

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, October 14, 1997

SENATE

Tuesday, October 14, 1997

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, leave of absence from today's sitting has been granted to Sen. Danny Montano. Sen. Vimala Tota-Maharaj has also been granted leave of absence during the period October 11—19, 1997 as she is out of the country.

Finally, as I was not here last week, I wish to congratulate Sen. Agnes Williams, and welcome her to the Senate.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following communication from His Excellency The President:

“Arthur N. R. Robinson
President.

TO: DR. JOHN BHARATH

WHEREAS Senator Vimala Tota-Maharaj is incapable of performing her functions as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, JOHN BHARATH, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 14th October, 1997 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Vimala Tota-Maharaj.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President
of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the
Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 13th
day of October, 1997.

Oath of Allegiance

Tuesday, October 14, 1997

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. John Bharath took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

VENTURE CAPITAL (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Venture Capital Act, 1994, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [Hon. W. Mark].

Question put and agreed to.

LIMITATION OF CERTAIN ACTIONS BILL

Bill to make provisions for the limitation of time for bringing certain actions, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [Hon. W. Mark].

Question put and agreed to.

QUARRY SUPERSTARS SPORTS AND CULTURAL CLUB (INCN.) BILL

Bill for the incorporation of the Quarry Superstars Sports and Cultural Club and matters incidental thereto, brought from the House of Representatives [*Sen. Nizam Baksh*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [Hon. W. Mark].

Question put and agreed to.

PAPERS LAID

1. The Nineteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman for the period January 1, 1996 to December 31, 1996. [*The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Project Development Services for the year ended December 31, 1988 [*Hon. W. Mark*].

Papers Laid

Tuesday, October 14, 1997

3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Project Development Services for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Hon. W. Mark*].

**SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS
(PRESENTATION)**

Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (Inc'n.) (Amdt.) Bill

Sen. Elizabeth Mannette: Mr. Vice-President, I beg to present the report of the Special Select Committee of the Senate appointed to consider and report on a private Bill to amend the Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (Inc'n.) Act, No. 26 of 1965.

Caribbean Union College (Inc'n.) Bill

Sen. Carol Cuffy-Dowlat: Mr. Vice-President, I beg to present the report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on a private Bill for the incorporation of the Caribbean Union College and for matters incidental thereto.

**Catholic Religious Education Development
Institute (Inc'n.) Bill**

Sen. Andrew Gabriel: Mr. Vice-President, I beg to present the following report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on a private Bill for the incorporation of the Catholic Religious Education Development Institute and for matters incidental thereto.

1.40: p.m.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Primary Schools
(Repair Works)**

24. **Sen. Penelope Beckles** asked the hon. Minister of Education:
 - (a) Could the hon. Minister state when his Ministry will undertake construction and/or repair works on the following primary schools:
 - (i) Heights of Aripo R. C. School;
 - (ii) Brasso Seco R. C. School.

- (b) Could the Minister also indicate:
- (i) The nature of the construction and/or repairs and also when such works will commence?
 - (ii) The estimated cost?
 - (iii) The anticipated date of completion?

The Minister of Education (Dr. The Hon. Adesh Nanan): Mr. President, the Member of Parliament for Arima, Dr. The Hon. Rupert Griffith, wrote to the Minister of Education, requesting a meeting with the concerned parents of the Aripo R.C. Primary School. This meeting took place on Tuesday, August 5, 1997 where a Member of Parliament was present and the plans for the school were outlined.

The Aripo R.C. Primary School was constructed in 1959. It was deemed unsafe for occupation by the County Medical Officer of Health in 1991. Since 1992 classes have been held at the homes of villagers. Plans for a new building were completed in June 1992. However, the proposed start of construction could not be delivered because the bridges leading to the village deteriorated to the extent that they could not accommodate heavy vehicular traffic. The Government, realizing the importance of our resource base, has decided to undertake the construction of the school and utilize lighter construction vehicles in the process. This would provide the students with a favourable environment for learning after years of failure by the previous administration to do as outlined in the history given above.

The construction of a new school to accommodate 240 students is scheduled to begin in November 1997 and to be completed in June 1998 at an estimated cost of \$3.37 million. The Government is building a modern primary school as the plans reflect. The building would include:

- A Principal's Office
- A Library and Information Centre
- Teachers' Resource Room
- Science and Technology Room
- Art and Craft Room.

Following discussions with the Member of Parliament for Arima, Dr. The Hon. Rupert Griffith, the alternatives of refurbishing the existing school at Brasso Seco were examined against the current demographic needs. The recommendation has

been made for the reconstruction of the existing school. This recommendation was based on the following:

- (1) the need to upgrade the existing facilities by providing specialist rooms and a library;
- (2) electrification of the school;
- (3) the age of the existing school which was constructed in 1937;
- (4) the evidence of a land slippage problem.

Provision has been made for the inclusion of this school in the Draft Estimates of the 1998 Development Programme. The estimated cost of construction is \$3.7 million.

The Government in its thrust to provide more primary school places is building the following:

Aripo R.C. Primary School. This is one of five replacement primary schools scheduled for start-up of construction in 1997.

Longdenville Government Primary School

Edinburgh Government Primary School

Carapichaima R. C. Primary School

Gran Couva R.C. Primary School.

Six new primary schools are also scheduled for construction this year. These are:

Maloney East Government Primary School

Valencia Government Primary School

Beetham Estate Government Primary School

Edinburgh Government Primary School

Malabar South Government Primary School

Bamboo Grove Settlement Government Primary School.

The Guayaguare R.C. School is almost finished. The Arima Boys' Government School was recently opened by the Hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday. The River Estate/Patna Primary School is to be opened tomorrow. This year 1997, would see the completion of the Reform Presbyterian Primary School and the

beginning of construction of the St. Mary's Children's Home at Tacarigua, after years of empty promises and small talk by the previous administration. Coulda! Woulda! Shoulda! *[Laughter]*

The Government has expanded security services to encompass a total of 33 primary schools. In addition, contracted security services have been put in place at Arima Boys' Government School and River Estate/Patna Government Primary School.

In an effort to relieve the hardship to secondary school students, the Government introduced the following new routes in 1997:

Sangre Grande/Mayaro Composite

Rio Claro/Cowen Hamilton Secondary

Brasso Venado/Tabaquite Composite

Mayo/Gasparillo Composite

Brothers Road/Princes Town Junior Secondary

Borde Narve/Barrackpore Secondary

For primary school pupils, services were also provided on the Penal Rock Road/Clarke Road.

The Government has included in its Development and Vacation Repair Programme for 1997, 15 primary schools for fencing. *[Interruption]*

Sen. Beckles: On a point of order, Mr. President. Question No. 24 on the Order Paper refers to nothing that the Minister of Education has been speaking about for the last five minutes. Mr. President, can I ask you to rule on whether this is permissible.

Mr. President: Yes, Sen. Beckles has made a valid point. I think the Minister should confine himself to the question which is before the Senate.

Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. President, to date, 10 schools have been fenced and work continues on five others. *[Laughter]*

Sen. Beckles: Mr. President, can I probably ask if you could explain to the Minister exactly what is your ruling. Apparently, he does not understand.

Mr. President: Would the hon. Minister confine his answer to the question as posed.

Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. President, the arrangements that have been put forward are encompassing security and fencing arrangements for primary schools, including Aripo R.C. School and Patna/River Estate R.C. School. At the secondary level, five school compounds are targeted for fencing.

Work on arresting land slippage is currently being undertaken at primary and pre-secondary schools at the San Fernando Technical Institute.

May I end with reference to two particular schools: The Rio Claro Anglican Primary School—*[Interruption]*

Prof. Spence: Mr. President, it is most embarrassing to parliamentarians to have your ruling completely ignored in the Senate. The Rio Claro school has nothing to do with the Aripo R. C. School.

1.50 p.m.

Mr. President: Hon. Minister of Education, please confine your answer to the question as posed.

Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. President, the Aripo R.C. Primary School is being constructed at a cost of \$3.7 million. It is to begin in November 1997 and completed in June 1998.

Let us work together to continue the process of education reform, to build on our successes as we prepare our students for the learning century, the 21st Century.

Foreign Companies (Competition with)

25. Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt asked the Hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Under what conditions are foreign companies being allowed to come into Trinidad and Tobago in competition with the National Petroleum Marketing Company?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar): Mr. President, in light of Government's decision to consider the liberalization of the domestic retail petroleum products market, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries appointed a Petroleum Retail Committee to study and make proposals for the retail marketing of petroleum fuels in Trinidad and Tobago.

Subsequent to a review by the Energy Sub-committee, Cabinet accepted the recommendations of the committee in November 1996. The Minister has since appointed another committee, which is responsible for ensuring that the proper administrative and legal framework is established for the new market structure and for overseeing the implementation plan which is being executed by the National Petroleum Marketing Company.

The intent of Government is to liberalize the retail petroleum products marketing sector in three phases. In Phase I, which will run for two years, and which commenced on January 1, 1997, local marketers will be allowed to enter the market to compete with the National Petroleum Marketing Company. In Phase II, which will end in December 2001, additional marketers will be allowed entry, and in Phase III, which commences in January 2002, all price regulation will be removed. The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, however, will have the right to re-introduce regulation in the public's interest.

The rationale behind the phased approach is to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) To allow local private sector investors the opportunity to prepare for competition and complete liberalization, by gaining a head-start in the wholesale business through the formation of alliances and the rationalizing of privately-owned retail operations;
- (2) To allow NPMC the time to upgrade, rationalize and diversify its operations and to raise capital to fund its upgrading and expansion programme, through partial divestment to local individuals and groups, all in preparation for a competitive environment;
- (3) To enable upgrade of the distribution infrastructure to accommodate additional players;
- (4) To introduce competition sufficiently with local players, thereby improving efficiencies in all areas of the sector, and establishing benchmarks, including environmental, in preparation for potential transnational entrants into the market;
- (5) To smooth the transition from a monopolistic and regulated sector to a free market, by gradually introducing measures, including removal of subsidies, adjustments in the pricing structure and the enactment of appropriate legislation to monitor and control an open, competitive and fully deregulated market.

While the Government expects to achieve these objectives during Phases I and II, which extend over a period of 36 months, the period of adjustment for the local players, including NPMC, will take place over the first 24 months in Phase I. At that time, international companies would be allowed to apply for wholesale and retail licences in Phase II.

Selection of international marketers would be based on the following criteria:

- (1) An acceptable business plan including its willingness to operate in all areas of the country and its ability to provide upstream linkages;
- (2) The ability and willingness of the applicant to enhance product quality and customer service through state-of-the art technology and marketing;
- (3) A commitment to employ and train locals in its operations;
- (4) Acceptance of the wholesale margin and source of supply from the local refinery during the transitional period, before complete deregulation;
- (5) The ability and commitment of the applicant to comply with environmental regulations in its distribution and retailing operations.

Both international and local marketers will be required to submit a plan for rationalizing its operation in order to ensure that the network is balanced both in terms of numbers and locations. Construction plans must also be approved by the relevant ministries and organizations in accordance with the regulations.

**Piarco Airport Terminal
(Status of Construction)**

26. Sen. Martin Daly, S.C. asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

- (i) What is the current status of the construction of the National Airport Terminal at Piarco?
- (ii) Does the Government still intend to have such a terminal built?
- (iii) If the answer to (ii) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state what is the anticipated date of completion of the terminal?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. President, the current status of construction of the national airport terminal at Piarco is that the contract for construction packages I and II, clearing and grubbing, earthworks and drainage was awarded to Seereeram Bros. Ltd. on February 17, 1997 and is 95 per cent complete. Designs are also 95 per cent complete.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is actively pursuing the development of both Piarco and Crown Point airport development projects and discussions are at present underway with NIPDEC to ascertain the most feasible time-frame for the completion of the project. It is expected that the project is targeted for beneficial occupancy during 1999.

Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh: Mr. President, with the delays on the other adjustments since the special enquiry, what would be the final cost of the airport? Also, what would be the financial obligation to Berk Hillman consultants?

Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. President, I had the answers to all those questions, but taking note of your earlier ruling, I will entertain them on a written question.

Mr. President: That is a new question.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, today is not Private Members' Day, but I beg to move that the Senate now deal with Motion Nos. 2, 3 and 4 under "Private Business", before proceeding to deal with "Government Business".

Agreed to.

2.00 p.m.

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

(ADOPTION)

Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (Inc'n.) (Amdt.) Bill

Sen. Elizabeth Mannette: Mr. Vice-President, I beg to present the following report:

Report of the Special Select Committee of the Senate appointed to consider and report on a private Bill to amend the Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (Inc'n.) Act, No. 26 of 1965.

Mr. President, this corporation was incorporated on November 6, 1965 by an Act of Parliament and the corporation now desires the additional powers to commit it to enter into contracts of guarantee, indemnity with banks and other financial institutions in respect of loans and other money advances to the general executive, local assemblies, district conferences and any other organization of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies. Also, to execute mortgages, charges, pledges and other securities as further security in respect of such guarantees and indemnities.

The committee appointed to review this report met on Wednesday, August 27, 1997 and considered the information provided by the petitioners, as well as all the evidence by the chairman, secretary/treasurer, vice-chairman and the attorneys-at-law for the corporation and was satisfied that the petitioners—the Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies is a well-organized, vibrant and stable organization and that the proposed amendment in no way contravenes any of the provisions of its constitution, but rather strengthens the existing legislation.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Seconded by Sen. Dr. E. St. Cyr.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Caribbean Union College (Inc'n.) Bill

Sen. Carol Cuffy-Dowlat: Mr. Vice-President, I beg to present the following report:

Report of the Special Select Committee of the Senate appointed to consider and report on a private Bill for the incorporation of the Caribbean Union College and for matters incidental thereto.

Mr. President, the committee was appointed by the Senate on Thursday, August 7, 1997 to consider and report on a private Bill for the incorporation of the Caribbean Union College.

The following persons were appointed to serve on the committee: Mrs. Carol Cuffy-Dowlat, Chairperson; Mr. Nathaniel Moore, Member; Mrs. Cynthia Alfred, Member; and Dr. Eric St. Cyr, Member.

The committee was satisfied that the requirements of Standing Order 76 (3)(b)(i) and (ii) of the Senate were fulfilled and the public was given sufficient notice of the intended introduction of the Bill. The notices appeared in the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette* and the *Trinidad Guardian* on July 3, 10 and 17, 1997 and no objections were received.

A meeting was held on Wednesday, August 27, 1997 and evidence was taken from persons representing the promoters. During the course of its deliberations, the committee examined the organization's constitution, audited financial statements for the years 1991 to 1996; college board minutes from 1992 to 1996; a

strategic planning summary which was prepared in 1995; a list of the board of trustees and a list of the members of the administrative council and its duties.

The committee made a careful examination of the Preamble and clauses of the Bill, and having regard to all the evidence, it is satisfied that the facts and allegations presented in the Bill are true and correct. The committee wishes to report that it has completed its deliberations and has found sufficient proof in support for the incorporation of this organization. It therefore recommends that the Bill be accepted by the Senate subject to the amendments listed in the Appendix.

In clause (1), the first column: "Insert the word '(Incorporation)' immediately after the word 'College' in line 2."

In clause (2) delete the words 'the Club' and insert the words 'the College' in line 2."

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Seconded by Sen. C. Alfred.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Catholic Religious Education Development Institute (Inc'n.) Bill

Sen. Andrew Gabriel: Mr. President, I beg to present the report of the Special Select Committee appointed by the Senate to consider and report on a private Bill for the incorporation of the Catholic Religious Education Development Institute and for matters incidental thereto.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Seconded by Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

2.10 p.m.

**MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN CRIMINAL MATTERS BILL
[Second Day]**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [August 12, 1997]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence-Maharaj): Mr. President, may I say that when this debate was adjourned on the last occasion, I did indicate to hon. Senators that I would read their contributions because I was not here for the contributions. I wish to give the assurance to them that I have read their entire contributions and will try to respond to all the queries which have been raised in respect of this matter.

Before proceeding, I would like to express the gratitude of the Government for the support, in principle, of the measures which have been stated by Senators on the other side. Many of the questions asked were about clause 3 of the Bill in relation to the Attorney General being the central authority, and also to some extent, the question of clause 3(2), the Attorney General designating any person or authority as the central authority. That was related, also, to the definition of “Minister” which means, the Minister to whom the subject of mutual legal assistance in criminal matters is assigned.

Mr. President, in order for me to explain why these matters occurred in the Bill, it is important for us to put in perspective what this Bill is about, and for one to see that if the functions of the Bill have to be performed—if the Bill has to be implemented—whether the Attorney General’s ministry is the appropriate ministry for these matters. We must remember that what we are dealing with here is a bill which will be administering law and have legal considerations being considered. When one looks at the scheme of other legislation, one sees that the other countries have put the Attorney General as the minister, because that is the minister responsible in respect of legal principles, laws and in respect of the guardian of the Constitution. That is the whole concept.

It is unfortunate that many personalities came into play in this matter because one would have thought that in making a contribution on such an important matter, one would forget the individuals. I want to take it above those matters, because we are dealing with a serious matter which is a new concept being devised in order to fight international crime, in order to co-operate and fight crime. We

should approach it in that context and examine it and see whether what is stated in the Bill ought to be changed, and if it ought to be changed, how it should be changed. I should, however, mention that I took into consideration some of the criticisms, and although our measure, as drafted, did contain similar measures which occurred in other countries with similar pieces of legislation, I decided to try to accede to some of the requests made in order to make the Bill more palatable—at least those particular clauses—more acceptable.

Mr. President, this Bill is really the domestic legal framework for implementing an international, bilateral, or multilateral agreement which has been made with countries in relation to mutual legal assistance in respect of criminal matters. When one looks at the Bill, one sees that when the request is made, there are legal considerations. The central authority has to consider legal matters. It is made in respect of evidence to be taken from any person, information to be given, and search and seizure of assets. One sees also, undertakings have to be given. Considerations have to be made if requests have to be complied with. One sees quite clearly that it is a matter of legal considerations and the administration of law, and it is in that context, I think, that when one has to draft these measures, one has to consider which is the most appropriate ministry for this particular function.

The central authority under this Bill will be charged with the duty of administering the law and making administrative arrangements to give effect to the law. It is in that context that the countries which have gone this route have put the Attorney General as the central authority. Mr. President, in the Ministry of the Attorney General one has the Solicitor General's Department and the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. These are the two departments that will have to administer this Bill. In substance, that is how it will operate. Obviously, it is a new field. There might have to be additional staff and additional resources, but the fact of the matter is that it is this ministry that will have to implement this Bill.

What I want to do, is show how other countries have dealt with this. In Dominica, the Minister is the Minister assigned the responsibility for legal affairs. One knows that in Trinidad and Tobago that ministry has been split, and there are certain matters that the Ministry of Legal Affairs sees about, and there are certain matters that the Attorney General's ministry sees about. Under the Constitution, there is a role and function of the Attorney General. In Dominica, there is one minister, the Minister of Legal Affairs, and under section 4 of that Act, the minister may designate any person or authority as the central authority for Dominica. The same concept we have here is in Dominica. The minister can still designate any person or authority.

As a matter of fact, in the Harare Scheme when this concept was devised, the whole concept was that there should be ministerial responsibility in that if another country has to make a request, it must be from a government minister to a government minister, so that there will be accountability.

The other matter that was taken into consideration is that some of these matters are very sensitive and, therefore, if Government does not act, it will be important for the ministers to know what information has been transmitted. If one examines all the legislation dealing with mutual legal assistance, one will see that it is the minister who is the central authority.

2.20 p.m.

In Barbados, the central authority is the Attorney General. Section 3 of the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act 1992 of Barbados says:

"The Attorney General shall be the central authority."

Then, in subsection (2):

"The Attorney General may by order publish in the Gazette, designate any person or authority as the central authority for Barbados".

In South Africa they have a little different concept, the Minister of Justice. Section 28 of the South African legislation, the International Corporations in Criminal Matters Act, No. 75 of 1996, says:

"The minister may delegate to an official of the department of justice any function conferred on him by this Act except the power to make regulations."

What I have decided to put before this honourable Senate is a section patterning that subsection where:

"The Attorney General may delegate to an officer of the department of his ministry all or any of the functions under this Act."

Then it says:

"Nothing in this section shall be construed as delegating to the officer referred to in subsection (2) the power to make regulations under section 39."

In Australia, the central authority is the Attorney General. Under section 40 of the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act of 1987 it says:

"The Attorney General may delegate a person to act as his central authority. He may delegate to an officer of the Attorney General's department all or any of his powers under the Act. "

In Australia they are including the power under section 10 which is to make requests.

Mr. President, I did mention that in Canada, for example—and just to give Senators an idea of how this thing works a bit, I have here a manual prepared by the Central Authority for Canada for Mutual Legal Assistance and Extradition. If I may read from it for you to see how this thing operates in a country that has had some experience with it.

"The Minister of Justice is the central authority for Canada for both extradition and mutual legal assistance matters. The international assistance group, created in 1988, is part of the Department of the Justice Criminal Law Branch which is headed by the Assistant Deputy Attorney General. This assistance group was established to carry out the functions assigned to the Minister of Justice at the central authority under the Extradition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act."

In Canada, the minister obviously has to consider whether he would approve a request or not, but as we know how this thing works, he cannot do all that by himself. There will be certain matters that he would attend to personally, but he would take the responsibility for whatever is done in his ministry. That is how it works in Canada and some other countries and, it is in that context that one sees that we have the Attorney General as the central authority.

Mr. President, under our Extradition Commonwealth and Foreign Territories Act which was passed in 1985, it had to be determined, when a request for extradition was made, which ministry had to do it. The country had schemes similar to ours and under section 9 of the Extradition Act, one would see that such requests and orders are made by the Attorney General. So when there is a request for extradition from Trinidad and Tobago it is done through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but it comes to the Attorney General because that is the ministry which deals with the administration of law and it has the relevant departments under it. That is the rationale. I hope that the amendments I have put forward would, in effect, satisfy Senators.

Mr. President, with regard to the contribution made by Sen. Daly, may I say that he displayed, quite clearly, that he understood the significance of the legislation, and the functions of the ministry of the Attorney General, regardless of the individual who is in that ministry. He did make some important points. I think it is important that if there are those concerns, it is the duty of the Attorney General to dispel those concerns, to get or at least try to get rid of them by giving an undertaking that those concerns are not correct.

Sen. Daly made the point that there was some speculation that the purpose of this clause was to ensure that some other body or authority would, in effect, be the central authority. I think in fairness, I should read from the *Hansard* what he said so that I can deal with it.

"So that the purpose of this clause is to sanctify or ratify some private arrangement that has already been made. I simply cannot see what is the purpose of this clause, otherwise. Therefore, I become somewhat alarmed and suspicious that the purpose of this clause is, as I say, to sanctify or ratify the activities of some body, that is, some authority that has already been set up and funded in some unspecified part of the budget.

I certainly want two things from the Government: I want some very, very strong justification for the need of clause 3(2). In any event, I am not likely to accept it in its present form, where it does not make it clear that the designate is the agent of the Attorney General or the minister. I certainly want the Attorney General or the Government's absolute assurance that no individual, no authority or no unit has already been bespoken to be the central authority under this Act. I want the clearest assurance; not some statement."

Mr. President, I would give the undertaking and the assurance that no individual, authority, unit or company has been given any duties, functions, promise or anything whatsoever to be functioning under this Act. The only reason that this Bill was drafted in this way is because we were trying to keep it uniform with other pieces of legislation in other parts of world, but I do take his point. It does not necessarily mean that because in other countries one can have what can be considered unrestricted power or power which is not properly safeguarded, we should try to copy it *carte blanche* in Trinidad and Tobago. If the purpose of it is not to misuse or abuse power, then there should be no objection for framing it in such a way so that it would not be open to that kind of criticism. If I may say so, I accepted what Sen. Daly and some of the other Senators said in relation to the matter and, I caused that clause to be redrafted in those terms.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. President, another matter raised is with respect to the Strategic Services Agency which is basically a daily collection and information agency. As we know, that is under the Ministry of National Security, therefore, it was not set up to perform this kind of function and it is in that context that it was not the central authority. In any event, it will not be proper in this kind of legislation to put an agency as the body responsible because this agency has to make decisions which

have national considerations, which will have to give undertakings to another country, make decisions as to whether it will give the information or take steps to go to court to get the information. It would be committing the executive arm of state. In that context, one would not find an agency being the central authority, but a minister of government, who will be responsible for law and the administration of the law. That is the rationale of it.

I want Members to understand that there would be a request which, may have to be refused. But if it is wrongly refused or refused for political consideration which is not justifiable, then the minister and the Government are accountable to Parliament and to the people.

There is also the consideration when the request comes that you will have to set lawyers in train in order to comply, if you agree. You will need to have legal considerations, application would have to be made to the Court so that the same lawyers involved in the state process at the Solicitor General's or the DPP's departments would be involved in these processes.

Mr. President, the point raised by Sen. Teelucksingh in relation to clauses 11 and 12. He wondered whether our witness protection programme was reliable and whether Trinidad and Tobago could guarantee the safe conduct of a person. That is a very good point. I am sure the hon. Senator would recognize that for these measures to work, administrative measures have to be put in place. If you have to transfer a witness and there are security arrangements or if, for some reason or the other, a witness has to be protected, there has to be the necessary administrative arrangements to protect the witness. The question of witness protection has occupied our attention for some time.

Trinidad and Tobago does have a witness protection programme. One would see in relation to some of the major criminal trials which occurred recently, that although there has been some mishaps over the years, we have been able to have criminal trials proceeding. There is co-operation with Trinidad and Tobago and other countries in and out of the Caribbean. As Members would know, Trinidad and Tobago in 1996, raised the whole idea of a regional witness protection programme and the Caribbean states became very involved in it. That programme has now been renamed "Original Criminal Justice Programme" because it is not only to protect witnesses but also their families, jurors, judges and magistrates.

As a result of the recent summit that was held between the United States President Clinton and the CARICOM leaders, there is a commitment by the

American government to provide resources to assist our Caribbean countries in having a regional witness programme on a much better scale.

I give the assurance to the hon. Senator that the point is well taken. The implementation of these measures would need added protection for witnesses, added institutions and machinery to ensure that the piece of legislation is not undermined. I give him the assurance that the Government would do all in its power to ensure that this happens.

Sen. Ramchand wondered why under clause 13(2) where once a person has consented to be transferred to another country to assist in criminal proceedings, that consent cannot be withdrawn. I want to tell him that was even my concern when we were going through this Bill. I also wanted to know. I have been told that this is the uniform measure in which it happens under the Harare Scheme and the Vienna Convention. It is a policy decision taken that witnesses cannot change their minds all the time.

In the United Kingdom, for example, under the Act there is a similar statement under section 5, which states that once he gives his consent it cannot be withdrawn. It is a policy decision taken in order to prevent people from changing their minds. It may be as we know in legislation—and I am not advocating any litigation—as long as you give a power and it is unreasonably exercised for some reason, even if it is there it can still be challenged. I hope that the Senators would accept this as it is. It is a policy decision taken at an international level in relation to these agreements, and countries that are passing domestic legislation owe a duty for it to be uniform unless the arrangements are changed at the international level. I ask hon. Senators to support us in this measure.

Sen. Ramchand also asked another interesting question. He wondered if a former politician commits an offence in our jurisdiction and migrates to another, whether he could be granted an exemption under clause 22(a) and (b) as an offence of a political character. If one is charged for an offence at any time, I do not think the fact that one was a politician would make whatever offence a political one. It is not related to the individual but to the nature of the offence.

Let us say, for example, someone in Canada is fighting for the rights of black people and, for some reason or the other, he got into difficulties, not because of a real offence but because of a trumped up offence, and Government "A" decides that it is going to prosecute this person and he comes to Trinidad and Tobago. Those are matters which can be considered to see whether the prosecution is of a political nature and the information is thus related. But the fact that one has been a

politician does not necessarily mean the offence would be of a political nature. Otherwise, many politicians will be totally immune and there might be a rush of politicians.

The other point raised by Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt was whether the Bill covered acts of domestic violence. In my view, it does because under the Domestic Violence Act, domestic violence means a prescribed offence committed by a person against a spouse, child, dependant or parent of a person. Prescribed offence includes murder, manslaughter or attempted murder/manslaughter and numerous offences under the Offences Against the Person Act. When we look under the Bill as to what is a serious offence, we see in relation to Trinidad and Tobago that it is an offence against the laws of Trinidad and Tobago for which sentence of death or imprisonment for a minimum term of not less than one year may be or is required to be imposed; and I am told that covers domestic violence.

Mr. President, the other amendment mentioned in the list circulated deals with the consequential matter of changing minister to Attorney General so that there can be no doubt that there is only one minister under the Bill. I think I have dealt with all the responses and criticisms that have been made.

This Bill can be safely said to be the most important piece of legislation dealing with international co-operation in the fight against organized crimes. It is a new concept which the international community has devised, whereby, quite apart from extradition there can be the co-operation of countries through the judicial machinery to provide evidence to assist prosecution in other countries.

2.40 p.m.

Before, one could only have access to evidence that was available to the police. This Bill will provide the framework whereby the court can order evidence to be supplied, order documents to be produced or even order assets to be seized in this country in respect of offences which have occurred in another country. There is the safeguard of the courts making the order. It is not as if the executive arm of the state can seize the property or take the assets. The executive arm of the state will have to make a decision through the Attorney General to go to the court. If he or she goes to the court then the court has the jurisdiction to make that order.

So, Mr. President, I think that the safeguards are there. I know that this Bill requires a specified majority but I am sure that Members on the other side and, in

particular the Opposition, will not use that fact in order to obstruct a measure to fight crime and to promote international co-operation to fight crime. I commend the Bill to this honourable Senate. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

Senate in committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Senators, this is a Bill containing a preamble of five parts, 41 clauses and two schedules. In order to deal with the matter coherently I would suggest, subject to your approval, that we deal with it part by part except where there are suggested and proposed amendments.

Clause 3.

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

Sen. Mohammed: Mr. Chairman, I have a proposed amendment to clause 3 which reads as follows:

“(A) Delete subclause (1) and substitute the following:

“The Strategic Services Agency shall be the Central Authority.”

(B) Delete subclause (2).”

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, we regret we cannot accept that because of the reason I have explained, the Central Strategic Services Authority in the scheme of the Bill cannot make the decisions that have to be made in any event. Secondly, the Central Strategic Services Authority does not have the power; it is not for that purpose. Having regard to all the matters that I have mentioned, it is really the legal consideration; it is the DPP and the Solicitor General’s Department. The Bill really cannot work if we did that.

Sen. Mohammed: With all due respect, hon. Attorney General, I did make reference to section 6(2)(c) of the Strategic Services Act which specifically sets out the powers of that agency. If I may be permitted to read section 6(2)(c), it says:

“In addition to the aforementioned functions, the Agency shall—

(c) facilitate and monitor the enforcement of requests for assistance relating to the proceeds of drugs and other serious crimes, made under bilateral and multilateral confiscation agreements;”

With respect to the Minister's comments about the international agreements, and who should be the central authority, my recollection is that there is no hard and fast rule and we simply disagree with the policy that the Attorney General be designated the central authority. That is our position.

2.50 p.m.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, if one looks at clause 22 of this Bill, the central authority would determine whether the offence was of a political character. When one looks at the sections dealing with request for information by Trinidad and Tobago and undertakings which have to be given, it cannot be given by an authority; it has to be given by a minister.

Sen. Mohammed: Certainly. If you look at the Strategic Services Act, in section 2, it says: "Minister' means the Minister to whom responsibility for national security is assigned." So the Strategic Services Agency will be accountable to a minister of national security. Our concern is, why have a rival, parallel organization?

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the hon. Senator is understanding what is happening here. An application would have to be made to the court but the Strategic Services Agency does not have a Director of Public Prosecutions Department; does not have a Solicitor General's Department; the Minister of National Security does not have those departments under him. So it has nothing to do with the personality; it has to do with the concept.

Sen. Mohammed: We are not dealing with personalities here, but the issue, in terms of the authority, even if we were to adopt the hon. Attorney General's argument, when you look at the powers of the Director of Public Prosecutions as set out in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, you would see that the DPP has its own distinct and separate powers. There is no supervisory jurisdiction as such, in terms of criminal offences from the Attorney General, unlike other jurisdictions, such as in England and I think even in Barbados. The role of the Attorney General is simply in terms of physical kinds of arrangements. But for the prosecution of offences, and so forth, the DPP, under our Constitution, has definite, clear powers. So in terms of that argument, we disagree.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I do not think I want to go into the argument as to what are the powers of the DPP and the powers of the Attorney General in relation to the DPP. The question is that if you have to go to court and you have legal considerations and administration of law, I cannot see how you could have

any other ministry. When one looks at the legislation in other Commonwealth countries, that is how the ministry of the Attorney General comes in. According to what the Opposition is asking for, they want an authority which would not have the power to make those decisions and which cannot have that power, in any event, but would have to co-ordinate with an Attorney General in another country. It would not work.

Sen. Mohammed: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, our concern in that regard is that—as the Attorney General pointed out a while ago in his contribution—there are, in fact, jurisdictions where the Minister of National Security has the same kinds of powers. He referred to South Africa, I believe it was.

Mr. Maharaj: The Minister of Justice. But we do not have a Minister of Justice.

Sen. Mohammed: In this case, we have a Minister of National Security; we have an Attorney General. As far as I can recollect, with respect to the model legislation that the Commonwealth has recommended, you can have a law enforcement agency, you can even have a judicial body, or any other agency set up and it is left to the individual countries to select which agency they would prefer. There is no hard and fast rule which says the Attorney General would be the authority. We are saying that the Minister of National Security already has powers in this regard. He can entertain the request and satisfy it. There is nothing wrong with collaborating, discussing or co-ordinating with other ministers or ministries. Why usurp the functions of the Minister of National Security?

Mr. Maharaj: I wonder if the hon. Senator could look at the definition again, in clause 2:

“‘Central Authority’ means the person or authority designated as the Central Authority for Trinidad and Tobago in pursuance of section 3;

‘central authority’ in relation to any Commonwealth country means the person or authority designated by that country for the purpose of transmitting and receiving requests for assistance under the scheme.”

If you have to give the information, you cannot have in one country, a minister and in another country an authority.

Sen. Mohammed: This is what I am saying. If you look at the model drafts which have been described, there is no stipulation. You can have the judicial authority; you can have another agency; it can be the Police Service Commission or even the Police Commissioner, as has been argued before in other places.

Mr. Maharaj: So what is your proposal?

Sen. Mohammed: My proposal is to leave it; let it be the Minister of National Security, by virtue of the Strategic Services Agency. We already have an agency established to deal with matters of this kind. So leave it in that agency. What is the position at present with the Strategic Services Agency which was passed in the Parliament before?

Sen. Beckles: If the Attorney General is saying that part of his concern is the fact that this agency does not have attorneys, unlike his ministry, or even the DPP, they have their legal advisers; there is a pool that is directly set up. Is he saying that in terms of convenience it is easier? I do not understand what is the difficulty in the agency having direct access to the Attorney General, or even the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. President, I thought I had explained this. If what the Opposition is asking for is implemented, the Bill would not work and it would obstruct the whole passage of the Bill because when assistance is given, it would not work; unless the Opposition does not want the Bill to work. I really cannot see the difficulty.

Sen. Mohammed: We need to reiterate our position. We would like to see this kind of legislation work. We welcome the legislation but we have a concern about setting up a rival or a parallel organization. We have already enacted in the laws of Trinidad and Tobago an agency which has been given powers to deal with matters of this type. Why have a rival organization now? It is a parallel organization, a usurpation of the functions and authority of other established agencies. This is not about personalities, with all due respect. We are saying that the central authority should be the Strategic Services Agency.

Sen. Brig. Theodore: But there are two. Which one are you talking about?

Sen. Mohammed: That is a matter in the legislation which may need rectification. I am sure it refers to whichever body is designated central authority.

Question, on amendment (Sen. N. Mohammed), put and negatived.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment to clause 3 which reads as follows:

“Delete subclause (2) and insert the following subclauses:

- (2) The Attorney General may delegate to a public officer of a Department of his Ministry all or any of his functions under this Act.

- (3) Nothing in this section shall be construed as delegating to the officer referred to in subsection (2) a power to make Regulations under section 39.”

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a comment on the Attorney General’s amendment. In clause 3(2), it states:

“The Attorney General may delegate to a public officer of a Department of his Ministry all or any of his functions under this Act.”

Could I suggest that he just put in the words, “to a public officer as defined under the Constitution” to take care of the point that he raised during his reply about the concerns which were raised, to make sure that it cannot be somebody contracted from outside?

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Maharaj: A public officer is defined in the Constitution so one could just say, “delegate to a public officer all or any of his functions under the Act”. I have no problem with that.

Mr. Chairman: Any other contributions?

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

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

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move an amendment to clause 4 as follows:

Delete the word “Minister” and substitute the words “Attorney General.”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 5 to 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 12.

Question proposed, That clause 12 stand part of the Bill

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move an amendment to clause 12 as follows:

In subclause (4), delete the word “Minister” and substitute the words “Attorney General.”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 13 to 32 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 33.

Question proposed, That clause 33 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move an amendment to clause 33 as follows:

In subclause (1), delete the word “Minister” and substitute the words “Attorney General”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 33, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 34 and 35 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 36.

Question proposed, That clause 36 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move an amendment to clause 36 as follows:

In subclauses (1) and (2), delete the word “Minister” wherever it occurs and substitute the words “Attorney General”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 36, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 37 and 38 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 39.

Question proposed, That clause 39 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move an amendment to clause 39 as follows:

In subclause (1), delete the word “Minister” and substitute the words “Attorney General”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 39, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 40 and 41 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

First and Second Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.

3.10 p.m.

Senate resumed.

Bill reported with amendments.

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

The Senate divided: Ayes: 24 Noes: 5

AYES

Mark, Hon. W.

Kuei Tung, Hon. B.

Theodore, Brig. Hon. J.

Baksh, Hon. S.

Phillips, Dr. The Hon. D.

Gangar, Hon. F.

Cuffy-Dowlath, Mrs. C.

Hamel-Smith, P.

Gray-Burke, Most Rev. B.

Moore, N.

Baksh, N.

Gabriel, A.

Williams, Mrs. A.

Cabrera, V.

Bharath, Dr. J.

Spence, Prof. J.

Mahabir-Wyatt, Mrs. D.

Teelucksingh, Rev. D.

Daly, M.

St. Cyr, Dr. E.

Mc Kenzie, Dr. E.

Kenny, Prof. J.

Ramchand, Prof. K.

Marshall, P.

NOES

Mohammed, Mrs. N.

Beckles, Miss P.

Jagmohan, M.

Mannette, Miss E.

Alfred, Miss C.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

LIVESTOCK AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS BOARD BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Reeza Mohammed): Mr. President, I beg to move that the Livestock and Livestock Board Bill be now read a second time.

As I present this Bill to establish the Livestock and Livestock Products Board in this honourable Senate, I wish to point out that the Bill seeks to resolve many deficiencies which have impacted negatively on livestock production and marketing, thereby hindering the development and financial viability of the subsector. This stagnated state of development within the subsector is reflected in its relatively small contribution to the agricultural sector's gross domestic product.

This stagnated state of development can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, I would deal with the aspect of marketing. The disorganized and inefficient marketing systems for the sale of livestock and livestock products prevent

livestock farmers from maximizing returns on their investment. It also fails to address spiralling input costs. The inability of farmers to negotiate prices results in animals being purchased by butchers and middle men at farm gate prices which are way below the actual dollar value of the animal. Animals are slaughtered and sold under poor marketing conditions. They are usually slaughtered and sold on weekends and largely restricted to roadside stalls which affects the quantum and quality of meat which can be effectively disposed of by farmers at any given time.

I would now deal with the lack of adequate, timely and reliable information on production and general activities within the livestock subsector. This provision of information in a timely manner is extremely important in the formulation of appropriate policies for the livestock subsector.

In the poultry industry there is a failure of boiler contractors to adhere to their contractual obligations. This can be attributed to the absence of a body to represent and safeguard the interest of poultry farmers. There is a lack of an independent body in the dairy subsector representing all stakeholders of the industry. This is particularly important in light of the extension of the milk subsidy programme.

I now turn to research and development. The lack of proper organization within the livestock subsector has resulted in the failure of the subsector to attract adequate investments which, in turn, has stymied all developmental efforts. This has resulted in chronic infrastructural deficiencies in the subsector. It has also hampered programmes necessary for the development and acquisition of quality breeding stock and technology for improving the efficiency and, by extension, enhancing the income of livestock farmers.

Because of this state of affairs in the livestock subsector, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is seeking to establish a livestock and livestock products board. Such boards have been successful in many parts of the developing and developed world in dealing with similar problems. For example, in the United Kingdom the introduction of the Milk and Meat Marketing Board has successfully introduced a range of technical and other services to enhance livestock farmers' return from the industry.

In Canada, the Ontario Pork Producers Marketing Board has provided the framework for hog producers to organize and control their affairs. Locally, the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board and the production associations in the citrus and coconut industries have successfully promoted the development of these subsectors. The establishment of such a board in the livestock subsector would be based on these models but adapted to suit the need peculiar to the subsector.

In order to establish such a livestock and livestock products board, legislative measures must be effective. The membership of the board is defined in clause 4 of the Bill. Every sector of the livestock subsector will be represented on this board. This will ensure that the interest of all stakeholders in the livestock industry is protected.

3.20 p.m.

The functions of the board are listed in clause 6 of the Bill. From this, it will be seen that the purpose of this board would be to regulate and develop the livestock industry. It will have additional responsibilities to monitor problems affecting production and marketing and will provide a forum for communication among farmers. It will also identify research and development within the industry and establish and operate auction yards for the sale of animals. The purpose of the board, therefore, is to address the many problems affecting the livestock sector in order to ensure growth and development of the subsector, which will ultimately redound to the well-being and benefit of the livestock producers of Trinidad and Tobago. In order to ensure that the board is not restricted in its function, clause 7 of the Bill gives the board general powers to do all that is necessary in assisting the livestock subsector.

Under clauses 8 and 9, the board will be required to account annually to the Minister with responsibility for agriculture, on its stewardship. This will be necessary since the state will be required to provide minimum subventions to the board until its revenue base allows it to become self-sufficient.

This Bill will enable the livestock industry to reach its full potential. The need to develop this industry is even more critical now with the new global, liberalized trade regime, which may put an already fragile livestock sector in a further disadvantaged position.

Question proposed.

Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed: Mr. President, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources into this Senate, this afternoon. The Minister has been setting new standards of parliamentary behaviour and conduct in the other place. I appeal to him, and hope that he will not transfer these new standards to the Senate.

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

Mr. Vice-President, I was just reminded of an omission and I would like to redress it at this point. On behalf of all the Senators of the People's National

Movement, I congratulate the new Senator on her appointment. We look forward to her contributions in this Senate.

Today, we are debating the Livestock and Livestock Products Board Bill, which was just piloted by the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. This Bill comes at a time and against a background where very serious concerns and doubts are being raised in the country with respect to appointments by this particular Minister. It comes against a background of the Minister allegedly recommending people for positions. It comes against a background of a deteriorating situation at a particular state board—and I refer specifically to Caroni Limited. With regard to the provisions of this Bill and the establishment of a livestock board, we do have some reservations and concerns about its establishment at this time.

It comes across as a mere public relations exercise. Talk is cheap and we are looking for action. I will go on to show how it may well be a public relations exercise—one on which we do not know how long from now there will be real action with respect to improvement in the livestock industry.

Time and time again the People's National Movement has been accused of neglecting our agricultural sector. As a member of the PNM, I think that we should take some blame, simply because during the boom years, a great deal more emphasis was placed on the development of other sectors, particularly the energy sector. However, I have here in my possession an article from the *Guardian* newspaper dated May 24, 1993, the headline of which reads, "Top economists call for urgent action in agriculture". This article states:

"Four of the country's leading economists have called for a re-examination of the current policies for agriculture, a sector which they say is in a deeper crisis than the rest of the economy.

In a document entitled 'An Action Plan for Agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago' John Spence, Frank Rampersad, Lloyd Best and Dennis Pantin, together with Frank Barsotti and George Bovell, have called for urgent action on restoring confidence in the agriculture sector, submitting several recommendations to this end."

Mr. Vice-President, I have here that particular action plan. At page 8, it talks about the agricultural sector being in deep crisis. It goes on to outline several situations and takes a very close look at the various subsectors, particularly with regard to the livestock industry.

Shortly after the comments in this article were made, there was the appointment of a committee to formulate a Green Paper on agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, that Green Paper was laid in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago in June, 1993. Following this Green Paper, widespread discussions and consultations took place throughout the length and breadth of the country. Eventually, a White Paper was produced, which is dated March 1994. This paper deals with a food and agriculture policy, and if my memory serves me right, I heard this particular Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, shortly after taking office in December 1995, in his first budget presentation, make a statement to the effect that the present administration would adopt this paper on agriculture insofar as their policy on agriculture was concerned.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Vice-President, we note that negotiations had been going on with the Inter-American Development Bank with respect to an agricultural sector loan. In fact, on June 11, 1996, the present Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources signed that agricultural sector loan agreement. These are the documents which would give some indication as to the policies and directions in which the agricultural sector is headed.

3.30 p.m.

This White Paper was produced by tapping into the resources of a large cross-section of persons who were involved in agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. Many experts came together with persons who were directly involved in agriculture and made an input in this document.

As I look through the document, I see that it deals generally with the national resources of the country and it looks at the performance of the agricultural sector; it then focusses on the major sectoral issues. There are macro-economic concerns which are addressed and, more particularly, there is a section which deals with policies and strategies.

In subsection (A) which deals with food and agriculture policy, under "Strategies" there is the economic and social issues, and then there is a section dealing with institutional support. I will refer to some of these measures or strategies which are suggested in this White Paper which deals with agriculture.

Under "Institutional Support" the document talks about:

- "a. Strengthening the institutional capability of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to undertake policy review and analysis.
- b. Provide more relevant education and training programmes.

- c. Enhance the market intelligence capabilities of NAMDEVCO and ETC."

We all know what is NAMDEVCO. It is another board or agency which was established under the NAR regime sometime in 1991, and we know it had been a virtual failure insofar as personal objectives are concerned. It goes on:

- e. Establish appropriate export infrastructure at the airports and sea ports to facilitate the export thrust.
- f. Mount appropriate on-going export promotion campaigns.
- g. Introduce a process for consultation within the sector in development of policy.
- h. Improve direction, co-ordination and management of national agricultural research by establishing an appropriate national research organisation.
- i. Focus public sector research on the development of appropriate technology.
- j. Upgrade the physical research infrastructure.
- k. Strengthen the capability of the extension service.
- l. Co-operate with the private sector in the delivery of research and extension services.
- m. Establish mechanisms for communication between research and extension and for client participation in planning of agricultural development.
- n. Undertake financial restructuring and institutional strengthening of the ADB.
- o. Amend the ADB Act to give the bank greater autonomy.
- p. Encourage within the commercial banking sector, a development incentive facility as a soft window to be accessed by targeted groups of farmers, i.e. co-operatives.
- q. Institutionalise a flexible interest rate system."

It goes on to other measures dealing with infrastructure, irrigation, agri-business, farm management training and so forth.

Under "Public Administration in Agriculture" the White Paper talks about developing procedures for managing the relationship between the Ministry of Agriculture, the Tobago House of Assembly and other agencies and ministries.

Under "State Enterprises in the Sector" it says:

- a. Reduce monopoly status of the state owned enterprises in the sector.
- b. Pursue action plan of the Caroni Tripartite Agreement.

Mr. Vice-President, having looked at some of these provisions in the White Paper, I am a bit concerned about the Minister introducing this Bill whereby he is seeking to set up a Livestock and Livestock Products Board. We are concerned because we believe that this board may well be usurping the functions of already established agencies. If anything, it is actually emasculating the role and functions of the agencies which exist within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It is a slap in the face to all our civil servants who work in that ministry. Later, I will show how this Bill is taking away from the authority and jurisdiction of the ministry.

The Bill deals with livestock and livestock products. What is really meant by "livestock"? "Livestock" refers to food-producing animals and, generally, when one speaks about livestock, it refers to cattle; buffalypsoes; pigs; poultry and small ruminants like sheep; goat; ducks; rabbits and even turkeys. Livestock products deal with products which are derived from these animals. For example, there are leather products, feed for other animals as a result of waste; products can also be produced from some of these animals.

Mr. Vice-President, when one looks at these varieties of animals there are subsectors that fall under the livestock industry of Trinidad and Tobago which can be categorized. There is the dairy industry, and when one is dealing with dairy, one is dealing with cattle such as cows which produce beef for consumption and also there are those animals which produce fresh milk for consumption.

I have in my possession a document which gives some facts about the dairy industry and, particularly, the situation as it relates to dairy farmers. I know the Minister himself professes to be an expert with animals and the dairy industry; I believe he is a veterinarian and would have great experience in this field. We know that over the years there have been problems and efforts are being made to revitalize this entire sector in the country. This document refers to certain basic facts about the dairy industry.

The dairy industry produces 11 million kilogrammes of fresh milk per annum and four million kilogrammes of fresh local beef. The total consumption of beef, both local and imported, is approximately 10 million kilogrammes per annum.

In Trinidad and Tobago there is a particular company that certainly has a monopoly control over the fresh milk that is produced in this country, Nestlé. In that company they purchase about 75 per cent of our local fresh milk. One will remember very early when the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Prime Minister were seen receiving a gift from Nestlé. I think it was a cow named "Nessy". I distinctly remember seeing a rather interesting picture with the Minister and the cow.

Mr. Vice-President, the heads of breeding cattle in Trinidad and Tobago are approximately 200,000, half of which are raised for milk and half for beef. However, half of the local beef comes from the dairy subsector. Approximately 2,000 farmers supply milk to Nestlé seasonally. The cattle industry, visibly and invisibly, provides income and sustenance, direct and indirect, for approximately 50,000 citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. There is a value given for milk production per annum. I think it is about \$21,500,000. The value of beef production per annum is \$70 million. There is an estimated value of the industry in terms of fixed assets, land, buildings, machinery and equipment. Mr. Vice-President, this document goes on to summarize the problems that face the dairy industry. The document states that there are other problems facing the cattle industry as a whole, such as the matter of trade liberalization, quota allocation for the import of beef, the role of Nestlé in the dairy industry, the cost of feed and other inputs in the industry, and the question of the unrestricted imports of powdered milk. That is a very big problem.

3.40 p.m.

It is even being suggested in this document that this important sector is threatened with collapse. Over the last few days, I have been speaking to some people who are directly involved in this particular industry. One well-known, well-established dairy farmer told me that only last month he actually put his farm up for sale because he was totally fed up with the problems which confronted him. The high cost of feed and the other inputs were highlighted. The monopoly status is a very big issue that affects the dairy farmers, and the unrestricted imports of powdered milk are very big problems insofar as our local farmers are concerned.

Over the years, the payment of subsidies has been a burning issue affecting farmers. Over the years it has been addressed. Last week, when I read the newspapers—another public relations exercise by the Minister—the headline said that the Government is to increase the level of the milk subsidy. I was rather amused to see another article appearing the following day in the *Daily Express* of

Wednesday, October 8, 1997 on page 6: “Reeza in hot water over milk subsidy”. Previous governments have given subsidies. These subsidies are paid every two or three months. Our concern is to get assurances that these subsidies would, in fact, filter down to the farmers who produce fresh milk in the country. Is the monopoly company alone going to benefit from the subsidy, or would our farmers benefit from these subsidies?

Mr. Vice-President, a very big problem that affects nearly all our farmers in this country is praedial larceny. One individual involved in the rearing of poultry told me that earlier this year, he lost 800 chickens one night alone. In fact, the persons who were taking those chickens from his farm were seen, but yet the call for help to the police station was not met favourably. In some instances, the authorities know who the bandits are, but they are very slow in making arrests for praedial larceny. Time and time again I have mentioned that praedial larceny is a big problem affecting our farmers. After they labour, sweat and toil the lands, to have someone come and steal their produce is really a frustrating situation.

The suggestion was that some kind of praedial larceny court be set up because the police seem to be in some kind of doubt as to what should happen if they arrest someone caught stealing produce—in this case, stealing animals. This is an area that needs to be looked at. We have already made the plea to the Government to focus some attention on this ongoing problem of praedial larceny. If a person steals a cow or a goat, that is a lot of money taken away. The individual I spoke to said that in that one night, he lost approximately \$15,000 worth of stock. This is a very big problem that affects particularly our livestock and dairy farmers.

When we look at the poultry industry, this is today, by and large, a fairly well-established subsector in the country. I believe that in the 1980s, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Affairs, there was a poultry surveillance unit that dealt specifically with matters affecting the poultry industry. In those days around the mid 1980s, there was a move to decentralize this industry and, indeed, in the late 1980s we started to become self-sufficient with respect to poultry. We had many hatcheries operating in the country. We were really doing well insofar as that is concerned.

Some basic facts about the poultry industry are that our poultry farmers in Trinidad and Tobago produce about 60 million pounds of chicken, or 75 per cent of the country's production. When one looks at the operations of the poultry subsector, there are different categories of persons involved. There are processors who can be described as integrators in the system. There are the poultry farmers

and, Mr. President, we know that from time to time there have been problems. We know that as consumers and, as a society that is now becoming hooked on fast foods—I am sure the Minister of Finance would know and appreciate what I am talking about in terms of our heavy consumption of fast food and poultry. We wish to say a special welcome back to the country to him as well. We thought he had decided to repeat his statement of not taking a vow of poverty and had gone underground, but he is back in town.

Insofar as the supply of poultry in the country is concerned, many of the integrators or processors are people who would generally supply baby chicks together with the vaccines and chemicals, as well as the feed. They supply these items to farmers under the contractual relationship between them and the actual poultry farmers. The farmers on the other hand provide the space, electricity, water supply, labour and the management skills to actually operate the pens in which the birds are kept.

3.50 p.m.

Of course, there are problems that both sections face. When it comes to the processors or indeed the integrators, these are, of course, relatively big companies and one of the biggest problems they have is in terms of the costs that are involved.

Nowadays, we have to import many of our eggs because—some attention needs to be paid to the hatcheries. If a processor goes to a foreign country, perhaps in Miami, and he purchases eggs from the factory there, he has to pay the cost in that country for the actual eggs. He has to pay the cost of transporting those eggs to the airport.

When those eggs arrive in Trinidad and Tobago there are other costs that have to be met. There are insurance and freight costs. When these eggs land in Trinidad, there are in fact certain duties; I believe it is a 25 per cent duty that has to be paid on the eggs themselves. In addition to having to pay duties on the eggs, one also has to pay duties on the crates in which the eggs are kept. One case of eggs approximate about 54 pounds or 30 dozens. Imagine, a processor or an integrator who imports about 16 tonnes per week, when one adds the cost of these eggs, the air freight and the duties one will realize that a great sum of money has to be paid simply to bring the eggs into the country. The duties are felt to be too high.

When these eggs arrive at Piarco one needs transportation to take the eggs from the airport to the particular processing plant or company. One is dealing here with an important agricultural subsector. These transportation costs are very high.

We had made mention of some of the problems that our fishermen faced when—in the last Budget—there was a price hike in terms of gas in this country. I think the hon. Minister of Works and Transport had said that we would be paying to use roads by the pump. Fishermen who are using boat engines have to pay a tax for the use of roads by the pump.

Mr. Vice-President, in the same way with respect to this agricultural subsector, there are many aspects to this poultry subsector where the integrators and the farmers have to pay very high costs for fuel that is used. When one looks at the situation with the farmers, they have to set up the pens. Look at our utility bills; high electricity rates and very high water bills. It is really abominable that in this day and age when one is seeking to revitalize the agricultural subsector, our farmers have to pay very high water rates. This Government has spoken a lot about giving relief to pensioners and so forth, but we are making an appeal to this Government to offer some relief to our farmers insofar as water supply is concerned.

Now, Mr. Vice-President, it is, indeed, an ongoing problem, that contractual problem between the integrators and the poultry farmers. At times they have had problems and, in fact, calls had been made for some kind of governmental intervention to have some sort of standard contract. So that after the farmer labours and takes care of and rears those chickens, then supplies these chickens to the processors and the integrators, he will get a good enough price for these chickens. Because it takes about eight weeks, I believe, to have a chick develop into a bird fit for slaughtering. I think if it is a three and a half or a four pound chicken it will take about eight weeks for it to mature. Many of the farmers have complained about the actual prices and the costs that are involved in the production line. On the other hand, one has the processors who, as I mentioned, have to use all sorts of heavy equipment. In some of their plants they need to have generators, boilers and water pumps. A lot of this equipment is expensive and they depend on fuel and one has very high fuel costs. So these are some of the problems that affect the poultry industry and that need to be looked at.

Mr. Vice-President, with regard to goat and sheep, I came across a document, a report of The Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth. This society held its 16th conference right here in Trinidad in April, 1994. I think his Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh was here and the Deputy President, Mr. Neville Cross was involved. Several papers that were presented at that conference are published in this book. On page 97 there is an interesting article by Mr. Richard

Bovell, who we all know is a prominent, well-established livestock and crop farmer in this country. In this particular document, some facts are given about the small ruminant production in Trinidad and Tobago which it identifies as falling into two categories: sheep and goat; and rabbit. In terms of the country's livestock production, it shows:

"Dairy cattle, approximately	25,000 head
Beef	11,000
Water buffalo	5,000
Sheep	7,000
Goats	28,000

On a population basis goats and sheep make up approximately 45% of this sector.

This may seem very encouraging for the local sheep and goat industry, but the reality of the situation is that local production only satisfies 5% of our 1.2 million kilogram annual consumption. This has a value of TT \$10.3 million. The remaining 95% being imports mainly from Australia and New Zealand."

Mr. Vice-President, the very big problem that is affecting our livestock industry in the country is the importation of livestock products from other countries. Our local farmers are suffering and we are making an appeal for some kind of protection in this regard. We know that throughout the world—at the Uruguay Round Agreements (GATT - General Agreement of Tariff and Trade) in the early 1990s—there are some restrictions and so forth, but the ongoing discussion has been the fact that in industrialized countries the farming industries are being given direct subsidies and being protected. When our markets are opened up—because we know that we are living in an age of globalization and trade liberalization and so forth—and these products come from the developed foreign countries, of course, they are coming into our country and competing with our local farmers. Therefore, our local farmers need some help; they need some kind of protection.

4.00 p.m.

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Insofar as the poultry industry is concerned I have highlighted some of the facts and problems with the small ruminant sector and we have dealt with that.

I looked at these subsectors in an effort for us to understand what difference the Livestock and Livestock Products Board Bill is going to make insofar as tackling these problems is concerned. Under this Bill clause 4 says:

"4 (1) The Board shall be appointed by the Minister..."

meaning the Minister of Agriculture,

"and shall consist of eleven members..."

It goes on to elaborate on who the members should be.

I think it is important for us to point out that if this board will really tackle these problems head-on, we on this side would have no difficulties supporting it. However, when we look at the problems and what already exists, we are of the view that this board would just be an unnecessary agency being appointed by the Minister—and God alone knows which friends he may wish to put on this board—because there are absolutely no guidelines as to the criteria to be used for the appointment of persons to these boards. Although it says what subsector they should come from, there is nothing to say that the Minister cannot get his friend from whatever part of Trinidad and Tobago whom he might know to be involved in the dairy industry, to put on the board. It is another curry-favouring mechanism by this Minister.

Further, it simply is an attempt—from looking at it first blush—for the establishment of a board to provide "jobs for the boys"; mere cosmetics, mere propaganda and not tackling head-on, the problems that are confronting the farmers and, indeed, the livestock industry in this country. It is going to add to the bureaucracy which is already so fat.

Mr. President, I made mention just now of a similar board that was set up in 1991 by the NAR, known as the National Agricultural and Marketing Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO). The Act that set up this board came into effect in August 1991. I ask this Minister to tell this country what useful purpose NAMDEVCO has been performing. Let me just point out who made up this board. When you look at its composition with respect to the setting up of the board it sets out who the members of this board should be and what powers are given to it. The fact is that the board has not really been fulfilling its mandate. Mr. President, I saw the composition just a few moments ago. I would put it on the record.

What I do recall is that NAMDEVCO was an agency formed by the NAR to replace the Central Marketing Authority. When it was formed it was originally

housed at the wholesale market in Port of Spain. If any farmer who was accustomed to being there and who was directly involved in agriculture was asked what assistance was gotten from NAMDEVCO—this Government has spoken about creating niche markets and markets for produce in this country—what really is NAMDEVCO doing? We know that it was relocated to the Aranguez Plaza and is now operating as the white elephant built by the NAR, in Debe, known as the Debe/Peñal Wholesale Market; the only wholesale market existing in this country which is, in effect, a white elephant. We remember all too well when the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, a few months ago went down to Debe and posed for the television cameras to show that they were making this market operational. Two days after, if there were two persons selling produce in the market there were plenty. I challenge him to deny this allegation that the farmers are, in fact, not utilizing the facilities there.

Under the former PNM administration, because of the agitation of the farmers and, particularly, Mr. President, those in the food basket of the country in the Aranguez and neighbouring areas, a decision had been taken to build a wholesale market for our farmers in Aranguez, the heart of the food basket, near to Piarco Airport and the Port. That market would have had appropriate facilities such as cold storage and so forth, for the farmers. This decision was taken but because of obstructionist elements on that side when they were politicking in 1995 prior to the election, to this day this Minister has not said one word about the construction of a wholesale market for our farmers.

He has spoken of rural markets and we know those exist in all the districts of this country. I see the chairman of a regional corporation in this Chamber. There are several regional corporations which could, in fact, control these rural markets. What really is this Government doing insofar as improving marketing facilities is concerned? Our concern in this regard is that there is an already established agency called NAMDEVCO that is supposed to deal with marketing facilities. Certainly, one would think that our livestock produce would also fall under the jurisdiction of an agency like NAMDEVCO. Here it is the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is seeking to establish another agency, a new board. What for? There are already established agencies. We have a very serious concern with this kind of position. Unless some real justification is given, we have problems in supporting the establishing of the board.

To be more specific, when you look at the actual function—and my colleague has found the section. Just for the record, the composition of NAMDEVCO is:

"4 (1) The Corporation shall consist of nine members selected as follows:

- (a) six members appointed by the President and having special qualifications or experience as follows:
 - (i) one in business management;
 - (ii) one in finance and management accounting;
 - (iii) one in produce marketing and trade;
 - (iv) one in food technology or agro-industry;
 - (v) one in information technology; and
 - (vi) one in agriculture production with special reference to small farming;

You have a board and it is underutilized. It is not fulfilling its mandate. The hon. Minister, should try to make this agency work. If he is talking about problems within the livestock industry let us see how NAMDEVCO can be of some use.

When we looked at the functions outlined in this Bill with respect to the establishment of this board, it says in clause 6 that:

"The functions of the board are:

- (a) to administer, on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago any programmes supportive of the livestock industry;"

Mr. President, I know that there are several divisions which operate within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and one of them is known as the Planning Division. One would have expected that the Planning Division would administer, on behalf of the Government, any programmes supportive of the livestock industry. When you look at 6(b) it talks about promoting and guiding the formation of co-operatives within the livestock industry. How is this board going to do that? Please tell me! When you speak about co-operatives, you are speaking about getting individual farmers to come together. Who on this board will go out there to reach out to these individual farmers? You go to Aranguez, every time they raise a problem with the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, he tells them form themselves into a co-operative and then they will get help.

4.10 p.m.

Mr. President: The hon. Senator's time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you, Mr. President and I thank all Senators for granting me this extension of time because agriculture is really an important sector in this country and we need to help it as much as possible but let us do it in a practical way, in a way that will work.

With respect to the formation of these co-operatives, you would think that within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources provisions already exist whereby there are extension services that are supposed to operate for the benefit of our farmers throughout the country. I read in the White Paper the recommendation that the extension services be strengthened. Yes, there are problems, but let us tackle those problems instead of spending millions of dollars to fatten the pockets of the boys or girls whom the Minister will appoint on the board. Redirect those moneys to improving the already existing agencies, whether it is through the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources or wherever else. There are extension services: let us see how we can improve the functioning of that area.

Another function, clause 6(c):

“to collect, store and disseminate data and information on the activities of the livestock industry;”

One would again expect the Planning Division to have this kind of information. Clause 6(d):

“to monitor problems affecting production and marketing with a view to making appropriate representation to the relevant authorities;”

Mr. President, everybody knows that in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources there is an Animal Production and Health Division. Why can this division, which is already monitoring problems affecting production and marketing of livestock, not be allowed to continue with these functions? Why do you need a board to come and usurp their functions? There are very competent, qualified and experienced people who have been working with the Government of

Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of which party is in power; very senior civil servants who function in the particular ministry and here you are seeking to emasculate their powers and functions. Do you know what this tells me? This Government, whenever there is any problem or situation to deal with, instead of confronting the problem and managing and dealing with the issue, is quick to create red herrings and it has a particular paranoia and phobia against the civil servants of this country. They regard all civil servants as being pro-PNM people; attacking the credibility and integrity of so many thousands of people in this country.

Sen. Cabrera: I rise on a point of order. Is that relevant to the Bill being debated in terms of the Standing Order?

Sen. Mark: Mr. President, if I may, also on a point of order—

Sen. Jagmohan: Mr. President, there has been no ruling on the first point of order.

Mr. President: Were you finished with your point of order, Sen. Cabrera? I think I will allow the Senator to continue.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Sen. Mark: Mr. President, on a point of order. I think the hon. Senator is accusing the Government of attacking civil servants, thousands of public servants. The hon. Senator has no evidence of that, she has attributed no proof to what she said, and if the hon. Senator cannot furnish this House with the relevant evidence of that kind of accusation, I call on her to withdraw that statement. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. N. Mohammed: Sen. President, with all due respect to the hon. Minister, this country knows that attacks are being made—

Mr. President: Sen. Mohammed, you have made a direct accusation and I think the Senator is correct in asking you to withdraw, if you cannot substantiate it.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, I cannot substantiate the statement about thousands but I must say that several have been attacked.

Sen. Mark: Mr. President, on a point of order. The hon. Senator said in this Senate, a few seconds ago, that the Government is guilty of attacking thousands of public servants. She has to withdraw that statement. She is now saying, Sir, that she means several. Let us be serious about what we are doing, Sir.

Mr. President: I agree with the Minister and I said if you cannot substantiate that accusation, please withdraw it.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, if I may attempt to substantiate my statement, a few days or weeks ago it was published in the newspaper that a legal secretary in a state-owned enterprise, Caroni (1975) Limited, was— *[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Sen. Mohammed, you are not substantiating your statement.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, because of the fact that my time is— *[Interruption]* Mr. President, if I may continue—*[Interruption]*

Mr. President: Order! Sen. Mohammed, will you withdraw the statement?

Sen. N. Mohammed: I withdraw the statement. *[Desk thumping]* Mr. President, thank you very much and I hope I will be given some kind of injury time.

As I was saying, with respect to the establishment of this board, we view this as an attempt to usurp the function of very senior persons involved in agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Mr. President, I was going through clause 6 which sets out the functions of the board and showing how many of these functions are at present being carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. I will continue with respect to clause 6 which says:

“The functions of the Board are:

- (e) to provide a forum for communication among farmers in the livestock industry;”

Again, this is a function that the extension services should be carrying out or are in fact carrying out in the country.

With respect to maintaining the register of livestock producers and processors, I understand that this has indeed been a problem and it does require some kind of register to be put together. If the Minister is managing his Ministry properly and implementing the policies that he is supposed to implement we would have all these things taking place. You do not need a board to do that. What you need is an effective, competent Minister; not an inept Minister whose record we well know.

Subclause (g) in clause 6 is “to advise and influence policy-makers in the best interest of the livestock industry.” If there is a Planning Division one would expect that this division would interact with those persons who are involved in the livestock industry, who are the livestock producers. There should be some kind of ongoing liaison existing.

The Minister talked about research and subclause 6(h) deals with identifying research and development and training needs and providing development

opportunities. Mr. President, I know that in the Animal Health Department they have been doing a tremendous amount of work in this regard. We know the different varieties, the different experiments that have been carried out over the years and a lot has been happening.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. President, the long and short of the matter is that we view this board as very unnecessary in light of the fact that many of the functions in this Bill, which will be conferred on the board, are already being carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. If anything, all the policy documents, all the analyses, reports, the studies which have been done in the agricultural sector, point to some very basic problems. What is required is greater co-ordination with some agencies, whether it is with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources or the Tobago House of Assembly. Here again, perhaps, if you have a competent minister who is carrying out his function properly, you would have that kind of co-ordination.

If the poultry farmers and other farmers are complaining about high water rates and they need help, what you need is a minister who would appeal to his parliamentary colleague, the Minister of Public Utilities, and ask him to lower the utility rates for the farmers in the country. That is the kind of action that is needed. You need action, not talk, not propaganda. This livestock board, really, does not address the serious issues which are affecting the livestock industry in this country. All we are saying is that you need to make the already established agencies work. You need someone who would drive the process.

When Dr. Keith Rowley was there, many positive changes were taking place. *[Interruption]* That is the kind of propaganda they are accustomed spreading in this country, as though the PNM did nothing for agriculture. Check the records and you would see. That is why this Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, when he came here in 1995, regurgitated all the already existing policies of the PNM and to this day he has said nothing new or different with respect to agriculture. This is the administration that one would have thought would have brought about that agricultural revolution in this country. They are a complete failure insofar as agriculture in this country is concerned. This Minister, who should have been fired a long time ago, should resign, because of his incompetence and the hopelessness. That is why our farmers throughout this country are holding their heads and bawling. They have some of them well-covered and the propaganda is working on their minds, but that is fooling innocent people in this country.

Mr. President, look at the situation with Caroni (1975) Limited. They also deal with livestock. Under the former administration, no less a person than the Prime Minister of the country was a signatory to the tripartite agreement whereby efforts were being made to rationalize that whole sugar industry. That company was being put on a sound footing. The intention was to make Caroni (1975) Limited cost efficient. Lo and behold, in two years time, we heard just a few weeks ago that whereas this Minister came here and the Minister of Finance announced “X” amount of dollars will be given to Caroni (1975) Limited, in fact, already they have exceeded the allocation to that company by more than \$100 million. What is going on? Every day we are reading about corruption in Caroni (1975) Limited. That situation is going from bad to worse. There is, Mr. President, with all due respect, very bad management.

What we need is a good minister who would manage the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources honestly, effectively and efficiently, not an inept minister. We want an honest minister who would operate this ministry and who would get the agencies together to work; who would drive the process so that all those conditions which we have to meet, whether it is in the agricultural sector loan, or in the White Paper that the experts in the field had put forward, would, in fact, be implemented. There is too much talk; we want action. This Government owes this population a duty. For years they gave the impression that they would solve all our problems in agriculture. Solve them now; not through a board, simply to give jobs to the boys. Not that, Mr. Minister!

From the Minister’s contribution we have seen no real justification for this board. All the matters which have been outlined by the Minister and, indeed, in the Bill, are already being dealt with by established agencies. If not the Minister, there should be somebody else who has the competence—that is what is required in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources—to drive the process positively. Instead of setting up a board, let us spend taxpayers’ money in the ministry so the agencies can operate properly.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Mr. President: I would allow Sen. Prof. Spence to make his contribution as he would like to leave after the tea break.

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Mr. President, it is not my intention to use the presenting of this Bill to give a discourse on the agricultural sector. I think we should debate agriculture separately and I would hope to bring a Private Members’

Motion in the next Parliament to address that issue, which I hope the hon. Minister would attend.

There are some things that I would like to say about this particular Bill. I am in some difficulty here, because clearly, the hon. Minister knows a great deal more about the livestock sector, certainly, than I do and more than many other persons do, because before becoming Minister he had involved himself a great deal in this sector. So if he feels that this body would, in fact, help to advance the sector, I certainly would not oppose that. But I have some sympathy for the expression which was just given by Sen. Mohammed, in wondering whether, in fact, we are not indulging in the usual Trinidad and Tobago practice of when one organization does not work, instead of amending it, we try to set up another one to carry out those functions.

I would have thought that many of the functions which are stipulated here, would be functions that should have been carried out by NAMDEVCO and some, indeed, by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources itself. So I have a little scepticism as to the need for this additional board. But as I say, if the Minister feels that it is necessary, I certainly would not oppose that.

I want to raise one issue which has not been raised yet and that is, finance. Clearly, if the board is going to carry out the functions which are given to it here under clause 6, it has to be funded. I hope that the Minister of Finance—if he would distract himself from his readings for a minute and listen—has come into this picture and realize, that if the board is, indeed, going to carry out these functions, it has to have staff. Nothing has been said in the presentation about what it is going to cost. Given how boards operate in this country, I would imagine that if it is, indeed, to function in this way, it has to have a very substantial budget. If it is not going to have a substantial budget, then it must be able to call on resources. But no authorization is given in this Bill for it to call on the resources, say, of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources or NAMDEVCO, or the like. In fact, it really is a very innocuous board.

The Minister, in his presentation, said that it would regulate, but it has no authority whatsoever in the Bill to regulate anything. It seems to me that it could have been a task force or a committee set up by Cabinet, rather than a board set up by legislation, because it really has no teeth at all, no authority to do anything. Perhaps the only activity that it does positively is to operate auction yards and facilitate the sale of animals. It would set quality guidelines, which, of course, it has no authority to enforce on any other organization, except, perhaps, its own

auction yards. So in that sense, perhaps, it will do something with some power behind it. But it does seem to me that it really is like a committee that is being set up with the hope that it will advise the Minister and influence various activities.

I certainly support the objectives which are set out in clause 6. Indeed, I would say, I agree entirely with the Minister about the role of co-operatives. If we had strong co-operative bodies with strong farmers' organizations, perhaps, successive governments could not have got away with the lack of impetus that they have given to the agricultural sector.

So my first problem would be finance. I am very interested if the Minister of Finance could enter into this debate and tell us how much money he intends to provide for this body.

I want to ask a question about the representatives of these various organizations. It always seems to me a bit peculiar when you say that there should be a representative of, for example, the Tobago House of Assembly but the appointment would be made by the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Does that mean that the minister decides who will represent the Tobago House of Assembly, or does the Tobago House of Assembly itself suggest its representative and the person is automatically appointed by the minister?

4.30 p.m.

There ought to be some thought given to how that particular issue works. Suppose there is no representative from one of these bodies, does that mean that the board is not properly constituted? It is important to address that issue because, I see one body which I think is on the way out, and that is, the Agricultural Development Bank. Clearly, any organization such as a bank which is in any way responsible for providing information about clients' business will not live for very long as a bank.

I have a loan from the Agricultural Development Bank and I intend to examine my affairs very carefully to ensure that I am able to get out from under the activities of that organization.

In any event, there is an extremely important issue arising within the Agricultural Development Bank. Its interest rates are now equivalent to those of commercial banks. They are now charging 14 per cent on their loans. Quite frankly, one wonders whether it would not be better for the Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism to do what he has done in the case of tourism. I know of one farmer who also has an interest in the tourism industry. He told me that the rates of interest for his tourism project are lower than the rates of interest for his

agricultural projects from the ADB. Is this what we want in Trinidad and Tobago, that we are prepared to encourage the tourism sector to a greater extent than we would encourage the agricultural sector? We should encourage both. Perhaps, what we should do, indeed, if we decided that this organization is not what it should be, let us face the issue squarely and allow the Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism to give tax free status on the profits for commercial bank loans to the agricultural sector. That would mean that the farmers could get their loans at a lower rate of interest and, indeed, they could be assured of all the confidentialities that they would need. Perhaps, we could finance this board by the money we have saved by shutting down the Agricultural Development Bank.

With respect to the general issue about what help we might give to farmers, the hon. Sen. Mohammed referred to the policy statement. Indeed, the present minister, I suppose one could say, paid a great compliment to the previous minister by adopting the last Green or White Paper as the policy of this Government. Clearly, there is no great difference in policy between the two governments and, indeed, the NAR government before it.

It seems to me that the two real critical issues with respect to the agricultural sector are the cost of money—that is why I referred to the high interest rates which is an important factor—and the provision of market. This is recognized in this Bill because reference was made to the increasing market possibilities by the activities of this board. Then, of course, the price. When one discusses the price, one has to look at the price of the imported products and we are still importing wheat products at highly subsidized prices and we still face the possibility that we may be forced, in the case of poultry, to accept a United States product which will be subsidized in all sorts of hidden ways that we ourselves do not yet seem to have the wit to know how to do.

In the United States, water is heavily subsidized to the agricultural sector. We only not subsidize it, but we charge industrial rates to our agricultural sector. There are all sorts of ways in which we could look at the inputs that are under the control of the Government in order to reduce them and so too reduce the cost of production.

If the hon. Minister, with his knowledge of the livestock sector, is convinced that a board of this nature would do something to advance the sector then, I certainly would not oppose it. Clearly, some of the things that the board has to look at would be matters that really fall under the purview of other organizations. I hope in the Minister's winding up he would tell the Senate either: how this body

would be financed and, therefore, have its own resources to investigate all the matters that it needs to investigate; or what mechanism there would be for it to call on the resources of other agencies and independent boards such as NAMDEVCO, or within the direct control of the Minister, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Thank you very much.

Mr. President: We will suspend for tea and resume at 5.05 p.m.

4.35 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.08 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny: Mr. President, this is a simple and straightforward Bill. I will deal with a few minor points. I looked at the composition of the board and there is no reference to the Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry. I think there is need for the presence of this institute on a board of this kind because it interfaces with the farmers. There was a slight puzzle for me at clause 5(8). I am not sure what the "Corporation" is. Perhaps, the Minister could clarify that.

As Sen. Prof. Spence said, if the Government in its wisdom sees merit for establishing a board of this kind, I would support it. I have some reservations about our society and the way in which it has developed over the years. When I look at clause 6, many of these functions are those of a ministry. If the ministry is setting up a board to perform the functions of the ministry, I am sure the Minister of Finance will look forward with glee to a reduction in the cost of the ministry.

With respect to the administration of programmes, the ministry decides to do this programme, but it does not have the in-house capability of doing so, and therefore, sends it to the board. Subclause (c) talks about collecting, storing and disseminating data and information on the activities of the industry. Collecting and storing data is not an easy task. It is very costly. The data gathering system has to be set up; the data have to be ground-truthed to ensure that dubious data are not given; then, a storage system has to be set up to see that this information does not go to parties who do not need it.

Subclause (d) would mean that the board must have technical people to monitor what is happening in the industry. I would not labour the point because I think Sen. Mohammed has already pointed it out. My concern is that many of these are functions of a ministry.

Recently, I read an article on the world economy in the *Economy* dated September 19, 1997. This article dealt with the problems of the growth of state

spending. I will not labour the Senate with the figures. In this century, there has been a trend of increasing expenditure. It might startle us to know that about 100 years ago the world's average state expenditure as part of the gross domestic product (GDP) was 8 per cent. As recently as 1960, it was 27.9 per cent. Today, the figure is about 45.9 per cent. The spread is quite immense. The United States and Japan have the lowest rate of expenditure which is approximately 30 per cent. I had a word with the Minister of Finance who said that our expenditure is approximately the same level. I think it is about \$33 billion and the state spends about \$11 billion. We are on par with the United States and Japan in terms of percentage of expenditure. We are not like Britain which spends about 45 per cent. Sweden was spending about 70 per cent.

I raise these figures because of the manner in which things are done in this country. If a body is set up for a particular function and it does not do it with the increasing expenditure, another body will be set up. There is a long history of this. I question whether this is the proper course in creating another board.

I now refer to one aspect of food production, the fisheries sector. Production of fish in this country has remained almost unchanged for four decades. There is more and more expenditure on fisheries.

I was at one time at the Fisheries Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and our establishment consisted of two professional persons and some technical staff. Today there is a Fisheries Research Division, an aquaculture section, administrative services and so forth. I do not know what the expenditure figure is, but it could certainly be quite substantial.

5.15 p.m.

To give you an example of how things go wrong—and I have had some personal experience with this. In 1952, the then Department of Agriculture, through the colonial office, established an aquaculture project at Bamboo Grove. That was supposed to solve the protein problem for poor people. Work was done and it became quite obvious at the end of three or four years' research, that it was not the solution because Trinidadians were not eating fish that tasted like mud. They wanted their Red Fish and Carite. The logical thing at the time was to guillotine the project and move on to something else, but that has not happened. There is still an aquaculture sector in the Ministry, and the last time I checked in at Bamboo Grove, there were, I think, 23 persons employed, doing absolutely nothing, and the expenditure was approximately \$800,000 per year. This was two or three years ago.

I mention this example to illustrate the problem that we have of continuing things way beyond their usefulness to society. For example, we have 20 state agencies responsible for managing the environment. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is one of them; the Ministry of Health another, and the Ministry of National Security is yet another. These simply did not function, so we set up a new one, which cost a fairly substantial sum of money, which we borrowed. Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt reminded us that the policy for the management of the environment was due last April. It went out for public comment and was savaged by the public, so we set up another agency. What has the Environmental Management Authority done? It is now recruiting consultants. I thought we were getting a high-powered authority with technical people who knew what they were doing, but it does not work that way. We buy more consultants.

My problem with the Bill is: Do we really need it? Indeed, I wonder whether the Minister might not have given us a broader overview of the agricultural sector and how this fits in. I must admit ignorance. I know there is a Cocoa and Coffee Board and some other organizations, but I always thought that if the ministry wanted to have specialized services, perhaps something other than a board of this kind, or NAMDEVCO, might have been created. In fact, I see no reason why there should not be, if the thrust is going to be developing our food production capabilities; or perhaps we really need to go back to imperial times where we had a department of agriculture where policies were clearly defined and you just simply got the people to do the work.

I would think that there might be an argument to having a super board to help the Ministry—one which would deal, not only with livestock, but food production generally, including fisheries, and possibly even including timber and forest products—and do things in one place rather than having livestock here, cocoa and coffee there and this diffused, nebulous NAMDEVCO body, which seems to achieve absolutely nothing. The livestock group in the ministry will not disappear, it will still continue as I have suggested happens in our way of doing things. I have some grave doubts about the need for it, and I am prepared to be persuaded by the minister that this is absolutely urgent. I suggest that there should be a rethink of where we are headed.

This business of the growth of the state is something which we in Parliament ought to watch because it is a limited pie and when some of it is directed off, it means that services in other parts of the state may not get what is due.

I must confess my shock last Tuesday at seeing this list. I am told it is not exhaustive, but looking through it, I see that the Ministry of Planning and

Development has someone who is being paid \$30,000 per month to help develop the national plan. When I look at the name of the person, I realize that this person actually holds a full-time senior lectureship at the University of the West Indies. We know that it is not our money: UNDP is paying, but we will pay for it.

I am only familiar with one name on this list, but here we have a ministry with senior civil servants. Can you imagine what it does to a senior civil servant who has been before the mast for 20 years to see someone come in as Project Co-ordinator? Who is doing the work? The senior civil servants. What are you paying them? A salary of \$6,000, \$7,000 or \$8,000 per month, and you have a full-time employee of the University of the West Indies being paid \$30,000 per month. This is totally out of control.

I take the point Sen. Mohammed was making about the effect on the civil servants. It must be very, very depressing to think that one is a professional economist in a ministry, working on a national development plan for the citizens of this nation, and the government of the day feels it necessary to get the services of somebody paid for by the UNDP, but someone who is in full-time service in another institution, which is also part of our system.

I raise this concern because, working in Parliament now, I have to educate myself away from science and so forth, to economics and I am starting to become very worried at the uncontrolled growth of state institutions, the multiplication of institutions doing exactly the same thing, which means that we are wasting our resources which might be directed to more productive aspects of our society.

I thank you.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, let me assure this Senate that I am not the person who is getting the \$30,000 per month. The day I get \$30,000 per month, I will retire.

I welcome the opportunity to speak on this Bill, not because I support its particular formulation, but because I agree with the general intention behind and all around it, to develop agriculture. I have to note, however, that I am still looking for the kind of incentives and concessions to be given to agriculture that are being given to the hotel and tourism industry.

I have three related concerns with this Bill. One of them is an objective we should all have and that is to make the food supply more secure. If the Livestock and Livestock Products Board Bill is going to help us to increase the food supply and make it possible for us to know for sure that we will not run out of this, that,

or the other, then I have to support it. This is one of the overriding aims of the economy, not only in relation to livestock. One of the aims ought to be to make the food supply more secure.

5.25 p.m.

Connected with this, Mr. President, is the need to produce more of what we like to eat. This is particularly true in the case of livestock since our import bill for livestock is a massive one. We like to eat meat, and if we like to eat meat, we have to start to produce it. The alternative is to eat less meat and produce more of the things that we can more easily produce.

Mr. President, the third objective which I want to emphasize in connection with this Bill—and it ought to be an objective of the economy—is to cultivate our eating habits and direct them to what we produce, or can produce. I do not mean that we should drink oil and inhale natural gas. *[Laughter]* I mean that we should look at the whole agricultural sector and see what are the things that grow naturally in our environment, what animals would breed more freely, these are the things on which we should concentrate. If it so happens that our land space does not allow us to raise enough cattle, then one has to start to eat goat. As far as I understand, goats need much less land, they eat old tin cups, old paper, dry grass, all kinds of things and the meat is non-fattening and goat milk is very nutritious. I would think that a livestock board may want to consider whether it would like to divert our attention from cattle and suggest the production of more goat and sheep, to cultivate our eating habits and direct them to what we can, or do produce.

I am in support of the intentions behind the Bill. I can see that it would increase employment, livestock production and reduce the import bill. I am glad to see that for the first time we hear a Government talking about encouraging an industry that is not an export industry. It seems that everything we produce is to sell, and for once we seem to be backing up an industry where we are producing for our own use.

Mr. President, I think that the Livestock and Livestock Products Board has an important function to play in deciding between the different kinds of livestock and what would be the best land use. It would have been good to see a geographer on the board so he could look at the map of Trinidad, see the soil, see what kind of grass grows where, where we can raise goats and cattle and so forth.

This Bill gives me a chance to seek enlightenment on something which has worried me a great deal over the years. As a layman—that is a kind of pun which will become clear later—I have some serious questions about the chicken industry;

and as a literary critic, I feel I can talk about poultry, but I want to raise questions on whether the poultry industry should not aim to eliminate its dependence on the importation of eggs for hatching, for baby chicks or for feed.

It is a good thing I do not eat meat. If I were eating meat, I would want a chicken with muscle, I would want eggs that have yolks, eggs which one has to burst for the yolks to burst. It must not burst as soon as the eggs are cracked. I would want chickens that feed on water grass; dry corn; chipped coconut and local foods. I would want a fowl I would have to run down and catch before I eat it. I would want meat, not cardboard. When I used to eat meat, one of the things that put me off meat was chicken, because it tasted like paper.

I am just highlighting the extent to which the interest of commerce and convenience has transformed the concept of the chicken and the industry and to ask whether it may not be worthwhile to consider the reduction in the size of farms; increase the number and bring about a better distribution of farms across the country allowing persons to make use of local food, grain and so forth; allowing us to break the dependence upon imports for the chicken industry. I hope that the Minister would set me straight on this. This is the sort of discussion that the livestock board ought to be qualified to carry on or to set up in the country.

The Livestock and Livestock Products Board ought to have working relationships with other agencies in agricultural production. There is need for an overall organization such as Sen. Prof. Kenny is proposing, so that somebody would decide to take 10 tonnes of manure and use it in agricultural production or take the coconuts that are being killed by the soya oil industry and use them to feed chicken. We would need a body that is aware of the whole agricultural sector and see how the different parts of agriculture can be made to work in relationship to one another, so we make of them a system or a structure that can grow from within, out of the working together of its different parts in a fruitful relationship to one another.

I am supporting the principle behind Sen. Prof. Kenny's contribution that there is an overriding need to co-ordinate the different elements in the agricultural sector. Looking at the membership of the board, I feel that we need a nutritionist/dietitian because there is need for people to tell us confidently that goat's milk is more nutritious than cow's milk; there is need for one to inform us that goat's meat has just as much protein as other meats; there is need to be informed about our eating habits; that one does not have to eat meat seven times a week. We need economists and geographers who will help us to look at the land

distribution policy and the land use policy. We need more persons who know about agro-processing on the board. I applaud the fact that they say there is need for someone to represent the University of the West Indies.

I think they should call for an agricultural scientist from the University of the West Indies, not a representative of the University of the West Indies. I take it that is the intention behind the proposal.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. President, if we cannot get an agency that overlooks the whole agricultural sector and brings the different parts into relation with one another, I think we need to have a livestock board whose members can make a gesture towards relating livestock to the rest of the agricultural economy. Those are my main thoughts and suggestions.

I just want to make a brief summary. I feel that our objective should be to put the elements in the agricultural sector in productive relation with one another. We should educate our eating habits and relate these changed eating habits to agricultural and food production, thereby solving some of the problems of the economy and contributing to the creation of a healthy population. I think we should co-ordinate our agricultural policies to work towards a secure and independent food supply, and thus restore some of the autonomy that is being lost in today's global economy.

Thank you.

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie: Mr. President, I would just like to ask the hon. Minister one question which I hope he would answer in his winding up. Mr. Minister, through you, Mr. President, these organizations that would be represented on the board, have you had any feedback from them? Have they approached you and told you that they think this is the way to go to solve the problems that you are trying to solve through this board? Or, are you going to impose a board on them and ask them to send representatives to form a board? My question is: Is this board originating from you, or is it originating from them?

Thank you very much.

Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr: Mr. President, I do not intend to make a speech. One question that passed through my mind as I studied this very carefully and

Livestock Products Board Bill
[SEN. DR. ST. CYR]

Tuesday, October 14, 1997

compactly put together draft Bill is this: Do we need a government statutory board which, more than likely, would be funded out of state funds and become another layer of bureaucracy? Or, do we need an industry initiated corporation which would probably fund itself, bring more industry information to bear on the problems, and rely on market-driven forces for coming up with solutions to these general problems?

I thank you, Sir.

Sen. Martin Daly: Mr. President, it never ceases to amaze me how the tide and atmosphere in Parliament changes. The mood changes. I want to take up a theme that has been struck by others which is not only the necessity for the board and what it is going to cost, but I think it is important to, very briefly, say something about the composition of the board. I will come back to that in a minute.

It was very interesting to see how this debate developed. The more mischievous among us saw distinct possibilities to just set up another board the Minister said we needed, and yield to the Minister's assertion that we need it. Then, we started to discuss the cost and whether it would be effective, everyone suddenly got very serious. No one got more serious than the Minister of Finance when Prof. Kenny told him there was a group spending \$800,000 a year in agriculture. I could see his lightening brain—particularly since his recent visit to the Far East—computing what he could do with that \$800,000. In fact, I saw him ready to leap out of his chair to ask Prof. Kenny for more details so he could go there tomorrow and close them down. That caused the whole debate to shift, and it caused people to think.

While I share all the sentiments expressed before, I think it is totally unnecessary, because this board is going to do what the ministry should be doing. I have another concern. I speak frequently, Mr. President, as you know, about the sins of Government with a capital “G”. There is a sameness and a staleness about this structure that bothers me. Let us consider, first of all, we are looking at 11 members to deal with one part of the agricultural sector. I think it is generally accepted—and I dare say all those who sit in Cabinet probably wish the board of Cabinet was rather smaller. The meetings would probably start more on time, be a lot shorter, and generally be a lot more efficient. I know some of those over there with their eyes closed are calling up mental pictures of how long Cabinet meetings take because Cabinet is so big and everyone has to have a say.

That is my problem with this. The staleness of the composition of the board is a very serious problem in this country. We repeat all the time, the mantras of the foreign organizations who now govern us, and say we need to have private sector/Government partnerships in order to move forward with the liberalization process, and the state must become less involved in the economy and require the private sector to do more. That is the mantra according to which our Government is operating.

If you follow that logically, if you need a board at all, we would have a board of the type proposed by Sen. Dr. St. Cyr; that is to say, basically, industry oriented and market driven. They will know best of all which of these subsectors should be on the board, and then they in turn can perform the clause 6 functions and tender whatever advice is required to the ministry. The state does not go further into the economy but strikes up the state/private sector partnership. That is what we should be doing logically if we are following the process of liberalization. Assuming we need a board at all, we should not even be determining the number or composition of the board. Moreover, what we are continuing by legislation like this, which I see repeatedly, is that everybody must get in the action. So the reason we have 11 people is because on page 4, the Government has to have people involved. I speak about the Government with a capital "G", because this problem is in all our legislation. The Government is not quite able to trust the private sector people to form a board and give advice. It has to have its few "macos" there.

5.45 p.m.

Then, of course, when they start choosing their Government "macos" they say, "Well boy, I have to take one from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources". Then another ministry will say, "This concerns me as much as the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources so you have to have one of my people too", and the thing just keeps growing.

Mr. President, you know what it is like, and again, I am sure we have all had this experience. Frequently, one would like to have a party and the type of party may vary with one's mood. I know I have always been saved a lot of money, not that I have many friends, my contributions in the Senate ensure that I do not. But the fact is, one starts saying, "Well boy, we want to have a really fun time, short pants, bare foot and cuatro. You know, Brian is good with the cuatro, but he sits next to Joe in the Parliament and if we ask Brian to play the cuatro and we do not invite Joe, he will be vex with us, so we have to invite Joe too. Then, if you invite

Livestock Products Board Bill
[SEN. DALY]

Tuesday, October 14, 1997

Joe, remember last week you met Joe's cousin by Joe's house and he told you that next time you are having something invite him".

This is exactly the same thing, you know. It is the inability to focus on what is the proper core group you require. So you do not want to offend the Tobago House of Assembly so they must have someone, and so on and so forth. The criticisms have already been made about the National Agricultural and Marketing Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO). So one has NAMDEVCO, that already has people like this, and then you pick one out of that side and superimpose it in here. Mr. President, consider this, all these people have to meet once a month. So the NAMDEVCO person has to fit in a meeting with NAMDEVCO, they have to fit in a meeting here, they have to do whatever it is they normally do.

I think we need to get out of this thinking. If we are going to have these kinds of structures, we have to be very clear and logical about what we are doing. This is the worst possible mishmash. So far as the private sector is concerned the Government is—not the Government—we, the legislators are dictating who is really required, and we do not really know. The minister may have had some technical advice and so forth, but we do not really know. The Government really has no business in it, because it has a ministry already and, anyway, to get all these 11 people to find a mutually convenient day to meet once a month, well, we know what is the meeting syndrome right now.

That is why we need to break out of this. This is why I have a lot of difficulty supporting a piece of legislation like this, because I think it represents the continued stale approach of how we get the different sectors in the economy or the different sectors of production moving. Therefore, I think the whole thing needs to be rethought. Really, there is no need for the Government people here. If it is to tender advice to the ministry, then set up a board and let the private sector people choose, in the way that Sen. Dr. St. Cyr has suggested.

Mr. President, apart from the costs, the practicalities of getting all these people to meet and, from the overspecific definitions that they have here, they also have—let me repeat, particularly as the minister moving this Bill does not come to the Senate often, the sins of the Government. It has nothing to do with this or that minister, but all of us who have been around long enough know that in politics people will say, "Well, I will put you on a board". Mr. President, I would love to do a survey of how many people, who ultimately get appointed to boards by the Cabinet because names are brought forward, are chosen at parties, river "limes" or as a result of someone complaining that they canvassed for votes for the particular

party and they have not gotten anything. One hears the expression all the time: "Well, I will put you on a board". My ears are down and I have been in this a long time. They say, "I will put you on a board", and then the other says, "Oh God, chief, I canvas for votes for you all up the hill." They will put you on a board. Then they start to look around and they get board appointments that way. I am not suggesting for a minute that is the majority of board appointments. It happens. Let us get real, let us live in the real world of Trinidad and Tobago and understand how these things happen.

Then, the other thing that happens is one will then find that one has—as I believe the new High Commissioner to Canada found out—36 one-man or one-woman organizations that represent the pork subsector. Each of these 36 organizations canvassed for you in a different constituency, so you cannot afford to alienate any of them. So then, bacchanal breaks out about who in the pork subsector should be put on the board.

The reason the Government should not be in this is because it is inviting that kind of trouble. If the minister is not choosing those people, then he does not have that kind of trouble. He can place the blame for someone's inclusion or exclusion on the person's peer group. We have got to get away from this business about the government moving people around on a board like chess pieces. It is not going to work. I have been chairman of a state enterprise, I had many experiences in life that tell me this is not going to work. It simply is not going to work. It is not practical, it is wrongly composed and it has not been properly thought out. I want to alarm the Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism some more: it is going to cost us a lot of money. The travel expenses, finding places to meet, the staff that is required. This is like top seeds, it is just going to grow and grow and it really is not going to work very well.

I am joining that section of the debate that deals with the whole philosophy of why we use these types of structures at all. I have a problem with these structures, and my particular problem is the mishmash way it is done and the fact that the Government is the selector and, therefore, we are going to have all these other difficulties. If they really need help, or some kind of partnership or activity between these bodies, then go out and tell the industry, "We need you people to put forward a board, get us a board. We are looking for four or five people who are knowledgeable in these fields. Of course, they will have to be acceptable to us," and form it that way, form it from the ground up. It is not going to work any other

Livestock Products Board Bill
[SEN. DALY]

Tuesday, October 14, 1997

way. The Government just invites political trouble. People will say, "You have not put me on that board and I know the most about pigs in Trinidad".

Mr. President, to bring or nail home this point, I am going to make a reference that really grieved me. Because you know I am very strong on what should be gracious behaviour, particularly among people who portray themselves as leaders. It kind of slipped from Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed this afternoon, I could understand why she got into a little confusion about it. We have all welcomed the new Senator to this Parliament. She has not been here for more than one session and what do we see? I had the privilege of having tea with her this afternoon. What do we see? Carp, carp, carp! Just like the little pig farmer groups, the dairy farmer groups and everything else. One part in Tobago says they were not consulted about the appointment, another part says they were not—I mean, you think that is a proper introduction of people to public service? You mean Trinidadians have become so mean, small-minded and territory conscious that if one among us gets an opportunity to serve the public we cannot all come together and say, "Well done, we are behind you, we hope you serve us well"? Carp, carp, carp! Look for territory.

I bring it up, not to be offensive. I bring it up to deprecate it and say how ungracious and bad-mannered it is that we have lost the art of saying to someone in our community who gets advancement, "We are all going to stand behind you". I bring it up in this context to make sure that everyone understands that it is not a figment of my imagination. Just like we have carping over something like that, we are going to have carping by who really represents the dairy sector, the pork sector, the poultry sector; who is closer to the Government who was selecting it. It is doomed to failure. It is doomed because it takes no account of the realities of social and political intercourse in Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like this Government to break out of the mold of doing things in the same old way. We need fresh thinking, fresh approaches, governments which understand that Trinidad and Tobago has changed and that when we are structuring things we have to bring all these different things in our social conditions together. So I really hope the minister will not take offence and he will pay careful attention to the objections we are raising. They are neither personal nor political. They are all based on simple, practical considerations of how these things operate in Trinidad and Tobago. It is almost impossible now to put together a coherent group of people in Trinidad and Tobago unless they do it themselves. Therefore, it is important that the Government break out of this same old PNM

way, anyhow way, DLP way; they all do it! Break out of this same old way of this board syndrome and having these board appointments so we could put you on a board and all this kind of business.

5.55 p.m.

Mr. President, that is my objection to this Bill. I really hope that because we are having a very calm and measured debate about this, the Government would take seriously, all the objections being raised to boards and doing things this way. We are not attacking just this particular board but we are saying that this is a golden opportunity to rethink how you do things and break out of the same old syndrome.

I find it very difficult to agree to doing something that is so illogical and about which I have great reservations as to whether it is going to work. I am sure the Minister is right that we need a board. I am in no position to challenge him; I know absolutely nothing about this except that I eat some of these things—not the people, the products. What I am saying is, if he needs a board we have to do away with this same old packaging, do some repackaging and pay some attention to the practicalities and cost of doing things these days. Therefore, I would like the composition of this board to be rethought.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, before moving the adjournment, I will inform fellow Senators that we are going to continue debate on this Livestock and Livestock Products Board Bill and then proceed to deal with the Limitation of Certain Actions Bill 1997 and the Venture Capital (Amdt.) Bill, 1997, thereafter.

I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, October 21, 1997 at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.00 p.m.