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, when it became clear that the Government was going to honour the contract with Severn Trent, I began to wonder whether there would be any point in debating Sen. Daly's motion. As I thought about it I came up with three clusters of questions. The first had to do with whether the debate would serve in any way to bring about a repudiation of the contract, or failing that, would it be able to put the Government in a position to require an alteration of the terms?

Secondly, I wondered if the debate would help us to enunciate principles and guidelines for future transactions between the Government and investing groups.

Thirdly, I began to reflect on the role, or more precisely, the diminution of the role of Parliament. Could the absurd spectacle of a debate taking place in Parliament after crucial decisions have been made and acted upon—could this charade, nevertheless, serve a useful purpose? Could it highlight the need for a restoration of the role of Parliament as a place where the nation's business and the people's interest are discussed by all the people's representatives before decisions are taken? In short, could the debate on this Motion help to make our democracy more democratic?

I want to look at each of these main concerns in turn. I would like to start with Sen. Daly's insistence that Parliament is the place where there ought to be disclosure of the terms of all contracts negotiated by government on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I agree with this. It is a reasonable and timely proposal but I would go further. The Government does not own the assets of the country; it is we the people, our children and our children's children who are the owners.

I believe it is Parliament consisting of Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate who serve in the two places, that should decide whether a contract should be entered into and on what terms. Parliament is not there just to receive disclosures about matters which have been decided elsewhere. Parliament is there to decide, as the mind of the national community, what will be done and what will not be done. The decision ought to be arrived at after full discussion in Parliament. All those who take part in the debate should feel that they are taking part in a consultative process undertaken in the interest of the nation. The fruit of that discussion should be a newly drafted proposal of a bill that the whole government consulting with one another has produced.

I am envisaging government as a proposer and conductor of national discussions, not as a decider in Cabinet before matters come to Parliament. To the

Government would go the credit for having introduced the business and conducted a free discussion and for incorporating all that is valuable in the modified proposal regardless of which side of the House the contribution came from. I am dreaming. I am trying to think of an ideal parliament.

The role of the press is very crucial in this kind of parliament. The publication of a parliamentary page containing accounts of what everybody said in the order in which these things were said should be put down there for the public to read, not included at the whim of the reporter because he understands it, or not left out because he does not understand it, or because he does not like your head or your politics. The parliamentary page should be an accurate record or minute of everything that has been said in Parliament so that the public can see how their business is being conducted. Reporters may be free to highlight Members and speeches they are impressed by in other pages. If our Parliament is going to work it has to work as an open discussion where all the Members can speak and believe that what they say can be used. They must also speak with confidence that what they are saying on behalf of the people would be made available to the people.

There is a very practical reason for my saying this. It has to do with a feeling that we can still repudiate this contract if it needs to be repudiated and if the Government thinks that this contract is foul. Not only are the circumstances shameful but the terms are also foul. If the Government feels that, I urge the Minister to trust that the people of Trinidad and Tobago would support it.

So far is the ideal situation I have outlined from the reality that Sen. Daly is driven to be willing to settle for disclosure. Government is not God. It is not for government to dispose. Government proposes. Parliament disposes. Disclosure is worthless if it is not followed by meaningful discussion which I am afraid is the very thing that our inherited system and adversarial politics work to make impossible.

I agree that we need to have an affirmation clause, but again, I consider this a compromise. It is a concession to the adversarial system and a confession of the breakdown of any sensible notion of how Parliament should operate as a meeting of the minds of the whole community. A decision arrived at in the ideal parliament I have proposed will not need to be provided with an affirmation clause. As I have implied, however, I can be clear sighted, even cynical, and I can see that some way ought to be found to allow government to free itself of the consequences of the gullibility, or the corruption or honest and reasonable mistakes of the government that went before it.

I do not wish to dignify the Severn Trent/Wimpey contract by thinking of it as a contract negotiated with a government in the normal way. "Shameful" is the word Sen. Daly used and shameful indeed were the circumstances in which both designing parties with Tarquin's ravishing stride rushed upon the utility in the ambiguous space between governments. [Laughter] There was no parliament when this contract was signed. In the election season between parliaments there is a skeleton government which is only expected to be on call. That skeleton government cannot and should not make major decisions. Part of the shamefulness of the proceedings is that both parties treated Parliament with disregard and disrespect.

3.00 p.m.

This thing was done in contempt of Parliament, Mr. President.

I see the Severn Trent arrangement (and many of the confidential arrangements that have begun to disclose themselves as disastrous for the nation, if not for the nation's agents), as a logical outcome of an undemocratic practice that has transferred power from the people to Parliament, to the ruling party, to Cabinet and ultimately to the One in whose gift Cabinet appointments lie. The One and his cronies.

I am grateful for Sen. Daly's Motion, not the least because it provides an opportunity to record in *Hansard*, for posterity, that there were citizens who felt that the options created by the movements of the people in the 1930s and 1940s were subsequently closed off. There were options for structural change; there were options for racial harmony; there were options for a whole society intending to be fair and just to everyone. These options were closed off and our democracy and our practice of it through and in Parliament need to be checked up on.

I now turn to the details of a contract which none of us can see. Long after Sen. Daly's compelling and patriotic presentation last week, I kept feeling humiliated by the spectacle of a senior Senator of an independent republic appealing to a foreign investor to release its partner, and the country, from a confidentiality clause. It is so humiliating!

Mr. President, until we are given information, we have to speculate that this clause was proposed by the investor, since it is to his benefit. Did the investor threaten to withdraw if the Government did not agree to it? What gave a company whose loans we had to guarantee, a company with a highly suspect action in its own country, that kind of hold on the Government? I do not want to say that we

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shall never know, but at the moment we do not. I believe the thought must cross any thinking person's mind that maybe there was no need to bully the Government into signing the confidentiality clause, since one of the effects of that clause is to prevent the Parliament and the people from knowing the details of the transaction. It is not impossible that not one but both parties to the contract wanted that confidentiality clause. If there is nothing to hide, both parties to this perverse contract would do themselves much good by making the terms available to the public.

But here, I have to confess to being puzzled by the course that the present Government is following. When the present Government saw the details of the contract, did they feel that it is not as bad as they suggested during the campaign? If that was the case, the Government owed it to the nation and to Severn Trent/Wimpey to say that they were wrong; that the contract was acceptable. They did not say so. In fact, the clear implication is that they do not like how and when the contract was made and they do not like its provisions. From the improvements which the Government is trying to negotiate—and I hope that these improvements are not going to be built in as additions—it seems that the original contract is very defective indeed.

Mr. President, there is a little anecdote I have to tell. Last Christmas, my daughter twisted her ankle. It became swollen, blue and painful and, as it was Sunday, I took her to a private hospital, where an itemized bill was presented, including the following terms:

- (1) Getting to see the specialist;
- (2) Being attended by the specialist;
- (3) Putting on of temporary cast by specialist;
- (4) Cost of X-rays;
- (5) Cost of medical supplies provided by hospital;
- (6) Rental of room in hospital;

The charges were repeated on a second visit when a permanent cast was put on and an additional item appeared:

- (7) Removal of temporary cast;

I want to know whether the management fee of US \$9 million is a fee for getting to see the specialists, and whether all other costs are to be itemized over

and above the management fee. I have not seen the contract, so I do not know. I want to know how people can estimate without making a thorough survey and coming up with a complete plan for maintenance, consolidation, expansion and innovation.

At this point, I can safely cut out a little part of my speech. I want to say that I am leaving out my description of the piracy inherent in this contract because it coincides substantially with what Sen. Teelucksingh has so eloquently and solidly documented. This contract—if I may use the speech of the home—is “thiefry”. Mr. President, they stopped me from writing in the newspaper “dry so”, so you do not have to worry that I will let it out if you tell me. Do you know what Severn Trent is going to do for the \$9 million? Do you know if water will cost more? Do you know if there will be a law against building a cistern or collecting rain water in a barrel? Do you know if there will be a law against digging a well in one’s yard? Will Severn Trent/Wimpey provide safe drinking water?

Sir Shridath Ramphal, Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, on page 51 of his book, *Our Country, the Planet*, says, in connection with water:

“Dirty water has become the world’s most dangerous killer. At least twenty-five thousand people die every day from their use of it, nearly four thousand in India alone.

(I hope it kills Shane Warne).

3.10 p.m.

“Diarrhea alone kills at least 4.6 million young children each year. About 200 million people are victims of schistosomiasis (bilharzia), caused by contaminated water on the skin. Five hundred million people have trachoma, one of the main causes of blindness, because of dirty water. About half of the people living in developing countries, some two billion members of the human species, do not have safe drinking water.”

Is Severn Trent going to give us safe drinking water? If that is so, I will pay the \$9 million dollars.

The judges of our national calypso competition awarded first prize to a calypsonian who sang a calypso, one half of which urged people to vote racially, the other unnoticed half of which being a vicious personal attack on the Prime Minister, to the effect, that once one is accused of something, that is it; people have to believe you have done that thing and you will continue to do that thing. Mr. President, I feel that this gives me licence.

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How can a company that has been accused and convicted in its own country of providing dirty water, get a contract for managing our water supply? Do you think they have a subsidiary company? Are they going to say, we are not supplying drinking water one could buy bottled water? As far as I could work out the Government cannot repudiate the contract, partly because it is legal and it will incur unbearable costs for any breach and secondly, because they think that their name would be mud in the international community and among potential investors.

I want to join Sen. Daly in urging the Government to take notice of the fact that Trinidad and Tobago does have a reputation for political stability; for honouring financial arrangements; for being a good place to invest and live the good life, and for being a baby whose candy can be taken. “Somebody letting the cocaine pass,” and “I, I, I going to Panama”, all of that is true but we have a good investment climate, and foreign investors still want to come here and be happy ever after.

I want to encourage the Minister to believe—considering the information we have about the circumstances under which this contract was signed, hearing about the confidentiality clause—I want to encourage the Minister to believe that nobody in the international community would think badly of us for seeking to overturn this contract. I also want to support Sen. Daly’s assertion that there is public support for a review of the contract in the country. I want to go further and hazard, that there will be public support for a repudiation of the contract on the grounds of the circumstances of the signing alone. This support would become a reservoir of irresistible power and freedom if the Government could show to the world that the contract is exploitative and arrogant.

Mr. President, I think, I, very wisely, in my opening speculations chose not to wonder aloud whether, overcoming his scruples over important subjects being introduced in unlikely bills and motions, Sen. Kenny would seize the opportunity to ask, what is the relation between a water distribution policy and a water policy. Can a management contract relating to water distribution be worked out without an input from those able to explain environmental concerns about pollution of sea, rivers, lakes, ponds and ground water? I quote again from the book by Sir. Shridath Ramphal where he talks about surface water:

“...surface waters are being polluted everywhere by a poisoned broth of human, industrial, and agricultural waste and today’s polluted surface water is often tomorrow’s contaminated ground water. Every year in North America, the excessive use of phosphates for green lawns leads with rapid runoff, to phosphate contamination of groundwater. In 1990, several Ontario rural

townships actually closed wells supplying water to their communities because of the seepage of industrial waste.”

I would like to know if the Severn Trent management contract derives any of its performance targets from such considerations.

Once more, farming accounts for 70 per cent of global water use. Can one have any confidence that the Severn Trent/Wimpey management contract has taken the needs of the country's farmers into account? Can we have any such confidence when we hear that they are now being pressed to include dry season management among their performance target?

On March 23, 1903, at 1.30 p.m. a crowd of about 5,000 Trinidadians forced their way into the Red House to interrupt the second reading of a Bill entitled the Port of Spain Water Ordinance, 1903. They advanced on the Legislative Chamber, hurling stones. The Governor and various officials fled to another part of the building whence they summoned mounted police, the Red House police reserve, men from the St. James Barracks, sailors from the *HMS Rocket* and *HMS Pallas* to help disperse the crowd. This is no joke, Mr. President. Water is no joke! By the time the affray was over, 200 shots had been fired into the crowd; 16 people had been killed and 44 treated in the hospital; the Red House had been destroyed by fire and many of the records stored there were destroyed by fire. Mr. President, water is trouble! People get very hot about water! The Government can make people get hot about water!

The Water Riots of 1903 were the culmination of a quarter century of radical opposition to Crown Colony Government in general, dissatisfaction with the lack of coherent and acceptable water policy, hostility to the management of water distribution by foreigners and objections to the corruption and to the authoritarian and non-consultative practices by the Crown Colony's Department of public works, especially its water policy.

According to Alvin Magid in a book entitled *Urban Nationalism* the department was always a target for protest and its foreign-born director, Mr. Walsh Wrightson on whom we ride very frequently, had come to symbolize a Government indifferent to human needs. I hope you will indulge me, Mr. President, while I read a few more sentences from what Alvin Magid has to say.

“Popular discontent was fuelled by evidence of corruption and venality among officials in the department of public works. The department had been periodically scandalized by revelations of bribery and sharp practices in the letting of contracts. In the 1890s, the generally low esteem in which it was held by the public was reinforced by criticisms directed specifically at its foreign-

born director, Walsh Wrightson. He was assailed for receiving a lucrative salary when local-born officials in the Crown Colony Government were being denied salary increases, and for taking leave with pay to serve briefly in neighbouring Venezuela as a private consultant on harbour engineering. Public anger escalated when it was disclosed that Wrightson had hired an assistant to oversee the Port of Spain harbour works during his absence from the Colony.” So, Mr. President, “we moving to the right and we moving to the left, we going South and we going North” but we are still right here. Nothing has changed.

3.20 p.m.

The radical groups operating in the late 19th Century—I think it is interesting to talk about them because this is a missing breed, a lost breed and I wish we could have a few more like them—included the Trinidad Workingmen. Association This and was founded in 1897 was made up of mostly black creole artisans, labourers and some immigrants from other islands. The No Surrender Party was formed in 1898, and its earliest leaders included a Spanish Creole, an English Creole and a black barrister.

The Ratepayers' Association was formed in 1901 and was supported by several radical newspapers, especially one called the *Mirror* launched in 1898 by an Englishman suitably named Mole, who had been living in Trinidad since 1886. It was the Ratepayers' Association and the *Mirror* that mobilized the mass protests that led to the events of March 23, 1903.

The Ratepayers' Association became the intense focus for nationalism when it was joined in 1902 by Emanuel Lazare, a radical black solicitor who had been a member of the Trinidad Pan African Association, formed in 1901, which was itself a branch of the African Association established in London, years before, by several blacks including a Trinidadian barrister, H. Sylvester Williams. This radicalism brought into play in public life, the feelings, thoughts and actions of the people. When I said that the movements of the people in the 1930's had been betrayed, I should have said the movements of the people begun since the latter half of the 19th Century have been betrayed.

It is interesting to look at the immediate flow of events surrounding the riot on March 23. The reason I am going into this is because when I lie down in my hammock and think about it, I feel that we should have some water riots. *[Laughter]* It is interesting to look at the immediate flow of events surrounding the riot of March 23, 1903. The Crown Colony officials were attempting to rush

through a legislative programme without consulting local pressure groups, and there was a national response to there indecent haste and secrecy. A national response took place. These nationalists felt that what was going on was another denial of participation and another attack on the possibility of autonomy.

In September, 1902, the government disclosed its new water policy—there was going to be a comprehensive ordinance superseding nearly a dozen statutes that were already in effect—and there were going to be conservation measures based upon a system of water meters that had been brought up since 1874.

On October 17, 1902 the Ratepayers' Association held a mass meeting of such vehemence that the Governor had to back down. The Consolidated Water ordinance was withdrawn but a new bill which tried to achieve the same thing came back in 1903. It had its first reading on February 23, it was to be published in the *Gazette* on March 5; and it was going to have its second reading on March 16. The Ratepayers' Association was not accepting that.

On March 5 the visitors' gallery was packed with people roused by the Ratepayers' Association and they prevented Mr. Vincent Browne from describing the policy. This forced an adjournment of the House to March 23. The Government thereupon said, "Okay we are coming back on March 23, but from now on anybody who is coming to Parliament has to have tickets". The Ratepayers' Association held another mass meeting on March 21 and they got the support of the *Port of Spain Gazette*, which was very conservative, and the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce, which was not what one expected of the Chamber of Commerce, but they were supportive.

So it was that 5,000 people gathered in Brunswick Square, now called Woodford Square, on that fateful day of March 23 when a chain of events started and culminated in the burning of the Red House, as I have already described. The moral of this little tale as I have said before, is that "water is life and people will get very hot about water.

Sen. Daly's Motion with respect to the signing of this contract asserts the arrangements were highly suspicious and very shameful and painful. If the Government feels that the Severn Trent contract itself is acceptable let them say so now and let me not waste my time and energy. If the position is, that they think the contract is unacceptable but there is a gun pointing at their heads, then they should say so. But in the latter case the population needs to know what are the details of the contract. Mr. President, I can tell the Minister that confidential documents have been leaked before, and it would not surprise anybody if anything connected with WASA leaked. *[Laughter]*

What I am saying to the Minister is that the Government should trust the people of Trinidad and Tobago to do the right thing if the Severn Trent contract is unacceptable. There were the Water Riots in 1903. We marched for Chaguaramas, we can march for WASA. If the Government thinks that the contract is unsatisfactory they should repudiate it. They should set up a commission of enquiry to see who sold the country down the river and they would know that they would have the backing of the whole population and the international community. I, for one am prepared to take part in any campaign the Government may wish to mount, to mobilize the national community, to stand up for the country and its water supply if they believe that the Severn Trent contract needs to be overturned.

Mr. President, I thank you.

3.30 p.m.

Sen. Selwyn John: Mr. President, I must use the words of one of my colleagues in the Senate, "I am just a poor labour leader speaking as a Government Senator on a matter that is very, very important". So important that I am surprised at some of the speeches and pronouncements, and why were some of these things not said before. Of course, one may say that it was only on the appointment of a Senator and the swearing in on November 27, 1995 that one of the Senators might have had an opportunity to file a motion on the subject.

However, one would know the fight and the objections that had been raised by the several trade unions and the labour movement on the whole approach of the PNM government to the question of seeking to get foreign management to come into this country to begin a recolonization of the country, particularly where the institutions and the utilities were concerned. We had been told time and again, that the structural adjustments and otherwise have created a situation that we were powerless in negotiations and many things had to be done. Later on, I will point out that some of these things were deceits, outright untruths and a whole attempt to fool a country and the people into believing that certain things had to be done and if not done, we would suffer immensely.

Mr. President, Severn Trent/Wimpey, WASA, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, have been the subject of nationwide debate, particularly since parties entered into an agreement just prior to an election and I must agree with several Members of the Senate, during a period when there was no Parliament. There was no opportunity to even file a question. No information was given to anyone as to what the agreement was, and what it would have been and I say so as one who had

to seek the interest of the workers at WASA. I was unable to get any questions answered to the more fundamental issue—how does this affect the workers employed with WASA, could you give us some information? Surprisingly you would find everyone "breaksin" and shifting from giving answers. The haste and secrecy of this signing made the PNM Government look like a wounded and desperate organization. People who were entrusted to lead and govern a nation and take decisions, for, and on behalf of the people, but apparently their whole thrust in this was to take decisions for themselves, to benefit themselves. This contract would seem—and the part about this is that the Opposition Members in this Senate may hardly be able to assist us in finding out what it was all about and why it was done. This Government came into power on November 6, 1995 and was greeted with a contract entered into by the PNM Government with a foreign concern, with questions to be answered which up to now, we cannot get answered.

Since the PNM government under the Member for San Fernando East came into power, they had a concerted and deliberate policy to run down WASA and probably a plan to make the organization look bad, because they had their intentions from then. They reduced the budget at WASA and required the entity to operate on the basis of becoming self-sufficient, yet the resources to achieve that were not available. Their whole operation depended on financing from collection of rates for water—and I say water because WASA undertakes a major operation in sewer for which it collects little or no rates because that Government had not decided to fix or allow rates for the disposal of sewer. So that a major contributor to WASA's income was not available because the authority was not able to collect rates. The Government required WASA to become self-sufficient and that, to us in the labour movement—and the president of the largest union in WASA realized that the Government had a deliberate policy in attempting to shift the management of WASA from the local people who were in charge and attempt to privatize. That is the common word we use—privatize, whether you are bringing foreign or local management, but that the interest had shifted to somewhere else.

Soon after the 1991 term began, the Minister of Public Utilities, the late Morris Marshall, met with the unions that represented the workers at WASA and indicated to them that there was to be a policy-shift and that the Government was required by the Inter-American Development Bank, which had agreed to a loan to the Government for the upgrading of the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery, that in order for them to draw down on that loan, the Government was required to implement certain conditionalities that were laid down by the World Bank with respect to WASA. Some of the conditionalities, surprisingly, were dismantling of the negative

list, certain questions of trade liberalization and more so, a reduction in the workers that were employed by WASA.

He attempted to justify the decision to retrench the workers and said to us that they needed the money for carrying out the upgrading of the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery, so we understood what he meant by that. With all the protests and marches that the union could have carried on, WASA went on to reduce the employment of workers, and in the case of the daily-paid labour force, just over 2,000 persons were separated and most of them had to go by voluntary redundancy. Added to that, the government began the first change in the management of WASA by removing the executive director and appointing a new one.

3.40 p.m.

However, Mr. President, I was in a position to test whether the information from the Minister was correct. I attended a symposium mounted by the IDB in Washington. They invited the leaders of major trade unions in Latin America and the Caribbean. When the time came for questions, I raised the question of the conditionalities laid down by the multilateral lending agencies, particularly the IDB and the instruction to the Trinidad and Tobago government to fire people at WASA because of a loan they had approved and before drawing down they required Government to carry out these conditionalities fixed by the World Bank, another organization, in the Water and Sewerage Authority. This created a havoc at that meeting because most, if not all, countries' union leaders that were there had the same experience and were complaining of the same thing. The President of the IDB took the rostrum and denied that the IDB ever had any such discussion or made any such request to the Trinidad and Tobago government.

He went further than that. To satisfy me and my queries and the noise I was making there, the President organized a meeting with the officers at the Trinidad and Tobago desk at the IDB. He took me to the Capital Hilton for a half day and, to make me feel more comfortable, the former Governor of the Trinidad and Tobago Central Bank, Dr. Uric Bobb, who was then employed by the IDB, joined the meeting.

I was satisfied after going through the exercise, that the IDB had made no such request. So that the whole operation of the PNM government had been to deceive people, fool the Trade Union Movement and create havoc in this country by putting people out of employment on the basis that they were required to do so by

authorities which they claim they could not resist because they needed the help there.

It appeared to us in the Trade Union Movement at that time that whatever the intention of the Government, in the case of WASA, we were sure that they had plans either to bring in foreign people we knew that something was being done to dismantle WASA. They brought in private sector management. The head of that grouping which was brought in was Mr. Emile Charles, who at that time served as a consultant to a firm working with WASA and people from the Central Bank, people from the public and private sectors.

We referred to them as the “Dream Team” to operate WASA. They were told that they would be given \$35 million to begin operation but they had instructions that they had to make WASA self-sufficient within a period of three years. That period came and went and the sum of \$35 million was not given to carry out any operation. We understood from being told by the then management, Mr. Charles and his people, that he had to go to a few institutions such as T&TEC, National Petroleum and Petrotrin to ask for advances on their bills in order for WASA to operate.

We were saying at the time that it appeared that the Government needed to find an excuse to execute whatever plans they had and this was one of them because for the entire period of the three years that that team was there, to us, all they did was defend action taken in court against WASA for failure to pay bills and ran every Monday morning to provide payment to firms and people that levied on WASA. To say that they were able to carry out the management, improve the water supply or try to upgrade the facilities at WASA, we had doubts; we had seen nothing of that sort being achieved by them.

Moreso, workers then had to work in poor conditions which one would look at—especially in a facility such as WASA, an essential service; it prevents one from taking industrial action in order to achieve any benefits that are due to one and, sometimes, we had to wonder if that could continue and how long workers could keep their patience.

Mr. President, few persons would understand what workers in WASA had to undergo during the period in which the employer would not provide any sort of material but ask them to get out there and stop major leaks that occurred. Workers had to find material that they could have used to fix leaks. So that when the public complained that the WASA crew came and repaired a leak one day but it was again leaking the next day, that was a fact because sometimes the old tube from a motor

car tyre which they used could not seal or bind the leaks. *[Laughter]* This is a serious matter. Here is an entity asking for the resources in order to keep it going and one is doing everything as the management not to allow this utility to perform.

3.50 p.m.

You know it is a different story to sit here, or to carry out a function as a trade union leader, and in the Parliament you hear people criticizing the workers as not performing when, in fact, workers are ready and willing to perform.

Mr. President, I could give you a story on this. If some of the functions carried out by the workers in WASA have to be done by the book, the time and cost to perform certain jobs would be lengthy and exorbitant. If there is a major leak—and I have seen this myself—and the backhoe goes out there and digs around it, and there is a valve to be locked off down there, to wait for that water to settle sometimes takes more than 48 hours. Those WASA workers would dive down there, all wet, lock it off and within a short space of time would begin correcting the problems that they came there to see. Otherwise, sometimes it may be a week before the water subsides, if one works by the book—by which time the public suffers by not being able to use an important commodity like water.

There was another aspect to this whole business of bringing in foreign management. As soon as Government's intention was made known, there was a clique of WASA engineers who held discussions, or were approached, by outside elements and they began pressuring workers to support the removal of the management at WASA to bring in private people to manage it. Some of them began preparing contracts for workers to work with them, as they saw themselves benefiting from this whole change as they would be the *jefe civil* in carrying out operations at WASA and big money would flow; and the poor union members had to fight. Over 2000 daily paid workers saw this as their future and took voluntary separation to find themselves in place to work with the new entity whenever they came in. The new entity is in, and nobody wants to see them now.

Most of the engineers involved in WASA began ridiculing the management of the Authority, sabotaging them, doing everything that was necessary to show them in a bad light; and the Minister of Public Utilities at the time was undermining the executive management of WASA, and going directly to engineers giving instructions. All because of this new trend that they saw the foreigners as the people that would make the money and anything could have been done—and maybe the then Prime Minister was correct at one time—you could get up a Monday morning and not find any water in the taps. But, thank God, we had

workers with a discipline that told people that there was a WASA culture and their life was that they worked here and this utility must survive.

When there was difficulty in getting funds to run the institution, workers volunteered their time and went out to people who were not paying their bills to collect money in order for WASA to survive and pay its bills. We are in March, 1996 and the records would show that in March, 1995 workers were able to collect sufficient funds that would pay the bills, wages and salaries and assist in keeping it going. They volunteered their time to do it. No pay. All because they were interested in having this utility survive the onslaught that had begun. The point about it is, suddenly one was hearing that the locally trained professional workers could not compare with the foreign professionals. I will speak on this a little later, Mr. President.

All during that time, the trade unions continued not only talking, but providing representation in the form of documentation, and I remember WASA producing a development plan, and the union was able to submit an alternative plan. The Government appointed a board which never met with the trade unions to discuss any policy, so that when our alternative plan, which embraced things like not only how we felt the utility should operate on a professional basis, but moreso the question of funding WASA, Government did not want to provide the funding. We thought there was a way to fund WASA by setting up a major maintenance garage for vehicles and offer services to other government departments and make some money from it. The response we had to that was, "Close down the garage and rent vehicles."

I heard someone raise the question of rental of vehicles, but it was noted that in WASA new vehicles suddenly started to appear on the basis of a rental arrangement with the big garages, and the authority began to downgrade their own stock. The payment for these rentals would have shown that in one year the cost of the vehicle that they rented could have been liquidated. The cost to rent the vehicle covered the buying price of the vehicle within a period of one year.

More recently, Mr. President, a decision was taken to provide vehicles to the management and top functionaries at WASA. I understand that over 144 cars were rented—I do not know if that is the correct figure—even though the officers were paid travelling allowances to own and use their own vehicles. So they would park their vehicles, get travelling payments for them and use rented vehicles provided by WASA. Those were the kinds of things going on, approved apparently at the top,

so whom does one talk to about it? If we protested—marched, or made noise—nobody took us on.

What had happened was that WASA operated on the basis of collecting these rates which were fixed some time in 1935 and not changed. The first change was some time in 1993, I believe, and these were very low rates. WASA also had the problem that, by a decision of Government water was supplied free to certain places, all agricultural concerns, companies that had concessions under the Aid to Pioneer Industries—very big concerns in this country were receiving supplies from WASA and not paying. Also the schools and Government institutions.

If the trade unions submitted proposals for negotiations on collective bargaining, the trade unions were being told WASA did not have money and the Government is not providing any subsidies, but still the Authority had to supply all these places that the Government, by law, required them to do without getting paid. Moreover, the workers who were to carry out the operations and they did so although they were being told that the Authority had no money to consider granting them any increases, or otherwise.

4.00 p.m.

As I mentioned before all during this time sewer rates were not only fixed but the authority was in no way able to collect a rate for providing sewer services and there were many requests from private developers that were connecting to WASA's services and calling on WASA make repairs. At one time when a union officer, being the supervisor on a certain job, decided that before WASA responded to a call the customer's account number had to be given, he was told that he did not have to get the account number because this was a service of WASA and they had to repair it. If WASA refused to carry out the repairs the Minister would then order that WASA must go and do the repairs. Those private developers were not paying a rate and they were not legally connected to WASA, but WASA was compelled and instructed to go and carry out repairs and so forth.

The focus on the utility on the one side by the powers that be was that we had to do certain things. The public was being told that the utility was unable to operate and provide these services and the Government was not providing funds for its operations so the plants were being run down. The Beetham Sewer Pumping Station was constructed and eight major pumps were installed by the original contractors but only two were of a similar nature. So, if any of the eight had broken down, they had to wait for some time, take it out, repair it and put it back in because there was no spare of a similar nature.

The excuse had been that when some of these facilities were installed, they were geared to operate on 220 electrical volts, but when the electricity was installed this was done with 110 electrical volts, so one had to convert; and in converting it would trip or burn because of a low voltage situation. Even up to today I think that area is being operated on two working pumps. I understand a loan has been granted to WASA to replace these pumps. We are hoping that whenever these are replaced—I do not think Severn Trent/Wimpey would do it, or had been requested to do it but WASA has to do it—it would all be of a similar size, so that if one breaks down we could always use another one rather than have eight with only two of a similar nature and the rest varying in different aspects or configurations.

Also WASA has been having problems with leaks in the system. It is a fact that the surveys done showed that 50 per cent of the production capacity of WASA was lost by underground leaks, and at one time workers were being blamed. I do not know how the workers got involved in it, but from our investigations it was revealed that these particular mains had a lifespan of 15—25 years. However, those mains are in the ground now for 45—70 years and there is no question that they should have been replaced, but they continued to patch and in some cases they have reached the point where there is no other place to patch.

We were told recently that a \$65 million loan was made to WASA to replace some 100 kilometres of mains—I think they were replaced. The system has now reached a 20 per cent loss, so there has been an improvement. We, in the Santa Cruz area, got water every other day, but invariably we get water every day now. Where we did not get water for one or two weeks, we get water now.

Mr. President, the point is that these are the things that were required to keep WASA as a running entity and should have been managed by local people, but the then Prime Minister attempted to cause the country to panic by stating that because of bad management, or non-management of WASA one may get up a Monday morning and find that there is no water in the taps, so they had to take immediate action. That immediate action was an advertisement for foreign firms to bid for the management of WASA.

We, in the labour movement, have been critical of many things. Yes, we talk about issues, but with a free press in Trinidad they do not print these things, they are too free where some of these things are concerned.

Mr. President, there was an open tender that should have been visible and transparent. A team was appointed to evaluate those tenders, so a meeting was

hurriedly called on Gloria Saturday last year, at the house of the then chairman, where I think two, or three members of the board, and two other people, took a decision to recommend the award of the contract to a particular firm, and by the next Thursday this was approved at a Cabinet meeting. On the Wednesday evening before the Cabinet meeting we, the union and the chairman of the board, Mr. Martin, met for the first time, even though he was in office for one and a half years. We drew his attention to a reference in that day's newspaper to the selection of a foreign partner, and he told us that he was the chairman and nothing like that was possible without his knowing. On the next day Cabinet made the announcement.

So, as workers and workers' representatives, we would like to know how these things could happen. We have to work there and we do not know of any part of the arrangement as to how it would affect us or, if we would have jobs when a foreign partner is brought in. These things are supposed to be transparent.

4.10 p.m.

In fact, it is to the credit of certain people that we were able to meet every firm at the union's office that applied. At least, three of them expressed surprise saying that some countries where they operate a trade union could not exist where there is an important operation as the supply of water. One begins to wonder where are we are going, what we would be involved in if we are to award contracts and that firm does not deal with trade unions. What would happen? The trade unions have tried to have ongoing discussions with the Government to clear themselves and to be able to speak and address workers on these issues but they cannot get anywhere with it. No time for meetings!

Somehow, trade unions today, should be happy that there is a government that is led by a trade unionist. My presence as a Member of the Senate has been because of the Prime Minister of this country, Mr. Basdeo Panday, inviting the trade union movement, NATUC, and requesting them to name a labour leader so he could appoint a Senator so that at least the labour union would have a voice to make representation at this level.

I have to thank the Trade Union Movement and the Prime Minister because today, I can come here and talk about the Severn Trent deal and how it has impacted on the workers and the trade union movement.

Mr. President, I go back now to the professionals; the engineers and their readiness to downgrade and to criticise our locally trained professionals in this

country. The surprising part of all this has been, and I do not know—I understand that there is an association of local engineers. Not a word came from them. Nothing is said in the defence of the local people.

I want to put on record the fight of the trade union movement in this country for the furtherance and the acceptance of the local engineers and I want to say that soon after 1970, when it was observed that whenever any engineering project was conducted in this country, that only English firms were hired as consultants. Some of the trade unions approached the engineers and the Government in order that they might do something about it. We were able to mobilize the engineers; we got them together to form the first of a local engineering consultancy. We are part of it. We hold equity in it. It was divided equally. The trade unions took 25 per cent, the engineers 25 per cent, the Government 25 per cent and the last 25 per cent was left for the other employees of the firm.

I say it is to our credit today that that firm has recently celebrated twenty-five years of its existence. That firm was able to offer to all the engineers trained at UWI, their first in-house/on the job training and all these things. I want to refer to the formation of Trintoplan—

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

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. S. John: I shall conclude in a few minutes. I congratulate Trintoplan for doing it. I want to correct the motion that many people have that Trintoplan has been owned by a former government minister. He was employed by us. We gave him his first break, but thank God, the company survived all that and more.

Sen. Daly: Without intending any discourtesy, for this last 15 minutes, could the Senator help me as to the part of my Motion he is dealing with now?

Sen. S. John: We express our thanks to Trintoplan who made offers to these professionals. If WASA had accepted that there were local persons who received training—some of them are now employed by the World Bank as consultants, some of them hold very high positions in big firms abroad and that this notion that local people cannot manage, especially by the PNM regime we would want them to think again. We feel that we still have within this country people who are capable, people who could have managed WASA.

Mr. President, the original advertisement and request for proposals specified—a world scale operator with international experience in similar—large size undertaking. The labour movement was never satisfied. I think Sen. Ramchand mentioned that Severn Trent had no experience on a world-wide basis. In fact, Trinidad and Tobago seems to be the starting off point for them to get this experience.

We are worried because most, if not all the operations are in association with or partners of other people. There has been much difficulty with their industrial relations approach in dealing with trade unions and this concerns us. Here it is you enter into an arrangement with a foreign firm for management, you say that you did not have the funds to do it yourself, you had to bring in foreigners so that they would bring funds with them; but they brought nothing with them. They raised funds on the local market and they got the Government to guarantee that for them. All they would be doing here is “expatriating” the profits they make without any contribution to the economy.

I feel, and I still say that it has never been in our interest to have such a situation. It is not the first time. I have sat on the board of a finance development committee and all these firms here that are making mints of money; from the National Flour Mills to chicken and chips firms and whatever it is [*Interruption*] Let us say firms which are coming in to develop the economy have brought nothing. They raised funds from the local developing companie [*Crosstalk*] What would happen if the Trinidad and Tobago Government guarantees that loan and WASA has the same opportunity to acquire such a loan for their development, is that there would be no need to bring any foreign element to manage. All WASA needed were funds to upgrade its facilities, plant and machinery and it would have been able to provide the service that the country required.

I still hope that somehow the Government could find a way to dismantle that agreement. I understand the predicament of the Government; the legal and international problems they face in matters such as that.

4.20 p.m.

I have just returned from Guyana and I know what it is to go through that. Guyana has still not come out of it. The trade union movement would give support to any requests of the Government on matters like these.

We have been able to get information from the major trade union that deals with Severn Trent in England. We have been warned that we have to be careful in

looking at the operations of how it is managed. If they are required to show a surplus in the books and they cannot generate this on the collection of rates, obviously they would find a way to reduce their expenses. In England they have been able to reduce employment in order to make the balance sheet in the books look good.

I am the leader of the major union in WASA and also a Government Senator. I do not think we can allow any foreign company to come here to take advantage of all the concessions that have been given to them and emasculate the working force that they met here. Have they indicated or cleared the question of wanting to retrench workers who are presently employed? This is an important question and somehow the previous Minister of Public Utilities and the former Prime Minister did not say a word about it.

Sen. N. Mohammed: What about the present Minister?

Sen. S. John: We will see about that. Remember that I am in the Senate. [*Mr. President stands.*] Remember on February 14, 1994, my union walked around this Parliament. Sorry, Mr. President. Let me thank you for the opportunity to speak on this matter. As I said we condemn the action.

Mr. President: Sen. John, when I rise would you please take your seat. You are digressing overly. I ask you to focus on the subject at hand.

Sen. S. John: Thank you, Mr. President. I would not fall for the taunting by the Opposition Members. I would speak on the matter at hand.

We are very concerned about this part of that contract where a reduction of employment at WASA has been indicated. We are sure that the present state of WASA cannot afford any more workers to be sent home. If a service has to be maintained one hopes that the workers would be motivated by at least making them feel comfortable with their security of employment. It is not a good thing for the PNM government to have entered into such a deal without getting the guarantee that workers would continue to work in the entity for the rest of their working life if they so desire.

We understand that the past government had asked for a three year period during which no one would have been sent home. We feel this was wrong and there was deceit in the whole approach by the then government. Its failure to inform the trade unions of the contract it signed and the relation with the industrial scenario at WASA has been one that we would not forget in a lifetime. Whenever we see these things occurring we intend to establish ourselves and stop them.

WASA Policy
[SEN. S. JOHN]

Tuesday, March 5, 1996

Mr. President, I apologize for not observing the Chair when you stood a while ago.

Thank you.

Motion made and question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [Hon. B. Kuei Tung]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.28 p.m.