

*Leave of Absence**Thursday, August 3, 2000***SENATE***Thursday, August 3, 2000*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. President: Hon. Members, leave of absence from sittings of the Senate has been approved for the following members: Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar from today's sitting; Sen. Dr. The Hon. Daphne Phillips from today's sitting and Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand from July 30 to August 5.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: I have received the following pieces of correspondence from His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, T.C.,
O.C.C., S.C., President and Commander-in-Chief of
the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

\s\ Arthur N. R. Robinson
President.

TO: MR. VINCENT CABRERA

WHEREAS Senator Finbar K. Gangar is incapable of performing his functions as a Senator by reason of illness:

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, VINCENT CABRERA, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 3rd August, 2000 and continuing during the period of illness of the said Senator Finbar K. Gangar.

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 2nd day of
August, 2000.”

Senators' Appointment
[MR. PRESIDENT]

Thursday, August 3, 2000

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, T.C., O.C.C.,
S.C., President and Commander-in-Chief of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

\s\ Arthur N. R. Robinson
President.

TO: DR. GEORGE DHANNY

WHEREAS Senator Dr. Daphne Phillips is incapable of performing her functions as a Senator by reason of illness:

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, GEORGE DHANNY, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 3rd August, 2000 and continuing during the period of illness of the said Senator Dr. Daphne Phillips.

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 2nd day of August,
2000.”

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, T.C.,
O.C.C., S.C., President and Commander-in-Chief of
the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

\s\ Arthur N. R. Robinson
President.

TO: MRS. LAILA SULTAN-KHAN VALERE

WHEREAS Senator Professor Kenneth Ramchand is incapable of performing his functions as a Senator by reason of his 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 40 (2) (c) and section 44 of the Constitution of

Senators' Appointment

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the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, LAILA SULTAN-KHAN VALERE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Professor Kenneth Ramchand.

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 2nd day of August, 2000."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The following Senators took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law:

Vincent Cabrera, George Dhanny, Laila Sultan-Khan Valere

PAPERS LAID

1. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Arima Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark)*]
2. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Arima Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Accounts of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended December 31, 1995. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Accounts of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]
5. Annual Audited Financial Statements of National Helicopter Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 1999. [*Sen. The Hon. W. Mark*]

**SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT
Presentation**

The Minister of National Security (Sen. Brig. The Hon. Joseph Theodore): Mr. President, I have the honour to present the second interim report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on a Bill to amend the Praedial Larceny Prevention Act, Chap. 10:03 and a Bill to amend the summary Offences Act, Chap. 11:02

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

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

Toco Bay Port

- 16.** A. Could the hon. Minister of Works and Transport state whether outline or final planning approval has been given for the establishment of a port at Toco Bay.
- B. If the answer is in the affirmative could the hon. Minister inform the Senate of:
- (i) the total area of land being acquired for this purpose and its market value;
 - (ii) the total area of sea bottom being reclaimed;
 - (iii) whether an environmental impact assessment was conducted;
 - (iv) the names of the firm and the names of the principal investigators who conducted the environmental impact assessment;
 - (v) whether such environmental impact assessment has been reviewed by the Environmental Management Authority.

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, I beg to move that the answer to question No. 16 be deferred for two weeks.

Question, by leave, deferred.

TOCO FERRY PORT PROJECT

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. President, it is my duty to present to this honourable Chamber the policy of the Government on a matter that has attracted wide public interest.

The present administration has a stated and demonstrated policy of balanced development. This policy of balanced development applies to the physical infrastructure, economic development and human development. The Government's policy of balanced development is, in effect, an affirmative action programme. Mr. President, in the implementation of the policy of balanced development, the present administration has been directing benefits to those groups in the society which have suffered neglect under past administrations. This policy has also been directing physical infrastructure and social programmes to regions of the country that had been left behind by previous policy-makers.

The Toco region and the Toco community have not, in the past, been provided with the infrastructure, means and the opportunities to meaningfully improve the lives of the people there. To correct this unjust situation, the Government has opted for a number of measures specific to the development of Toco. A major measure is the proposed development of the Toco ferry port and its ancillary projects. As is always the case, good news for any group or region in our country is sometimes bad news for some people, some organizations and groups opposed to the Government.

The Toco ferry port project will bring immediate and measurable benefit to the region—that cannot be questioned, Mr. President—improvement that will come in the overall improvement of the physical infrastructure. This will include roads and water, electricity and other services. A new secondary school has already been built there. This will put an end to the need for children of the Toco community to travel long distances to and from school. The proposed project will create jobs for the people of Toco. The project will also create opportunities for micro businesses, small businesses, cottage industries, individual entrepreneurs and ecotourism. The Toco ferry project will also be of direct benefit to Tobago in areas that will be obvious.

Not surprisingly, objections to the Toco project have been raised in the other place and elsewhere. It is to be noted, Sir, that comments about this particular project are not couched as queries seeking enlightenment about the project. Unfortunately there have been some accusations, assertions and allegations directed to the Government and at individuals prepared to facilitate the project. All of this, Mr. President, is a replay of many other occurrences in terms of other developmental projects throughout the country.

Against the backdrop that I have just given, I wish to inform this honourable Chamber of the following: firstly, the Toco project remains at the proposal stages. The Cabinet has made no decision, save and except that the feasibility of the Toco

Toco Ferry Port Project
[SEN. THE HON. S. BAKSH]

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ferry project and its viability in social, environmental and economic terms be established. Secondly, Mr. President, the Government will not permit longline fishing anywhere within the territorial waters of Trinidad and Tobago and certainly not off Toco. [*Desk thumping*] Thirdly and finally, Mr. President, the Cabinet is now considering an alternative location for a ferry hub to provide another transportation link with Tobago.

These are the facts, Mr. President, and I hope that this will, in fact, end the speculation. I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT
Adoption

The Minister of National Security (Sen. Brig. The Hon. Joseph Theodore): Mr. President, I beg to move the following motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that the Senate adopt the second interim report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on a Bill to amend the Praedial Larceny Prevention Act, Chap. 13:03, and a Bill to amend the Summary Offences Act, Chap. 11:02.

On Tuesday, July 4, 2000, Mr. President, an interim report of your committee was laid at a sitting of the Senate. By motion of the Senate on the same day that it was laid the report was adopted. Acting in accordance with Senate Standing Orders 51(2), your committee was granted an extension of 21 days to complete its deliberation. Since the presentation of the interim report your committee held two meetings on July 6, 2000 and July 20, 2000 on the matter. However, your committee was still unable to meet the deadline and finalize its report within the stipulated time-frame. Consequently, Mr. President, your committee wishes to report that it was unable to complete consideration of the Bills. Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of Senate Standing Order 51(2) your committee is reporting progress until the presentation of its final report.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Senate adopt the second interim report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on a Bill to amend the Praedial Larceny Prevention Act, Chap. 10:03 and a Bill to amend the Summary Offences Act, Chap. 11:02.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. President, I seek the leave of the Senate to deal with "Private Business" at this stage of the proceedings and, in particular, "Bills Second Reading", before proceeding to Motions.

Agreed to.

1.50 p.m.

ASHTANG YOGA ASSOCIATION (INC'N) BILL

Order for second reading read.

Sen. Nizam Baksh: Mr. President, I beg to move,

That the Bill for the incorporation of the Ashtang Yoga Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and for matters incidental thereto, be now read a second time.

Just to give in a nutshell, the aims and objectives of this organization:

- (a) To form a nucleus of people devoted to the brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, class, colour or religion;
- (b) To investigate the divine laws of nature and their relationship to man;
- (c) To develop through study, discipline and practical application, the powers latent in man, particularly through the practice of yogic science; and
- (d) To engage in devoted service to humanity at the physical, mental and spiritual levels and to encourage all other individuals, groups or organizations similarly engaged.

It is an organization with three types of membership: ordinary, life and honorary. Mr. President, a special select committee of the House of Representatives was appointed to consider and report on the Bill. The committee's report was adopted by the House and the Bill was passed.

I beg to move.

Question proposed.

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 to 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

Senate resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.

AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Mr. President, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas an efficient agricultural industry forms the basis of every successful economy; and

Whereas agricultural output continues its secular decline in Trinidad and Tobago; and

Whereas Government's stated policy is to diversify the economy and stimulate broad-based growth;

Be it resolved that Government fully explain its policy towards agriculture and detail the measures it has taken and propose to take to raise agricultural output and incomes and enhance the quality of rural life.

Mr. President, when I started preparing to present this Motion, my wife said to me, "I hope you are going to say something new. You talk so much about agriculture, are you going to say something new?" [Laughter] I said to her that all the things I have said have not been adopted by the various governments I have said them to. Why should I say something new? I think they are still valid. I will continue to say them until somebody tries them and finds them warranted, or else shows me in a logical, rational way why the things that I have said cannot work. I will try to state things in a different way, if not entirely new.

I have 12 issues here to mention briefly, because really what we are looking for here is a policy statement by the Government. I will just mention some of the issues which I hope will be addressed in the Government's policy statement.

Mr. President, it may well be that because the Minister is speaking immediately after and, therefore, will not have had an opportunity to listen to me these points and respond to them, I hope we will be able later on in this debate to waive our Standing Orders in order that the honourable Minister could, perhaps, make a second contribution. It is an important debate, I think, and really one does not want to stick too much to procedure which may inhibit a thorough exchange of views on this topic. Later on, if the opportunity arises, I hope to persuade the Senate—it might be useful—to have the hon. Minister, perhaps unusually, make a second contribution before my final response at the end of the debate.

The first point I mention is the state of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. Again, I will not go into detailed figures because I have done this fairly recently on a Motion which Dr. St. Cyr had on the economy. Suffice it to say that between 1995 and 1999, the figures show that there has been a 15 per cent negative change in the agricultural contribution to the GDP. The food import bill has increased by some 22 per cent over the same period and employment rates have gone down by the figures I—have been able to arrive at from the Central Statistical Office in the Central Bank—by some 8 per cent.

The latter does not necessarily mean a diminution in agricultural production, because as we go along, we will discuss the fact that, perhaps, we should be looking for lower employment in direct agricultural production if we are to have a modern agricultural system. Nevertheless, that is the situation as it is. Sugar has fluctuated in a couple of bad years due to poor froghopper control where the industry in direct production lost a couple hundred million dollars. Cocoa has declined and most of the others have tended to stay more or less at the same level without any increase while food imports have been going up.

The second issue I would like to touch on, which I hope will be expanded to a much larger degree by the hon. Minister is the government programmes. The programmes that I have been able to discern from what has been said, subsidies on production and, as I stated before, I do not think these are likely to be successful. Even one of the Government Ministers, hon. Morgan Job, in one of his presentations earlier on Dr. St. Cyr's Motion, stated that he had been involved, when he worked with government, in handing out subsidies for ploughing, and the amount of money he handed out for subsidies could have ploughed Trinidad twice.

There is a problem with subsidies and production processes. Our experience in the past has been that they are unlikely to increase agricultural production, they are open to corruption, they involve an increase in the bureaucracy and they may benefit individual farmers either in their farming efforts or perhaps through various devices personally rather than directly in agricultural production.

Subsidies have continued on rice—I think that is good—on sugar, not directly but through subsidies to Caroni—that I think is necessary—on cocoa, and I think milk. I think that those rice subsidies perhaps have had to continue, and I hope we will hear from the hon. Minister just how those are working. Certain wholesale markets have been constructed and that is good. Again, I had my doubts that they would lead to increased production. At least it would make life easier for the farmers in marketing their goods.

Access roads have been built. I do not think I have seen any evidence that there has been proper planning in the location of these roads. I have said repeatedly in this Senate that one does not build access roads until one has an agricultural plan and one knows where to build the roads to areas of production. I still have a question mark on access roads.

There was a corn programme proposed by the previous Minister. I suspect it has been an abysmal failure. Perhaps the hon. Minister will tell us what has happened with that programme. Of course, there was the initiative on the growing of apples. Nothing more has been heard about that. The least said, the better, no doubt.

Then, of course, there are the normal services in research extension and credit which I had hoped to mention in a little more detail, but basically, just to touch on points, I hope we will hear from the hon. Minister at this stage to say a great deal about these various points. I hope in winding up to respond to whatever is said by the hon. Minister.

With respect to credit facilities, the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) is still the major agency of governmental loans to the agricultural sector. I think, largely through having to borrow money through the Inter-American Development Bank, the bank has had to become more commercially oriented. So, we have a situation now where the Agricultural Development Bank is lending at 15 per cent, whereas if one wants to build a hotel in Tobago, one can get a rate of interest from a commercial bank of 9 per cent because of government policy.

I have already suggested to the hon. Minister of Finance that what we should do is have a window of opportunity through the commercial banks for agriculturists the way we do for tourism. That is, the bank should not have to pay tax on the profits they make on loans to the agricultural sector. I am not suggesting at this stage that we should close down the Agricultural Development Bank immediately, but we should open another window of opportunity similar to the one we have for tourism in the agricultural sector. I have other reservations about the Agricultural Development Bank, but because I am a borrower from that bank, I think it is better not to voice those at this stage.

I believe that we could use the same machinery we use for tourism, for agriculture. Why not add agriculture to TIDCO's responsibility? I do not believe that a ministry should undertake the vetting of agricultural products which would be approved for this window that would be available through commercial banks. I do not think the ministry is in a position to do that. We have to set up new machinery.

As much as I have reservations about TIDCO, why do we not put TIDCO in order and add agriculture to it so that we could have TIDCO being tourism, agriculture and industry? After all, agriculture must be closely linked to tourism, if it is going to be successful, because that is one of the markets we hope will develop. I went to a seminar in Tobago earlier this year on agro-tourism and, of course, industry because the processing of agricultural products becomes very important. Indeed, listening to the hon. Minister speak about Caroni (1975) Limited, the one bright spot appears to be the processing of sugar cane product into rum. That certainly is an important aspect of our agricultural industry. I think we ought to give serious consideration to how we provide credit facilities to that sector.

It seems to me really quite unusual to have a development bank which is charging interest rates as high as commercial banks. What is the use of having it? We have the whole machinery of a separate bank when we could use the machinery which is already available in the commercial banks, and I think, therefore, allow the farmers to have lower interest rates.

Marketing, of course, is important. I, myself, have just mentioned the wholesale markets which I think are a good development, absolutely no doubt about that. In the past I have suggested that the biggest market for our local agricultural production should be a school feeding programme, suitably expanded. It should be a market, not of 75 million, but 350 million which could feed all the schoolchildren throughout the year. Even if we charge a small fee for the meals, I would not expand on that at this stage, because I have spoken about it in the past, and no doubt, in winding up will speak about it again, if we do not get much response from the hon. Minister on that score. I think this is an excellent opportunity for stimulating local production in the agricultural sector.

With respect to foreign markets, really, there is evidence in the one area in which the Government is directly involved in marketing—which is in cocoa—that we really do not understand that international marketing is a strictly commercial enterprise. We cannot treat it as if it is a Government department and have as its CEO, an extension officer, and its chairman, a university professor. That cannot work.

International marketing of cocoa is a competitive business, and we really have to understand that in this day and age where we are so interested in the private sector, in what it can do, surely the chairman of a cocoa marketing board should be a commercial person; somebody from the private sector rather than a university

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professor. Of course, what is happening is that our cocoa production is declining and we are going to lose our foreign markets eventually, if we do not change our policy.

The fifth item I hope we will hear the hon. Minister speak on is our land use policy. Again, I have spoken recently about the alienation of agricultural lands. It is still happening. If we drive to the airport now, we can see a village being put down on what is the last little pocket of good agricultural land in the northern part of the country. We just do not learn from mistakes which past governments have made. We filled up the Diego Martin Valley with houses, we filled up the Maracas Valley with houses, all on class—one agricultural land. On the foothills of the northern range between Tacarigua and Arima, that is class—one agricultural land, and Trinidad, quite frankly, does not have on the whole, a great deal of good agricultural land.

2.10 p.m.

They may be fertile in the sense of having nutrients, but their physical structure is such that they are not easy to manage. They waterlog in the rainy season and dry out and crack in the dry season. Heavy clays are not the easiest soils to manage and that is what most of our land in Trinidad is like except the little pockets in which we manage to put concrete. I looked at Minister John when I mentioned asphalt. I also should have said concrete. [*Laughter*] So, alienation of agricultural land continues and one cannot understand why.

The second point I would like to make is the preservation of state lands. Now, Trinidad and Tobago is very lucky, much luckier than most countries in this part of the world. In most of the Latin American countries, much of the landmass is owned by the private sector, by private persons. Therefore, it is more difficult to have an agricultural policy under those circumstances. We have been very lucky, for historical reasons, that the state owns most of the land in Trinidad and Tobago. I keep making this point because, again, one hears talk of privatization of Caroni (1975) Limited and private sector investment in Caroni (1975) Limited.

This must not mean alienation of the land from the state. Why do we not proceed to vest the land that belongs to Caroni (1975) Limited in the state and then lease it back to Caroni (1975) Limited so that if and when we privatize, the land would not be passed away from the state? That is critical to the future of our agriculture in this country.

The same applies to the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises land. If the oil companies, not just Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises as a company, but the other oil companies that own large tracts—between the oil companies and Caroni (1975) Limited, a large area of the land mass of Trinidad and Tobago is owned by the state or by agencies of the state. Unless we transfer this land back to the state then lease it back to these companies, eventually it will be alienated, if not by this Government, by some government in the future. I think that is an urgent development which we do not seem to have accepted, a good land use policy for Trinidad and Tobago.

We really must decide which areas of land are for development and which areas of land are going to be kept in agriculture. Because once we have put it into concrete or asphalt, it is extremely difficult to reverse the process so we cannot in this term think about five, 10 or 15 years; we really have to think of our great, great grandchildren when we come to decide what is proper use for our agricultural land.

Another policy which I do not see governments addressing, either now or in the past, is that of farm size. Now, if we are coming to a situation where we want to have a modern, competitive agricultural system, to have free trade in all its aspects, eventually we will have to reduce our subsidies and maintain them as long as we can. We have to address the problem of farm size. We cannot expect to be internationally competitive and have cocoa farmers producing cocoa on five acres of land. It just will not work and, of course, most of these farmers are not full-time farmers. They are part-time farmers and they drive taxis or do some other thing. They have to because they cannot make a living on five acres of land producing cocoa.

Government policy has got to be that small farmers will produce high priced crops and that has to be stated policy and adhered to. If we are distributing land to small farmers in small acreages of land, they have to be high priced crops. Five acres of vegetables can make a man rich if he is successful, but five acres of cocoa will leave him in poverty. We have to address the issue of farm size in relation to the crops that we are producing. When we look at the United States growing corn, it is square miles of corn, large tracts of land, because you do not grow corn on five acres of land. Of course, that is what we tried to do within the term of this Government following the previous government.

The previous Minister had the same policy for small farmers to produce corn to compete with corn from the Midwest. I mean, it is just so nonsensical. Clearly, that has to be an extremely important part of our policy, that is, we must wean

farmers and, of course, this is an emotive issue because people will say that you are against small farmers. I have been lucky so far. Nobody has accused me of being against small farmers, but every time I say it, I fear that I am going to be accused of being against small farmers. No.

I think small farmers should grow crops that would make them well off but they should not be encouraged to borrow money from the European Development Fund to rehabilitate small cocoa farms. That is a complete waste of effort and the Europeans ought to be ashamed of themselves if they are going to give us money for that sort of activity. It really is out of order, but we could do something with cocoa. We should have at least family size farms. If you calculate it, between 50 and 100 acres could probably give a reasonable living on a cocoa estate if we are able to maintain our markets, grow the right varieties, cultivate them in the right way and we were able to have a good production.

The average of cocoa in Trinidad and Tobago is 100 pounds per acre, but the potential is \$1,000. That is the difference. So, let us stop joking about it and get serious and we must accept, when it comes to that, fewer people are going to be in employment directly in production processes. In the United States, the proportion of the population from the land went from about 80 per cent in the 18th century to 3 per cent today in direct production on the land, but the whole agricultural sector including processing, inputs supplied, services and so forth, probably employed about 30 per cent of the work force. It is not that people would not get employment through this activity, through this sector, but not directly in production on the land.

Unless we understand that, again, we will just continue to decline slowly until we do not have much production at all. What will survive is the vegetable production which always is good because, on a small acreage, small farmers can make a good living and they are the ones who are really keeping agriculture going, apart from the sugar which is a special circumstance with a great deal of subsidiary.

So what about new initiatives? What are we really doing that is new? Well, private enterprise has developed a cut flower industry with very little help from the Government and I could document this. It is quite easy to demonstrate that this is so.

In fruit trees, we have Bert Manhin, who has introduced a number of interesting new crops from various parts of the world, not the Ministry and not the University. I have tried to demonstrate to the Senate in my own small way that the

dwarf pommecythere is potentially a good crop for processing and marketing in that way. Any efforts from the Ministry? Absolutely none. Apples—that is the effort from the Ministry.

We have the foreign investment in the form of Pernod Ricard. That is a new crop and if you know the fight they had to have a few acres of land in order to introduce that new crop for Trinidad and Tobago. Eventually, they succeeded, then the new Government came in and wanted to take it away from them to put a village now on top of that land. Where is our orientation? What are we really trying to do?

One effort for which I must give the Government credit, but I doubt whether it is an effort that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is even conscious of, is the introduction of plant variety protection legislation. I do not mean protection against the diseases and pests; I mean, a copyright in effect. Because that would encourage plant breeding and, indeed, one commercial grower of anthuriums has started the breeding of anthuriums locally which could be an important development, not just for our local industry but also for export.

In fact, the Hawaiians produce their own varieties based on Trinidad material. They have taken anthuriums from Trinidad which they use in their breeding programmes in Hawaii. So, why should we not do it here? That is now being done, therefore, the people who produce it could get their royalties protected by this new legislation that has been passed by us in this Parliament. I think that is an important development but that has come, rather from the Ministry of Legal Affairs than from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

With respect to the government-owned farms, Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises continues to take over. I once sat on the board and I do not think much has changed. I do not know what major contribution it is making to the agricultural sector but, of course, we have to consider the most important one, clearly, is Caroni (1975) Limited because that not only occupies a large area of land, employs a lot of people, but quite frankly, it is a major contributor to our gross domestic product. If we took out Caroni (1975) Limited, the picture of agriculture would certainly be very dismal. As the hon. Minister himself has pointed out, we really have to be very careful about the future of sugar.

I myself believe that when the United States reconciles its relations with Cuba and Cuban sugar is more freely available on the world market, or when the United States decides it will no longer protect its own sugar producers and, therefore, subsidization of sugar is no longer allowed, then I think our sugar industry is for

it. As the hon. Minister has pointed out recently, our production costs are too high and he has pointed out the difficulty of too great a supply of labour, the point I was making about reducing the labour in direct reduction if one is going to be efficient and competitive. Of course, the hon. Minister has pointed out the difficulties in that. There is no programme of even voluntary retirement, let alone reduction in the labour force, but it is something that has to be addressed. Perhaps Sen. Selwyn John could make a comment about this.

Then, there are things like Non Pareil Estate—2,000 acres used to be an extremely productive estate in the cocoa industry and one cannot understand what is being done by the Government with respect to Non Pareil Estate. It is just there, not producing anything. You hear rumours—as Trinidad, we know, is a country of rumours—about who it is being reserved for and so forth.

At one time, the Japanese were interested in cocoa in Trinidad and Tobago. The Jamaicans have been able to encourage the Japanese to invest in coffee in Jamaica because they are providing the market for Blue Mountain Coffee. Somehow, we have not been able to achieve the same thing with our cocoa which is also of world standard and very high quality, perhaps, the leaders in the world of quality of cocoa.

How are we going to privatize Non Pareil? Are we going to do anything with it? Are we going to do as I have suggested and plant cocoa and lease it out to University graduates and ECIAF graduates in 50- or 100-acre plots to develop a new cadre of farmers? We need to have family farmers in Trinidad and Tobago. We need to have family farms that can make a decent livelihood. We need to demonstrate that this sector of the economy can function as we are trying to demonstrate that the tourism sector can function. But, at the moment, we are really not doing that and if I were a young person, I would certainly—I mean, I am in farming because I love it and there are some people who will always be in agriculture for that reason but you cannot expect to build an industry on that basis. There will be a few people who like the land and who will go that way but we must have a proper commercial enterprise if we are going to be having this as a major part of our economy.

Then, there is the question of research. If you are going to have an agricultural sector which is of any value, one has to have certain services supplied and one of those services is research. The three agencies that would do research for the agricultural sector is the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources which spends a major proportion of the money spent on agricultural research.

Conservatively, it is about \$20 million a year and I would undertake to demonstrate that we get very little benefit for the \$20 million that we spend. That is not to say that the people there are not good scientists or are not industrious people, but the system of our bureaucracy does not allow them to perform.

Twenty-five years ago, when I was Dean of Agriculture, the then Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources got me to get a group of people together to give a report on how we could take the research from the Ministry out into an autonomous body, like the Caribbean Institution of Research, Science and Technology or what have you—25 years ago. I did it because he wanted the report yesterday. He got it the day after. It never saw the light of day and we have been talking about this now for 25 years.

Everybody who has anything to do with agricultural or any research for that matter will tell you, you cannot do it within a bureaucracy. It just does not work. The machine breaks down; they cannot get it repaired. The air-condition unit breaks down so the expensive scientific equipment goes bad because they cannot get the money to repair the air-condition unit. So, they pay salaries. They cannot get the money to run the tractor, but they have the money to pay the salaries. There are all these expensive scientists with degrees and post-graduate degrees and so forth costing \$20 million a year doing what.

Let me hasten to add, this is something that has been going back for, as I said, 25 years. It is not a criticism of the present government or a criticism of the present Minister but it is something that I must bring to his attention, again, because one keeps on hoping that there will be a change and we cannot understand why there is no change. We have all these studies of the civil service which—we know Minister Wade Mark is in charge of the public administration—but we have all these studies done time and time again and everybody says you cannot do this in a bureaucracy but we continue to do it. Why?

We understood we could not run the health service from the bureaucracy so we set up regional health authorities. Why do we not set up research in that way? It may still not be successful. At least, it may have half a chance. At least, the young scientists cannot blame the system if it does not work. At the moment, they have a legitimate excuse for not achieving any results because the system does not allow them.

The second agency that does research for this Government is the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI). Why are we still members of CARDI? Guyana has suddenly found that it is too expensive so they

are thinking of coming out. I gather that the Minister has persuaded them not to go out and they are going to negotiate that they pay a special fee or something, not the usual contribution because they find that the large amount of money they have to pay to CARDI does not work.

Have we examined the five, seven, eight or nine million dollars a year we pay to CARDI and what benefit we get from it by way of research? Have we done that exercise? I would suspect, again, that if we do it, I would put my head on a block if we do it, that we would find we are certainly not getting \$7 million worth. So, if it is, as I have said repeatedly—I have said it for the last 14 years I have been in Parliament—that we want to give aid to the least developed countries, to Guyana and so forth, then let us put it through an aid window. At least, let us get the benefit. At least, let them say to us, “Thank you Trinidad and Tobago for giving us money for agricultural research.” But we do not do that. We pretend we are getting benefit from it and we are not getting any benefit from it. All we are doing is helping out the smaller islands because they cannot pay the cost to CARDI. Well, for heaven’s sake, let us get the benefit, at least by way of “thank you” for the money we spend. That, again, is not this Government. It goes back to the last 25 years. CARDI was set up in 1973.

Then, the University of the West Indies. Now, UWI has the infrastructure and the staff but, of course, the university is not funded to do research. They do a bit of research out of what they can by their normal budget but the way that we should be getting agricultural research out of the university is by way of project funding. We should not just give them the money the way we give CARDI or the way we give to the research division of the Ministry; we should contract them to do particular projects. That is how all research works in the world today in the developed countries. You have contract research.

I went into a professor’s office in a university in the United States and he had three blackboards with three lists of projects—projects he was about to complete; projects which were in progress and projects which he hoped to get and his whole activity was funded by research grants which he gets, contract grants that he gets from various agencies. We would have been talking about a sum of money to do contract research. The National Institute of Higher Education (Research, Science and Technology) (NIHERST) proposed this some years ago. Talk, talk, talk. Nothing. We should pin down the university to do research that we need that is important for our agricultural sector by way of project grant and by contract, and if they do not deliver, they do not get the money.

When I was at the university, I used to do contract research for international agencies—the British government, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and so forth. Those guys would even come into the university and look at your accounts, the individual cards, to see if the money spent on a tractor was really spent on the tractor and so forth.

Sen. S. John: Mr. President, may I ask, dealing with the research statement Sen. Prof. Spence is making: What has happened to the volume of research that was done by the former Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture (ICTA) which UWI has succeeded?

2.30 p.m.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Of course, Mr. President, much of it would now be out of date, it is no longer relevant. It is important because you build on it, but the basic principles that we enunciated earlier are what the scientists build on these days. The one area of continuity has been in cocoa, so that some of the cocoa research which is still done by the university had its antecedence in the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture.

Let me just say this, the one successful bit of research that has been done by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is in the area of cocoa, and that was because there was one dedicated individual. If you are breeding tree crops it is a long-term process, and this man was breeding cocoa for three months. Posthumously, he got a national award, and he stayed in the job for 40 years just breeding cocoa. I have said this before in Parliament—it is the only successful cocoa-breeding project in the world. Everywhere else people went out to these tropical countries, stayed a few years, built a set of crosses, then tested the progeny, then somebody else would come and make a different set of crosses. Here, Freeman went through the line for seven or eight generations back-crossing and producing new cocoa; that was how we got the Trinidad Selected Hybrid, but even that we had some funny notions about.

I had a research student at the University of the West Indies—in fact, I still supervise a student there—who wanted to look at the flavour of Trinidad cocoa. Now, flavour is the important thing for our cocoa here; that is what we get our premium price on. He was having difficulty doing the work because the ministry has a policy that nobody must work on the Trinidad Selected Hybrids; but the information is for them. The student has said, "I would not publish the names of the varieties, I will call them A, B, and C; you just let me have the material so I can test it by methods I have developed to tell you the different flavours, so that

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when you have your breeding programme you can feed into your breeding programme a flavour characteristic which is important for you to have." But no, what are they afraid of? I do not know.

They are afraid that a student would put out that Trinidad cocoa is no good; but whether a student or the university says that Trinidad cocoa flavour is no good is not going to be important worldwide, it is the market that is going to decide that. Even if he says that it is excellent, it is the international cocoa market, it is how we negotiate with Cadbury, Roundtree, Mars and so forth, that will decide whether your cocoa is any good. It is important for you, in your breeding programme, to have that information.

Nobody can find from where this policy was derived. I am told that it is policy. Who made the policy? Can the policy be reviewed? You go to the Permanent Secretary, you go to the Chief Technical Officer and it is like hitting your head against a stone wall to find out. I have not been to the Minister, because I do not really like bothering the Minister about things like that; it is a technical issue. Why should the Minister be bothered about it? Actually, the Imperial College of Agriculture did do some good work and we have followed up on it.

Education: There are a lot of criticisms about University of the West Indies graduates. I do not think that it is valid criticism, because I have always said that it is very difficult to teach a subject like agriculture in three years and produce both a person who is well-grounded in science and also somebody who is practical and who can easily go out and do a job. You have taught them the basic sciences, but if you wanted them to be able to apply it directly to a job then you have to have a fourth year. In law, having done three years at the university, you spend two years in law school. In medicine, you must have clinical years and practise at a hospital before you can be given a licence, but in agriculture—which is a much more complicated subject than either of the other two because you have both physical sciences and social sciences in the agricultural package—you must do it in three years and then be able to do practical things when you graduate. We really need to look at how we do our agriculture.

The engineers are now asking for a fourth year; the engineers are now saying the same thing. When you graduate as an engineer after three years they do not register you as an engineer, you have to work under supervision for another two years before you are allowed to go on the register as a professional engineer. The same thing has to be true of agriculture. You have to have an additional year if you are going to do it that way.

There is another way of doing it; you can have your technologists trained in a different system, and, indeed, to some extent, we have that, because that is what the Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry (ECIAF) has been doing, it has been turning out technologists. Except that we do not give the technologists in this country the credit they deserve, so they do not get the pay, the remuneration and the opportunities that the university graduate would. Therefore, we need to look again, because it does not only apply to agriculture, but also whether we are going to have an alternative university system in Trinidad and Tobago. We should have a technical university of Trinidad and Tobago. I have had two motions in this Senate on that subject, so I am not going to go into it again now.

Mr. President, look at what we are doing: Minister Gangar is setting up an institute of technology; I would call it his technology institute because it does not seem to be linked to any other part of the tertiary educational system; it is standing there by itself, on its own. Then we have the community college, which is amalgamating all the other colleges together. What is the relationship between the technical institute and the other colleges? Why do we not get serious and say that the Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry should be part of a university of Trinidad and Tobago offering degrees in agricultural technology, which are respectable disciplines that will get the rewards they deserve? Then you will have the university concentrating on the more academic aspects of the system, which I think is important.

Do we ever monitor? We keep on saying this. You would find that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources would go to Caricom meetings and they quarrel about the University of the West Indies and so forth, what about Trinidad and Tobago? Did we ever have a monitoring system by any of the governments that have been in power for the last three sessions of Parliament? Three governments! Have they set up a monitoring system for the university degree in agriculture? Do they say, "Well, look, we do not really want these academic types, we only want technologists and that is how it should be." Or, "Yes, we understand that you have to have an academic system, but we need people to be oriented in the practical way". Do you think you need a fourth year? Would that be the solution? Is there any monitoring at the university at all?

I tried to put in legislation that they should monitor the school of dentistry—that is now in the law—and by the end of this year the Minister of Health would have to be doing that. Perhaps, we should have some similar legislation with the agricultural sector. Of course, if we are going to have the Eastern Caribbean

Institute of Agriculture and Forestry as part of the system, what about the linkage between the research and the teaching? The whole land grant system in the United States has been extremely successful in developing their agricultural sector, because they link extension, research and teaching. So you have in one place, in each state, research people teaching people, and extension people. So the extension people will pick up the research activities and the research results quickly, and so would the teachers to teach the students, and so forth. Some people would be full-time extension, some would be extension doing some teaching and some would be doing some research; you have different proportions. That is an extremely successful system.

Of course, ours is divorced; the Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry is next door to Centeno, but they are administratively separate; one is in the Ministry of Education and one is in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. You could run ECIAF without any teachers appointed to their staff by having the research people teach. They would be better occupied than what they are doing now, and you could save some money that way. Now we are moving the Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry into the College of Science, Technology, and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago, the community college, so that is going to be even more separate, because it is not even in the government. It is now an autonomous thing, but the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is still in the bureaucracy.

What can the people who come to advise us on administrative structure really advise on? It is a wonder to me that simple, straightforward issues, which would seem to be common sense, do not seem to get treated in these rather highfalutin administrative areas.

Mr. President, these are some of the issues that I would like the hon. Minister to address when he is telling us about Government's policy, because I think they are all important issues for the future of agriculture in the country.

There are two final points that I want to make—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Cabrera: Through you, Mr. President, as the Senator is about to wind up, I was interested in hearing his comments on the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI). It is an organization in which I have a great deal of input. I am putting on the table the establishment of the National Agricultural Research and Development Institute (NARDI) in Guyana, and I did not hear him link both in terms of what he was saying on CARDI. I wanted to get his comments on that. I also want to know, what has become of the

research work done at the university by Dr. Sammy, which I know was quite detailed and so forth? Have the respective governments just not looked at it? What really happened with all that research?

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: To take the second point first, yes, you are quite right, Prof. Sammy did some very interesting work, and for a time we were able to buy in Trinidad yam flakes and instant yam, which is an excellent product; it was made in Barbados. Unfortunately, it was done by a government agency rather than the private sector, and after a while the whole system was uneconomic. I think, myself, that they did not market it properly. I always use it in my home, because it is an excellent product, but from the marketing point of view I do not think it was attractive packaging and so forth.

The information is still there. It is really for entrepreneurs both to produce the yams that would have to go into the processing, and for the processors to take it up. Again, you cannot produce yam for processing in that way, on two acres of land, it has to be large-scale. Potatoes now sell for 99 cents a pound in Trinidad, you cannot get a yam for 95 cents a pound, because the production systems are small. We have to look at the industry, look at each product and look at how it can be commercially viable. I believe there has to be some subsidy. I would give subsidy on the interest rates. I do not believe in these subsidies on production processes, they are a waste of time, they are open to corruption, they are inefficient and they have a big bureaucracy.

The two areas you can give subsidy on is the end price where you are marketing through a government agency, like in the case of cocoa or sugar, and on the interest rates; but here we are making our interest rates more and more commercial. I once had a loan from the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) at 3 per cent, now if you go to the ADB the rate is 15 per cent. So, yes, I think that Prof. Sammy's work was extremely important, and it is still available, it is still there, but, no, it has not been taken up by entrepreneurs. I suppose the point is—as the hon. Prime Minister said—generally, we do not have entrepreneurs in Trinidad in any sector; that is our problem, but particularly so in the agricultural sector.

The other point that you asked about was the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute. Well, really, what I am saying is that we do not have any system for monitoring the expenditures that we make, even within our own system. Here is a system where we are giving to another agency a rather substantial amount of money, and I am not seeing any reports by the Government on how that money is being spent and what benefits there are, directly, to Trinidad

and Tobago. There may be, but certainly they are not apparent to me. I believe the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute has a unit in Tobago, and I think the Tobago House of Assembly is happy to have the people there, because they do not have many experts in agriculture. As far as I know, there is nothing in Trinidad that is a substantial return for that rather high expenditure.

I am not saying close it down, all I am saying is get value for your money, and the only way you can get value for your money is by looking at it and having some system of monitoring. The system need not be a bureaucratic system. I do not think, necessarily, that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources alone should do that monitoring, you could set up a small group. I suggested, as far as universities go, that there should be a university council to monitor the University of the West Indies. The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute could be one of the agencies it monitors as well, because it could have an agricultural sector and different sectors.

When I come to speak on Sen. Prof. Ramchand's Motion, I hope to speak about education and the training of teachers at university level. Why do we not have a B.Ed degree and so forth? We need a monitoring system for the society as a whole, through the Government, to look at what value it is getting for these various sums of money that are spent. Does that help, Mr. President?

Sen. Cabrera: I know that Prof. Sammy, Mr. President, did become very frustrated with a certain regime for neglecting the work he had done.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: I would not say that it is the regime. I would say that it is the country, it is the Government. The work is there, any entrepreneur who wants to take it up could take it up, but you need first the production of the raw material and then you need the processing facility. That is why I tried to push the dwarf pommecythere so much, because I believe that you can demonstrate that it is an easy production system—much easier than yams, by the way—and you can show processing to a good end product. It seems to me that that is an ideal system to get going, but you have to be younger than 70 years in order to do it.

There are two final points that I wanted to make which I think are important from the point of view of Government policy, and which need to be addressed. These are: pesticide use and genetically modified organisms.

Concerning pesticide use, we have, I think, as a policy, stated that we will go towards integrated pest management and reduce the use of pesticides. But you know, Mr. President, one of the big gaps in monitoring the system is the fact that most of the advice that goes to farmers on pesticide use comes from the

agricultural shops, the agricultural sales. The university did a study a few years ago on this issue and found that most farmers get their advice not from extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources—and I should just say a word about extension before closing—but they get it from the agricultural shops.

I go to an agricultural shop once a week and I sit there waiting to be served and listen to the person in that shop giving advice to farmers. That is where they get their advice from: what rates to use, what pesticides and so forth. These persons are not trained; some of them are very good. I, myself, ask questions of the man who is supplying me with the pesticides and he can give me answers which I can then use with my own information to decide on pesticide use.

We really have to address the training of the people who sell. We have to come to the situation where we must decide that in order to sell a dangerous pesticide you must have a licence to sell it. That licence must mean that you must have people in your system who are trained, just like a pharmacist. We keep talking about excessive pesticide use, about dangerous pesticide use, but we do not do anything about it, and that is the place, in my opinion, to start. We also have to have good extension services so that the farmer will get the advice out in the field as well, but the first point of attack is to have the people who are selling the pesticides properly trained in pesticide use; that does not occur at all.

With respect to extension services, again, I think we need to look at our extended system quite seriously. Again, I believe that the land grant college system is the better one. I think that specialist extension officers should be created, so that a man could be a specialist in tree crops, in poultry, in milk or what have you. This idea of a man in the district who can advise on all things under the sun, all the crops, all the animals, that went out in the United States with the land grant college system being developed some 200 years ago, or whenever it was. We still have it here; we still expect one man in the district to advise on all these different things; it cannot be done.

When I was a research officer at Centeno, any farmer of any size did not go to the extension officer; he came to the research man. Of course, that meant that the poor small farmer did not have the benefit because there were too many to go and research people, so you tended to go to the large farms and so forth. That is not the system we should have. We should have the extension officers who are advising on cocoa, sitting with the cocoa agronomist so that she is able to back them up, relate to them and give them the latest things, and then they go up, and people get more motivated when they have a particular enterprise to deal with.

If I know that I am a cocoa extension officer, I would learn all about cocoa and so forth. When I have to do all these other 100 things, how can I possibly be motivated to be an expert in poultry, pigs, cocoa, citrus, vegetables and so forth? It cannot work. I cannot, again, understand—it is so clear to me, so straightforward, so sensible, it is such common sense—why we do not go in that direction. Sometimes we say that we have gone, but when you actually get down to brass tacks you find that it is only on paper; it has never been implemented. We do not have specialist extension officers.

The district extension officer should be a market specialist, an agricultural economist. He should go to the farmer and ask, "What are your resources? How much labour have you got? Can you employ extra labour or is it only family labour that you use? What are your lines of credit? Do you get credit from the Agricultural Development Bank or do you get from commercial banks? How much land have you got? What are your land resources? What type of land is it? All right, what types of crops would you like to grow? A, B, C and D, no, given your land resources of labour, land and so forth, I do not think you should go and do so and so, and besides that, I do not think that you should be going A, B, C, and D, I think you should be going E and F." That is what the extension officer in the district should be doing; he should be a farm management specialist. I have said this repeatedly in this Senate. That is why I have to tell my wife, I have to repeat what I have said before, because we are still not doing it; we still have this stupid system. It cannot work; it does not work. The agriculture just keeps going down, down, down. So, what can we do?

Genetically modified organisms—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: Senator, just let me mention that your normal time would expire at 2.55 p.m., but I will give you an extra five minutes because of the interruptions, so it would be 3 o'clock.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: I would certainly finish within five minutes, Mr. President.

Finally, genetically modified organisms are in the news now, so it is worthwhile just to say a word on it. I think that it is important that we have some legislation to deal with genetically modified organisms.

2.50 p.m

I am not one of those who feels if organisms are modified by laboratory manipulation that they are necessarily dangerous, because in fact, all you are doing is altering the genes in a different way; the way they were to have been

altered if you had done normal plant breeding, but because you can now move genes from such wide species, and even families, or even orders, it becomes important that we keep an eye on what is going on.

The only activity I see in this regard is the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and they are more concerned with the importation of foods that have been grown from genetically modified organisms. Whereas, we in fact have no legislation locally so that anybody can do research on these organisms and produce and indeed sell them and there can be no restriction at all. I know one of my colleagues has written to a number of persons in Government including the Prime Minister and he has had some responses but really not the sort of response that one would need. He may even have written to the Attorney General and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. We really need to get down to it and decide what we are doing about controlling the research and use of genetically modified organisms.

Mr. President, this is all I would say by way of introduction. I hope it is possible for the hon. Minister to address at least some, if not all of these issues, because I think they are all important. If it is not possible, because he has had to prepare his statement, then I would hope that we in the Senate would so arrange our affairs to allow him at a subsequent time to respond to some of these issues.

Thank you, very much.

Seconded by Sen. Dr. St. Cyr.

Question proposed.

Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny: Mr. President, I wonder whether the Senate would permit me to include the fishery sector in agriculture? I will tell you why. It is not that I want to sneak Toco into it, but we do have an annual report from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources from the Fisheries Division and I must congratulate the ministry in getting this report out. For several years reports were not available.

It appears that I am being permitted to speak on the matter of fisheries. I think that out of this would come some general guidance on what is the Government's policy on that particular sector which is normally linked with agriculture.

Mr. President: Senator, if in fact you are going to be speaking on fisheries, you must make the linkage rather than thinking that some other entity would make that linkage, otherwise you will not be permitted.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, I think in our country, fisheries is usually considered to be a part of agriculture. It has always been considered to be a part of the production system even though it is in the marine environment rather than in the land environment. I do not know if one had a strict definition of agriculture whether it would exclude fisheries, but my intention had been, I must say, even if perhaps I had been remiss in not specifically mentioning it, certainly with respect to agriculture, I would have hoped to include both forestry and fisheries.

Mr. President: Go ahead, Senator.

Sen. Prof. J. Kenny: Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you, Sen. Prof. Spence.

Mr. President, the fisheries sector of food production is quite different from the agricultural sector and I think that the policies in support of the fisheries sector clearly will have to take into consideration the peculiarities of our activities as hunters. We are basically hunters, there is no well-developed commercial aquaculture in Trinidad, so we are really dealing with man, the farmer, and man, the hunter.

One thing which is striking about the 1998/1999 Annual Report of the Fisheries Division, is that the figures given for GDP as related to fisheries closely parallel that which we see in agriculture and if we take the year 1994, the GDP given in this report is \$86 million; in 1995 it is \$82 million, in 1996 it is \$78 million; 1997, it is \$66 million and then in the two following years 1998 and 1999, there is just a speculative estimate of \$74 million, but the trend appears to be a decline which is a bit puzzling to me because the report actually projects landings of about 10 million metric tonnes, but I accept the data presented in the report with the slight confusion.

The agricultural sector of the economy is responsible for 8.9 per cent of the GDP and the bulk of this is sugar so the actual food production other than sugar appears to be quite small.

In the fisheries sector, the production is really only 0.19 per cent of GDP so it is a very tiny sector. What is rather striking, is that the report also gives the imports of fish into this country. Traditionally, we have been importers of fish and I would not go through all the figures, but in 1994 they ranged from about \$31 million imports to about \$45 million of imports in 1998.

Mr. President, we also export vast quantities of fish. When I say we export it, we basically receive Taiwanese tuna fish which is caught in the Atlantic, put into containers and exported and the exports listed here in the last year amount to

about \$92 million worth of exports. The fishery sector is very closely linked with the agricultural sector and indeed, if you go to places along the North Coast, to Toco you will find that a fisherman may in fact, have a piece of land, if you go to Tobago it is like this as well, if you go to Blanchisseuse, Moruga, Mayaro you will find that there is a category of farmer/fisherman who produces fish. He in fact, may start out as a fisherman doing a bit of gardening and if he is successful, he may invest in more than one boat, he may get somebody else to fish the boat for him. So that you have actually in the agricultural industry or community, the coastal ones, a very close link with farming: free crops, gardens, ground provision and so forth.

The figures given in the report indicate that there are no less than 1250 artisanal fishing boats; these are smaller fishing vessels from pirogues to multi-purpose vessels, and then you have 25 industrial trawlers which throw off the shrimp offshore. The report does not give any indication of the people who are actually dependent on that sector of the industry, but if you take the number of boats and the trawlers and so, I would think that a very conservative estimate is probably about 25,000—30,000 persons spread around the country who are directly dependent on the fishing industry. That is, crewing and repairing the vessels, transporting the fish and so on.

Mr. President, why I think this what we are doing is very important, is because there was a problem with world fisheries in that we are the hunters and we have now approached to plateau where production does not seem to be moving anywhere above 85 million metric tonnes for the world. It does not matter what you do, this is the level. This is what the fishery apparently is barely capable of sustaining and indeed, worldwide, there are serious problems of over fishing. In the North Sea there are heavy controls put on harvesting of herring. In North America, off the Grand Banks there has been a bit of warfare between the Americans and Canadians about the cod stocks. This is why, of course, most of us cannot afford to buy salted cod. It cost \$30.00 or \$40.00 per pound in the market. We are no different here in that we are surrounded by the sea and I could paint a picture of our resources for you and illustrate a problem that we have with our fishing industry.

The resource base that we have, if it is divided into what we call near shore, that is available to the artisanal fisherman and we took the offshore where you require something that can stay out at sea for several days, if not weeks, our near shore industry is concerned with harvesting shrimp mainly in the Columbus Channel, in the Gulf of Paria and going along the North Coast where it comes into

conflict with other fishing communities. This area, as I pointed out before, is a farming/fishing community and there is a bit of potential warfare that goes on between the artisanal fisherman on the North Coast and the industrial trawlers.

We also have in our near shore waters what we call coastal pelagic fishes the carite, kingfish, and cavali. Then we also have what we call our coastal demersal fishes, these are ground fish the snapper, grouper, salmon and so forth. Mr. President, it is becoming very difficult to buy things which at one time used to be readily available and there are reasons for this because there has been an export market for snapper. Planes arrive in Tobago to pick up the red snapper, grouper and the lobster to take to the hotel trade in Martinique, Guadeloupe and Barbados. So we as citizens are finding it more and more difficult to access fish and sea products.

The other resource base is oceanic. Trinidad and Tobago, being party to the law of the sea are given certain rights over an exclusive economic zone and if we take our zone to the East of Trinidad. Taiwanese exclusive economic zone without going into the details, it is mainly to the East of Trinidad and about 15 times the land area of Trinidad. Most of our activities are in the Gulf of Paria, the Columbus Channel and poaching in Venezuelan waters; and around Tobago most of the activities there are with the flying fish industry and there are Barbadian fishermen poaching in Tobago. From time to time they are arrested. These are within the waters under our jurisdiction, our archipelagic waters; our territorial sea, and our exclusive economic zone.

Mr. President, over the past 20 years or so, there have been many activities involving our exclusive economic regularly go through their harvesting. There is no way that we really know, because we do not patrol it. The American long liners which have operated out of the United States of America and have moved down progressively stripping the resource for their particular market and we are sitting on this resource. We are actually responsible. It is ours to exploit and we are not doing anything about it.

Mr. President, we hear talk of money laundering, do you know there is actually talk of fish laundering out of Trinidad and Tobago? I will tell you why. There are international agreements about the exploitation of these offshore stocks of salt fish, tunas, guapo, and so forth. Salt fish sells for about US \$20,000 in metric tonnes and sometimes five salt fish will make a metric tonne, they are that big.

The United States fishermen, the commercial fishermen are in conflict with the sport fishermen, and the sport fishermen do not want them to take these game fish so there is a conflict and they are spreading out into our waters. So when I hear the talk about long lining for salt fish and tuna and it would not be done at Toco—it would be done at Toco—because this is an offshore thing and here we are setting up—at least it is proposed to set up—a ferry port where we will have berths for long liners. We are encouraging the exploitation of a resource which is under “heavy manners” now.

Mr. President, when the issue of the Toco ferry port arose, I had a telephone call from the Department of Commerce in the United States of America that looks after the marine section. They wanted my views as a fish biologist on what exactly was happening. So we do have a problem. In Tobago we have had this mysterious sea bank project that everyone has read about, many of us have read it. I think Mr. Reginald Dumas handled it extremely well. He dismissed it. This project was going to provide for 36 high-speed long liners and we, the taxpayers of this country were going to guarantee the capital cost which was going to be half a billion dollars and there you were going to set up a long liner fleet or floating harbour near Crown Point Airport for export.

My point for mentioning all this is that there are international regulatory bodies which are very concerned with what is happening which is the extreme depletion of the offshore oceanic stocks as well as the near shore stocks from over fishing. One of the concerns in terms of policy is that if the law of the sea gives us control over these resources and other people are exploiting them, should we not be developing our own policy initiatives for ensuring that our fishing industry is the sector which will be exploiting these resources, rather than foreign fleets coming from Taiwan or from the United States or elsewhere.

3.10 p.m.

This, then, to me, is one of the major concerns of policy—what do we do? What will our policy be? The future of our fishing industry lies with the resources of the east coast. The pelagic resources are exploited—by offshore I am talking about 60, 70, 80 kilometres offshore—by longliners, Taiwanese registration, which fish all over the Atlantic, following the fleets, and American fishing interests and a few local interests. Their main concern is getting swordfish and tuna for the international market. They are not concerned with what we call the by-catch. Indeed, these boats, if they catch shark they chop off the fins and throw away the shark. These are our resources. If they catch wahoo or kingfish, over the side they go. They are only occupying space.

My point is that it is long overdue that we have a clearly defined policy as to how these resources will be exploited. Venezuelans actually routinely fish on our east coast with bottom longlines, what we call “palang”, and with free-floating lines and they are after the grouper and the snapper which they pass off to the west to one of their Venezuelan ports. They then export these catches to the same markets, that is the New York, Montreal or Miami market. So my major concern with introducing this is that as part of the official food production policy of the country, how can we deal with this resource? Because this is the future of our fishing industry.

My view is that we ought to be stimulating the development of an intermediate kind of technology, one that suits our people. I do not think that we want to have 100-foot longliners travelling at 20 knots. What we need is something which has already been happening from the private sector. We are moving away from pirogues toward decked boats that can operate off the east coast. So, already the designs are there. There are boats operating along the east coast of Trinidad and my view is that we should try to stimulate this, but at the same time we should try to curtail or prohibit exploitation of our pelagic resources in the exclusive economic zone, the bulk of this area being along the east coast of Trinidad.

Mr. President, to do this we probably need a facility somewhere on the east that would facilitate fishing vessels of perhaps 15 metres long. This is a kind of craft or multi-purpose vessel that can take the tuna when they are migrating and then at other seasons can convert to catching ground fish like grouper and snapper. So that this kind of craft does not need an immense port, and where it can be berthed can be determined by the form of the coast. Studies have been done, and a smaller fishing port can be used, as one sees around the coast of Britain and in North America, essentially a breakwater. There are places where this can be done without disrupting the close-knit social unit that is a village such as Toco or Blanchisseuse. My point is, I would like to see a policy that is geared to developing our fishing industry away from the pirogues and, at the same time, excluding foreign fishing interests from our exclusive economic zone.

Finally, Mr. President, as Prof. Spence said when talking about agricultural produce, a large part of the fishing industry is marketing. When dealing with these resources, say tuna and swordfish, bear in mind that even for tuna, which will go at US \$10,000; US \$12,000; US \$13,000 or US \$15,000 per tonne, one has to be in—it is a specialist market. One does not just simply catch the fish and wonder if it can be bought off the ship. It cannot. One must have one’s buyers and brokers at

the international fish markets, which are in Miami, New York and, believe it or not, Montreal. One of the largest fish markets in the world is actually in Madrid. Now, the fish do not actually necessarily go to Madrid but it is like a boss. It is like a stock market where one trades with a commodity. My point is that essentially I would like to see a fisheries policy enunciated taking into account some of these ideas which I have suggested. Thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr: Mr. President, I want to congratulate Sen. Prof. John Spence on again bringing to our attention the need to articulate what is a cohesive policy towards agriculture. I am also very happy to see the hon. Minister with us and, as usual, in his very pensive, reflective mood. I look forward with great interest to hearing him speak.

Mr. President, I do not think that there is any argument about the second preamble that, by and large, our agricultural output has been on a secular decline, especially the export commodities—sugar, cocoa and coffee, *et cetera*. We have made valiant attempts to diversify into vegetables and poultry, *et cetera*, and we have met there with mixed success. I do not think, either, that there is any question that the stated policy of successive governments has been to diversify the economy. I think that we have a little problem here because it would seem that, in the context of our history, when we think of diversifying the economy we expect that we would somehow reduce the importance of agriculture, even absolutely, and go for some of the more “modern activities” such as manufacturing and services.

However, Mr. President, I want to spend a little time discussing the first of the three preambles that an efficient agricultural industry forms the basis of every successful economy. The question I want to put to this honourable Chamber and on which I would like to hear the hon. Minister speak is, do we really as a country and as a Government believe that an efficient agricultural industry forms the basis of every successful economy? If we do, then it should show in the amount of investment, in the amount of attention, *et cetera*, that we give to our agricultural sector. I dare say, Sir, over the last 40 or 50 years I do not think that we have displayed a strong belief that this first preamble is true.

What I want to do today, Sir, is to operate on the principle of just making one point. I understand—and I do not know that today we should talk about cricket—but it has been said of the very distinguished Sir Garfield Sobers that he could bowl the orthodox stuff, he could bowl the back of the hand and the medium pace

and even very fast sometimes. However, they tell me that there was a man called Arthur Mailey. He had one ball and whenever he pitched it one was out. So today I want to address simply that first preamble.

Historically, Sir, civilization has developed in the alluvial valleys of Egypt, the Nile, the Indus and Ganges and so on. These have been fertile agricultural areas and settled agriculture has formed the basis of those civilizations. We can come through history and establish that viable, efficient, high-productivity agriculture has historically been the foundation of every thriving economic system. We could look at the countries today which have thriving economies and examine their agriculture. The United States of America, though today we would think of it more as an industrial and perhaps a post-industrial society, does have an extremely efficient, highly productive agricultural economy.

Dr. Mohammed: Highly subsidized.

Sen. Dr. E. St. Cyr: I do have that as one of my points, that countries everywhere protect and subsidize their agriculture. They may not do it by tariff protection but they have means. They may do it through various forms of plant quarantine or whatever; but it is done.

To get back to the thread, Japan has a very efficient agricultural sector. Let me take one more. European agriculture is also very highly productive, very, very efficient and, if I may take two regions which would make the point probably in the obverse way, the present tremendous industrial growth in India only started after the green revolution raised agricultural productivity and output in that country. On the other side, the droughts and wars on the African Continent, which really reflect themselves in low and poor agricultural output and productivity, have to be the basis of the decline in economic and social performance.

So, Sir, I want to think that—and I hope that I do not cause any difficulty here—my friend, the hon. Minister of Agriculture—I want to give him his full title—Land and Marine Resources, is in a very key position in the present juncture of this country. I am sure he is more than able to give the leadership and the direction that a long-term policy towards this sector would require. So even as we saw, after 1986, a shift in policy and a fair measure of policy continuity for the 14 years since, I still believe that we have in the present Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources the ideal choice to lay a good long-term policy towards this sector. You see, Sir, food is still man's first need and the primary element of all wage goods. So that, what happens to agricultural production, in fact, determines the value of the wages in one's hand.

You know, Sir, one of the things I said was, suppose we could flood the urban markets with vast amounts of fruits and vegetables, so that typically an orange would cost 25 cents but one would sell in such volume that the farmer's income would be substantial even though the price is low; we would not only raise the income of the farmer but we would also raise the real income of the wage earner. I have not yet said anything about the improved nutritional status of the society and, therefore, the impact that it would have on our medical and health expenditure.

I believe that it is easy to make the case and to receive the point that, in a closed economic system, since resources must be released from producing food and other basics to be used in secondary production and tertiary activities, the fundamental importance of agriculture would be easily conceded. Where I think we have gone wrong over the years in this country is that we have tended to behave as if this does not also apply in an open economy. In other words, we have taken the view that we could kill agriculture, we could monetize our gas and we could import all the food we need. I am sorry that the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is not here because I do think that the very open and exciting debate which we had a few months ago on the monetization of our gas resources essentially missed the target in one serious way. I think we did well in terms of pointing in the direction of improving our human resources. That is good, because we have to do that.

3.30 p.m.

Where I think we went wrong is that in my view, we simply put the ship back where it was 50 years ago. In that respect, I hold the view that we did not take the correct long-term decision, but that is by the way.

I want to deal with the importance of agriculture in the open economy, because I think that the very eminent West Indian economist, Sir Arthur Lewis, has been misread, and in very many respects, misunderstood. I just want to take a minute to put that old debate back in context.

Lewis never advocated shutting down agriculture and putting up industry. Never! His argument was always that in order to raise productivity in agriculture, one had to mechanize, and in order to mechanize, one needed to release land to fewer people. It is in the solution of making space for bringing in capital equipment to combine with less labour input, that it was necessary to create jobs off the land.

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He has always been very, very clear that the only basis of raising incomes and raising levels of living is to raise factor productivity, and the most important factor input is labour. In fact, if we wanted to be a little pedantic, we would just want to remind ourselves that in starting up that work, he actually compared the ratios of labour to land and labour to output and land to output here in Europe, and recognized that land in the Caribbean was more productive than land in Europe. What was less productive was labour, because labour was still using hoes and machetes and so forth.

I want to get to the point that there is a sense that we can disregard our agriculture, get into manufacturing and trade. There is in the discipline of economics a very complex law: the law of unequal exchange. Basically, what that asserts is that in trade, ultimately, what one is doing is exchanging labour, and if one's labour is of very low productivity, then what would happen in trade is that one would reap very low returns and the country where labour is more productive will reap very high returns.

Let me put this another way. In one of his books, *The Evolution of the New International Economic Order*, Lewis graphically put it this way: he said that during the 19th Century, 50 million Europeans left Europe and went to the new lands at ten shillings per day wage. At the same time, about the same number, 50 million Asiatics left Asia also for new lands at one shilling a day.

He posed the question: why the difference? He answers it this way: Well, in Europe, the productivity of the labour there was producing at a level with a ten-shilling-a-day wage return. If one wanted to access that pool of labour, one had to pay the ten shillings which was the opportunity cost, whereas in Asia, the labour there was producing at a level that afforded only one shilling a day. So, all one had to do was to pay one shilling to access that pool of labour.

You see, Sir, the lesson I want to come to is this: If we develop our hydrocarbons, if we develop our tourism, using international capital, then all that capital has to pay local labour to access the pool of labour here is the going wage in the country, and the ultimate determinant of the going wage in a country is the productivity of labour in agriculture.

Our entire economic policy has to be based on raising productivity in the agricultural sector. I am so happy that we have a Minister who not only knows these things but is both experienced and wise to give to the nation at this time the guidance that is necessary.

I would like to say in terms of the Motions before us that if the hon. Minister would answer just one part—it is a very full resolution here—if he could give us, explain the Government's policy—I would not go for a full explanation, neither would I think it important at this time to give details of the measures taken and the measures proposed—if we could get from the hon. Minister a first directional statement on the Government's policy towards agriculture, that would be good.

I would ask specifically how important do we think the agricultural sector is to the overall development of the economy and the society? How important do we think the rural sectors and communities of our nation are, given the fact that most of our land resources and very many of our loveliest people are located in the rural areas?

What strategic role do we see for the agricultural sector? What conceptual picture do we have of the agricultural sector, say in 20 years time? This thing is not going to happen overnight, so this is not, I think, to be dealt with in a way that will give quick returns. If we go in that direction, we probably would err, and perhaps towards some idea of what key changes we may need to start putting in place in the next five years or so.

I want to say that the mover of the Motion, Prof. John Spence, alluded to the importance of the commercial family farm. The subsistence agriculture is low productivity, low income, and it does not have a proper place in a modern economic system. Communal agriculture, both traditional and state-owned, have both shown themselves also to be very inefficient.

Our own experience here in the Caribbean has been of plantation agriculture, and I keep saying that when in 1975 we took that very important step of purchasing the resources in Caroni, what I saw we were doing was that we had repatriated to ourselves, those land resources, but certainly, we continue to leave them as they are, because in my view, in agriculture, in organization, how the agricultural sector is organized is really key, and my understanding of agricultural systems worldwide is that the commercial family farm has been the one which has been the most productive.

Within the family farm there is the incentive to bring in technology, because if the work is backbreaking, it is on one's family. There is an incentive there to raise technology. There is also a great incentive to be very market sensitive, because if one does a lot of work and one gets little returns, one's incomes remain low.

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I go along with the mover of the Motion in advocating the move in the direction of viable family farms. That brings us to a very vexed question, and if I may say so, I did detect in a report I saw in the newspaper, probably within the last week, evidence that we have made substantial progress on that matter of the resources in Caroni.

We have in that area, approximately half or more of our agricultural resources; the land, and let me say very openly that I view land—

Cellular telephone rings.

Mr. President: Whose telephone is that? Is it someone in the public gallery?

Member of the public stands.

Mr. President: Please, switch your phone off! Do ensure that it does not recur. We have had warnings on several occasions in the past and some drastic action will be taken if it recurs. This goes for all Members in the Senate and the members of the public gallery.

Sen. Dr. E. St. Cyr: When we come to land, I view land as a productive input into agriculture. I know it also features substantially as an asset, and I think that was the burden of Prof. Spence's proposal, that we should probably vest the land in a way that it is not alienated. I understand that the Chinese have really seriously recognized this problem of the long-term alienation of food producing land. They have put proper policies; they have a billion people to look to and they are probably looking hundreds of years down the road. We have to start looking in that direction.

If we were to sensibly vest the land in a way that it does not get alienated from agriculture and does not, in terms of how we organize it for production, cause too many jitters outside the land area itself—these are real issues—I think that we have to move in the direction of organizing those resources in commercial family farms.

To me, the most important thing there would be is the time phase over which we seek to do that, because historically, Caroni had 30,000 employees in 1950; 20,000 in 1970; 10,000 now, so it is coming down. If we go and say we have to reduce it by half, we would cause people to suddenly wonder what is going to happen to them.

I think a very participatory approach would work, and as I said, I observed from a report in the press that the relevant union did not seem to say, "We do not want any—" All it seemed to be saying is that they were not consulted. I took that

as a great step forward, and I see that we could get into a good proper long-term solution to that historical hot potato with which we find ourselves. The best agricultural resources; the machinery and the farmers, are locked in to an industry which, as organized at present, and in world market situations—especially referring here to Prof. Spence’s reference to a likely resolution of the Cuba/United States problem would make the sugar industry not a long-term industry one to be in—I think the industry should be congratulated on producing 114,000 tons of sugar this year, though the phrase that it was a record, I think, needs to be corrected. We did produce 250,000 tons in 1975. *[Laughter]*

I say these things because we need to have very mature debates in this country and our debates must always be factual so that we could cut through the “picong” and—I nearly said the politics—and really get on with the nation’s business, but I do see us having to deal with land reform and the organization of the resources land tenure, and so on and so forth.

3.50 p.m.

But, Mr. President, in winding up, the good book which I read and which I know the hon. Minister is quite familiar with, tells us that, “He who tilleth his land shall not lack bread.” We really have to put agriculture centre stage in our economic and social policy.

I would like to think that we are fortunate in having in the hon. Minister, a person of intellect, experience and astuteness and look forward to seeing him give the leadership in this direction. May I just say that the hon. Minister and I were colleagues at a certain place so if you detect a little special relationship there, we let that out.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed: Mr. President, this afternoon we thought, or we assumed that the hon. Minister was going to be making an early contribution in respect of the Motion that is being debated here. Obviously, the assumption was wrong and, in those circumstances, I have opted to make my contribution at this time in terms of this very far-reaching Motion that is before the Chamber this afternoon.

At the outset, I would like to commend Sen. Prof. Spence for once again bringing a Motion dealing with agriculture in our country. Not too long ago, there was a Motion where we had the opportunity to speak at length on this very important sector in our economy and, bearing in mind that there has been a

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significant change in the country in terms of agriculture—and I refer specifically to the fact that not too long ago, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources was changed and today we have Minister Trevor Sudama in charge of this very important and significant Ministry. Having listened to Sen. Dr. St. Cyr's contribution a while ago and the comments he made about looking for leadership and guidance from the present Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, we, too, on this side and, particularly, speaking for myself, I have very high expectations that Minister Trevor Sudama would, in fact, at some point during this debate, enunciate a policy direction with regard to agriculture for this country that would really be a meaningful policy direction and something that we can hope, in the next few years in this country, we would be able to look at this sector and say, "Yes. We have achieved something."

Mr. President, over the years, I would say we know for a fact that because of the oil boom and the focus on the energy sector in our country, agriculture has, in fact, taken a back seat and for those who are laughing, this is no laughing matter. It is a fact of life in our country because different governments have been in power over the years and it is just because of the circumstances in terms of our economy that we have experienced this situation.

In terms of the importance of agriculture, Mr. President, as a student of history, I recall having to study the fact that when, in the 18th Century, Britain was undergoing its industrial revolution, it coincided with what was then described as an agrarian revolution. There one saw the link that exists between the two in the sense that in a country becoming industrialized, it is important, too, for there to be changes in the agricultural sector.

It is important because when you look at the most basic needs of a human being, you would see that food ranks among the first of all our needs—food, clothing and shelter. They are perhaps the most basic of needs that a human being would have and whatever the state of our country or our economy, food security has to be a very important issue in the development of our country. Contrary to what the propaganda was and what they on the other side would have said, in terms of agriculture in our country, I think, over the years, we can identify very concrete efforts that have been made with respect to improving the sector. But it has to be acknowledged that there are serious problems that affect the sector as well.

For example, Sen. Dr. St. Cyr spoke a while ago about the labour aspect of agriculture and the need to stimulate labour in agriculture and I agree with him. But let us look at the realities facing us in our country today.

I grew up in an environment against a family background where agriculture was key to our survival. Coming from an area known as "The Food Basket" of the country, in Aranguéz, agriculture has always been a very critical and important aspect of life to many people in the San Juan area. What we have seen over the years, is the fact that as we look at those who are now tilling the soil, more and more we are seeing where even the older folks who were involved in the land, they themselves are opting to give up farming and look for easier means of survival.

I know for a fact that many of the people in the Aranguéz area who used to produce thousands and thousands of pounds of short crops, like tomatoes, baigan, cucumbers, sweet peppers, watermelons and what have you, have actually given up the lands and opted—many of them—to migrate. This has extended itself, particularly to the younger folks, the younger members of the family.

I myself used to be involved in producing food at one time and I have opted for another means of earning a livelihood. It is a fact of life and perhaps because of the changing times—granted, we have other avenues open for earning a livelihood but, at the same time, even if one pursues a career because I know some very successful people who, whether in one of the professions as a lawyer, in politics or what have you, also became involved in agriculture over the years and produced very successful crops. I know that today some very senior people in our society continue to do so very successfully.

It is a kind of consciousness that we need to bring about in our country where we need to encourage our people, particularly the young people of our nation, to get involved in agriculture once again. There is nothing to be ashamed of if you have to hold some manure in your hands and throw it in a hole to fertilize a plant. That is a very noble form of earning a livelihood and, more importantly, it helps to produce food.

Mr. President, in the Motion before us, I heard Sen. Dr. St. Cyr talking about: How do you stimulate labour in agriculture? It is a case where all of us, as a nation, have to try to bring about that consciousness.

Over the years growing up, I heard remarks being made that people are moving away from the land because they are looking for easier means of earning an income, particularly in terms of what we now know as the Unemployment Relief Programme. We know that programme fulfils a certain need in areas where it is impossible to carry out agriculture but what is very sad, and we must be honest about it and look at what is happening, is today that URP syndrome has

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now extended itself into areas that traditionally were involved in agriculture and producing food. People are opting to get a “10-days” to get a quick dollar, rather than going out and producing some food. That is a fact. We cannot run away from it.

So that we need to find ways and means of bringing that about, renewing that interest in agriculture. You know, Mr. President, agriculture is a sector which is a very lucrative area in which many jobs can be created and one can earn an honest livelihood. We acknowledge that yes, there are problems, but one of the points Sen. Dr. St. Cyr made a while ago was in terms of our farming practices. Bringing about the mechanization of our lands and so forth, that again, is an issue, given the nature in which agriculture or farming takes place in our country. Right there in Aranguéz for example, it is a situation where, over the years, there have been individual families farming plots of land. In Aranguéz in particular, those people who farm the land there, do not necessarily refer to their land as acres of land. For example, they farm a bed or two beds and it all depends on how many beds—the length and so forth—that will determine how many beds actually make up an acre.

If you have to talk about mechanization in terms of agriculture, the manner in which we are accustomed to using the lands is something we need to address—how we use the land; the acreage and so forth.

I remember some years ago, there was a gentleman in the East near Piarco Airport who attempted to mechanize his farming practices and he was, in fact, very successful in his efforts. Again, there were problems. He got the tractors. He was able, because of the large area of land he started to farm, to introduce crops to try to cut some of his costs and so forth, but God alone knows what is happening now. As a country, this is an area that we need to look at and get to the core to see what we can do to improve the system.

I talked about Aranguéz because it is the place closest to me, closest to home and I know that Minister Trevor Sudama was in the Aranguéz area some time ago. One of the things that I know had been going on, prior to the UNC administration taking government in 1995, was a land use and land distribution programme. I make mention of this programme, Mr. President, because it formed part of what we now know as the Agricultural Sector Reform Programme. It was part of a loan that had been negotiated under the People's National Movement prior to 1995. In fact, this Government when it came into office, in June of 1996, actually signed the contract documents pertaining to this loan. Prior to the actual

signing of those documents, in terms of the negotiations of the loan, there were certain things—I have copies of these documents; we were all provided with these contracts; we have had them over the years and every year, I stand right here on this side and make reference to these documents. I am hoping, out of this debate, that the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources will update us on this agricultural sector loan.

I ask for this information because in these loan documents which were signed on June 11, 1996—I saw the previous Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in the Chamber a while ago and he was, in fact, the person who signed it but they were negotiated prior to the UNC coming into government. In this document, there are references to certain things like interest payments and credit fees that are payable with respect to the loan. In the event that we are not accessing the funds under the loan arrangements, it means that certain fees and interest payments—if we may refer to them as penalties then—are payable.

After some four and a half years in government, we would like to know what is the status of this loan. This was supposed to have been advanced in three tranches. I am aware of the fact that the first tranche had, in fact, been accessed. Things were being put in place to meet certain conditionalities associated with this loan and we have referred to them from time to time.

I would like, again, to make reference to a couple of these conditionalities. In the document entitled "Loan Contract between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank Agricultural Sector Reform Program June 11, 1996", at page 3, it deals with "Conditions Concerning Disbursements" and it sets out "Special Conditions Precedent to Disbursement of the First Tranche." Then it makes reference to "Special Conditions Precedent to Disbursement of the Second Tranche."

Under that heading, when this Government came into office, we were told that it was working on the second tranche so I am going to start on the basis that, by now, they would have accessed the second tranche of the loan but let us look at some of the conditionalities here. Reference is made to measures that have been taken in respect of the Agricultural Development Bank. Sen. Prof. Spence in his presentation made reference to changes with the Agricultural Development Bank. There are several conditionalities here. The one labelled (g) says:

"It has made satisfactory progress in the implementation of the Land Use Action Plan, which shall specifically include the following:

- (i) that the borrower has transferred at least 2,000 acres of Caroni Ltd. land to private farmers and at least 7,000 acres of other state-owned land either to private farmers or to regularize squatter settlements;

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- (ii) that all new state land leases conform to the revised Standard Agricultural Lease based on Guidelines agreed upon with the Bank on August 11, 1995;
- (iii) that the Urban and Regional Planning Act has entered into effect and that it conforms with the Urban and Regional Planning guidelines, agreed upon with the Bank on August 11, 1995; and
- (iv) that the Borrower has organized the Urban and Regional Planning Division created by the Urban and Regional Planning Act referred to above.”

It continues:

- “(h) The borrower has made satisfactory progress in the implementation of the State Owned Enterprises Action Plan, which shall specifically include the following:
 - (i) That Caroni Ltd. has attained, in accordance with terms previously agreed upon with the Bank, satisfactory progress in the fulfillment of the Caroni Performance Agreement agreed upon with the Bank on August 11, 1995. Compliance with said Agreement shall specifically include, that Caroni Ltd. has:
 - (1) tested three (3) core sampling machines during the 1996 crop, and developed an operations manual and training program for incentive-based sugar cane purchases from private growers;
 - (2) reduced its general labor force by at least 605 persons during 1995-1996 and its staff by at least 20 persons during the same period;
 - (3) sold or leased at least 2,000 acres land in accordance with the Land Divestiture Program...”

4.10

- “(4) initiated a study of the land markets to assist in the determination of additional land for sale or lease by Caroni Ltd., in accordance with terms of reference previously agreed upon with the bank;
- (5) reduced its production costs during 1995—1996 in accordance with the requirements of the strategic plan referred to in Section 5.02 (e)(ii)(4);”

Mr. President, this document goes on. As part of the State Owned Enterprises Action Plan, one of the requirements under this was the implementation of the Tripartite Report. We have made reference to this time and time again. Since then we have heard that the Government had initiated other studies with respect to Caroni (1975) Limited and they were going in a different direction from the Tripartite Report. In fact, the hon. Minister of Finance had referred to certain studies that had been done. I think PriceWaterhouseCooper had done a study subsequent to the Tripartite Report, and not too long ago we heard about the Transformation Imperative Plan, the TIP programme involving Caroni (1975) Limited.

I raise the issue of Caroni (1975) Limited because we have made statements and we have heard and now it seems as though it is a fact, that Caroni (1975) Limited is going to be sold by breaking down the company into certain sections. I am asking the hon. Minister this afternoon in this honourable Chamber, to tell us if it is not true that tomorrow morning a very lucrative, perhaps, the most lucrative part, of Caroni (1975) Limited, is going to be sold at a gross undervalue.

I am not into the rum or alcohol business and so forth, but it is known that the rum distillery is, perhaps, the most lucrative part, the most economically viable part of Caroni (1975) Limited. We have received information to the effect that, in fact, that part of Caroni (1975) Limited is about to be sold at a gross undervalue. We would like to know what is the professional valuation of that company, what is the price the purchasers are getting it at and who are the purchasers, because, once again, it seems to be friends and financiers. I see the hon. Minister Carlos John looking at me and smiling, because he knows what I am talking about. Long ago, the hon. Prime Minister used to talk about the parasitic oligarchy, and now this same parasitic oligarchy seems to be in control of the Government, and I say this without remorse. [*Crosstalk*]

In fact, it seems as though a new oligarchy has emerged under the hon. Basdeo Panday. The hon. Minister Trevor Sudama is a man, I know, whose heart is with the people, and I know that he is genuine and is committed to ensuring that in terms of whatever limited resources we have in our country, especially our agricultural resources, we as a people in this country are able to get the most out of it. I am talking about the nation. If it is that this part of Caroni (1975) Limited is the most lucrative part, then the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources must intervene in this transaction, and if anything, probably put a halt to it.

I know, Mr. President, that in terms of the transaction it falls under his portfolio, but there seems to be higher and more powerful forces that may be operating. In his conscience, I cannot believe that a man like the hon. Minister Trevor Sudama who has been struggling for the people over years in this country, would sit by and allow such a transaction to take place, causing so many thousands, if not millions of dollars to be lost to our Treasury. It would be a sad day and a very unfortunate legacy to be left behind in our country by the hon. Minister Trevor Sudama, especially in these times when we notice that when the first batch of candidates was announced, the hon. Minister's name was not there.

Sen. Kuei Tung: Mr. President, I would just like to pose a question to the hon. Senator, with your permission. Does the hon. Senator know—and I must thank you for giving way—that Caroni (1975) Limited's rum division is also losing money, that it is not the most lucrative?

Sen. Shabazz: "And Jack Warner give allyuh money for it?"

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, I am not an economist, but certainly we are concerned about the value, in terms of the open-market value for this company. We know that Caroni (1975) Limited over the years has been operating at a deficit level, but that part of the company is known to be the one with the most potential to be economically viable; we know that; it is in the report. I have the Transformation Imperative Plan here. Mr. President, it is very, very sad that they are allowing the sale of an asset in this way.

I know that from time to time Sen. Prof. Spence has spoken about the sale of the land assets of the company. What is happening with the land owned by Caroni (1975) Limited? I think the point was made about keeping those lands in agriculture. We have read, we have seen, we have witnessed, we have heard, when InnCogen got a part of Caroni (1975) Limited land, again, at undervalue. Why is this Government so hell-bent on making—every time there is some transaction to take place, it always involves some kind of favouritism and some kind of nepotism.

If it is true that the price at which this part of the company is being sold is so low, much lower than the open-market value for the company, then it is a sad day for our country. *[Interruption]* If you want to know what the price is, our information is that the price they are selling it for tomorrow morning is \$40 million, when it is valued at about \$500 million, *[Crosstalk]* Mr. President, they are the ones in office, let them come clean with the nation, because they have, from time to time, boasted about openness and transparency. Let them come and tell us what is the market value. Let him say so.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. President, I just want to tell the Senator, there is a difference between market value and book value. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, that fine point of distinction that the hon. Minister is trying to make is just a red herring. The reality is that a sale is going to take place. The hon. Minister is saying that I am talking about something that I do not know, because the country is not stupid. The people of this nation are looking on; we are looking on and waiting—[*Desk thumping*—and when the time comes then you will know.

The way things are unfolding in our country today, a Prime Minister being involved in the hiring of a person for a private company, we really have to wonder.

Mr. President: Senator, get off that point, please, and get back to the Motion. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senators: Shame, shame!

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you, Mr. President, and I will be guided by your ruling. [*Desk thumping*]

I hear the hon. Vincent Cabrera shouting shame across the Chamber; I hear him crying shame, but let us get on with the Motion.

Mr. President: Get on with the Motion, please.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you, Mr. President. [*Crosstalk*]

As we talk about agriculture—because we will not talk about the trade union movement at this point in time. Except, that when it comes to the sale of Caroni (1975) Limited, not too long ago, I think it was last week, I heard the current head of the All Trinidad Sugar Workers Union asking whether it is true or complaining about the fact that 1,500 workers are likely to be laid off at Caroni (1975) Limited, so we want to know. Sometime ago when the Labour Day celebrations took place, that sugar union was absent from the day's proceedings, so we are waiting anxiously to see how they are going to be dealing with the current sale of that part of Caroni (1975) Limited; we are waiting with anticipation.

As I get back to the agricultural sector loan, Mr. President, we talked about Caroni (1975) Limited. We have heard about the Land Use Programme, but I want to ask a question too about an important facet of that loan, because in the very first budget presentation of the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development he came to this Chamber and boasted about the Social Mitigation

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Programme to help poor farmers. [*Interruption*] He cannot even remember now about the programme; it is so unfortunate, because an integral part of that agricultural sector loan was going to be the disbursement of funds, I think it was US \$30 million, to assist those persons who would be affected, at the lowest rung of the ladder, in terms of the changes that had to be made in the agricultural sector, so it was called a social mitigation programme.

I would like to know from this Government, have they yet accessed one cent of that money? If so, how much, and when did they do it? We would like to know. Let us know what tranche of the loan has been accessed to date? Is it that they have gotten the full loan? If not, if you have not yet accessed all the moneys under that loan, let the country know how much money we have to pay, in terms of penalties, for not accessing the funds in time; how much in credit fees and interest payments. Please let us know, hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, or perhaps, the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development might be willing to divulge that information; after all, they claim to be a Government of transparency and openness.

Sen. Shabazz: Not with Jack! That was before Jack.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, before I leave the situation in Aranguéz, I would just like to call upon the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. As I said some time ago, I am aware of the fact that he met with a group of farmers in that area. I think it was around July last year, the farmers yet again experienced a terrible flood in the area and many farmers' crops had been destroyed by the flood waters.

Now, in the last budget presentation of the hon. Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, an announcement had been made that a fund was being established called the Disaster Relief Fund. I am asking on behalf of these farmers—and this is not about politics, this is about people who have been genuinely affected by the flood that recently took place—to please, hon. Minister, if there is anything you can do to expedite the settlement of the claims that have been made by several farmers in the Aranguéz area, to get some compensation arising out of those floods. It will be appreciated.

Mr. Sudama: Thank you for giving way. Mr. President, let me assure the Senator that we have just approved the Cabinet note for the settlement of claims for relief for farmers, and this dates back to 1998; those who were left out, those who made claims and were evaluated and assessed for 1999, and up to April 2000. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. N. Mohammed: It is most encouraging to get that information from the hon. Minister, except I just want to issue a word of caution. Last year when the issue of compensation arose, the then Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, I believe, held back the disbursement of the funds until close to the Local Government Election, so let us not make politics out of this and please give the farmers the money. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

Mr. Sudama: Let me really assure you that the Member for St. Joseph has no such authority to hold back any disbursement. [*Laughter*]

Sen. N. Mohammed: The hon. Minister would be surprised to know that that is, in fact, what happened. Mr. President, in terms of who has authority nowadays, we really have to wonder. I know that the hon. Minister's heart is there and he will try his very best. Perhaps, the hon. Senator Carlos John might assist in the quick disbursement of these funds to the people of Aranguez, an important constituency that Sen. Carlos John might have some interest in now. [*Laughter*]

As I continue with my contribution, I will just like to make another plea. Hon. Minister Carlos John, this is an important point. For some time now we have been asking and advocating or calling for the Government to actually build a proper wholesale market for the farmers of our country. This is a problem that has been going on, we have acknowledged it. Over the years there has been a problem. Over the years we know that there has been the Debe Market. With all due respect to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources who hails from that area, it is a fact that our farmers—while some of them would use that market—the bulk of the farmers, the people who produce food in this country, particularly from the food basket area in Aranguez, up in Paramin and other very fertile areas in this country, over the years have been “boarding a lodge”—if we may use that expression—at the Central Market near Sea Lots.

The Central Market has really been designed and built as a retail market. From time to time, our poor farmers who have to toil in the hot sun, rain or whatever it is, whole day there, farming the lands, when they come to sell their produce they have to go into that facility there and be subjected to the most gruelling and harsh conditions. We know that some attempts were made at improving the situation. Sometime ago a loan had been accessed and the Port of Spain City Corporation tried to accommodate the farmers, but the farmers were not very happy with the arrangement.

Not too long ago, a change took place whereby these farmers opted to leave the Central Market, controlled by the Port of Spain City Corporation, and go across to a building that NAMDEVCO had there for some time and a shed that had

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been there for many years, which was originally designed to be used as a wholesale market for farmers. In that particular area there is a problem with security, and for many years the farmers did not want to use there, but because of the situation now they have opted to go across. In fact, some little renovations took place and they have gone across there, but the situation is not the ideal one for the farmers. They are struggling but they have to go there. It is unbelievable to see what is happening to these farmers, because now they are open all day and all night. The market is open around the clock, but to get in there people have to go early enough to get a spot to sell their produce. When you get in there, you cannot stay there the whole day, you have to wait on buyers to buy your goods, and it is a problem. It has been existing there, but the accommodation is very cramped; it is very tight. Parking is a problem, security is a problem.

Every time I raised this issue, the former Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Dr. Reeza Mohammed, would get up in this Parliament and announce plans by the Government to build retail markets. We are not talking about a retail market only, we are talking about a proper wholesale facility.

Mr. Sudama: I really hate to be interrupting the Senator so frequently, but since the next time this debate comes up would be, perhaps, in a month's time, I thought I would clear the air. We have looked at the situation at the Northern Wholesale Market, the question of access and egress, space, security and all the inconveniences, and we have decided, Mr. President, that we would relocate the Northern Wholesale Market from its present place to Macoya where we have a lot of state lands. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. N. Mohammed: I am glad for that information. That is a very strong statement. Now we have to really wonder if it is going to be in the Centre of Excellence—[*Laughter*]—but I know so far that the feedback we are getting, at least, the feedback I have gotten from some of the farmers is that they are not too happy with that arrangement.

Let us look at it practically. Mr. President, many of the people who use that wholesale facility in Port of Spain are people who have to depend on the ferry service to take their goods from Trinidad to Tobago. When they are put in Macoya, how are they going to get their goods to Tobago? Are they going to have to wait for the Toco ferry project to come on stream? [*Laughter*] There are many problems with that, and we know of it. Not many of the goods can be shipped, or you can send it by airplane, so it has to go by boat, so the distance—this is feedback I have gotten from some of the farmers.

What is regrettable, Mr. President, is that under the former PNM administration, plans had been approved for the construction of a facility in the Aranguéz area, at the Aranguéz Main Road intersection, and all of a sudden when this Government came into power those plans were scrapped. In fact, the lands that were earmarked to be used as a site for the construction of a proper wholesale market have since been sold to a private individual who is a known friend of the Government. We can call names, but I would not go so far to do so. If you pass there now you would see a lot of development taking place in that area. *[Interruption]* Sold by whom? Whether it is Aranguéz Estates or whoever it was, the point is that the Government had the power.

They could have acquired those lands, in the same vein, and use it for the construction of a market facility, which they did not do. They have kept on promising the farmers, and if you look at the Public Sector Investment document for this year, you would see a clear statement now by the Government that plans to build that market have been abolished; they have been scrapped.

Even the construction of the retail market in San Juan is riddled with the kind of politicking of this UNC administration whereby they have been bypassing the regional corporations and doing things in a very high-handed manner.

4.30 p.m.

Everything had been put in place to have that San Juan market rebuilt and lo and behold because of the politics that they are playing, they have since diverted the funds to the Chaguanas Regional Corporation. First, they had sent it to Tent City and now, from our information, they are taking funds from the Chaguanas Regional Corporation to use in the San Juan market, bypassing the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation because it is PNM controlled. It is so ridiculous, so sad and unfortunate because all these things have an effect in terms of our agricultural sector. Marketing is a key and integral part of agriculture and it is a critical issue. When the Agrarian Revolution took place in England, the marketing system was a very important aspect of that transformation and we have to be mindful of it.

Mr. President, there is another area on which I need to touch. I am glad to hear the Minister say that they are going to build a wholesale market, but I will ask him please to rethink the location of that market. Macoya is where the Centre of Excellence is. We want the market where the food basket is, where the people who use that market, particularly the Aranguéz farmers and those from Paramin would have easy access to the market. There would be good security, parking,

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good facilities, covered sheds, toilets, baths and what have you. That location is so strategic that people from Central, East and South can all converge there and make good use of that market.

From day one, the Debe Market had been described as a white elephant. I know attempts had been made to put it to some use and perhaps more retailers are using it than wholesalers. I know that even shows are held there sometimes.

Hon. Senator: In the market?

Sen. N. Mohammed: In the Debe Market. Mr. President, Sen. Prof. Kenny gave us a very interesting discourse in terms of fisheries in our country and this is indeed a very critical sector in agriculture and I refer to the fisheries sector because only last week a gentleman was passing with his vehicle in the area where I live selling his fish and shrimps. One of the most difficult things to get in this country, as a citizen of this blessed country are shrimps of a reasonably good size and at an affordable price. Can you imagine the shrimps were sold at \$8.00 per pound and they were very small. When I asked him for medium sized or big shrimps he said he could not afford to get those shrimps because they are selling for \$40.00 per pound. Shrimps from our waters going at that price? *[Interruption]* Supply and demand, sure, but certainly Mr. President—

Sen. S. John: I suggest to the Senator that the best size shrimps, at the most reasonable prices could be had at 12th Street in Barataria just where she lives. *[Laughter]*

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, I know the place in Barataria. He seems to have forgotten that I have my roots there and I know where it is, but I am talking about the price. Why is it for good quality shrimps—even if it is \$17.00 per pound, it is still a high price for us to be paying.

Sen. S. John: Round the corner by Mr. Khan.

Sen. N. Mohammed: We know Mr. Khan is one of the most successful shrimpers in this country. Over the years he has been doing a lot in supplying our country with shrimps, but this brings us to a very critical point: the practices by our fishermen fishing in our waters, and not just the local fishermen, but certainly those who are in our territorial waters as well, that is an area that needs to be monitored. The size of the nets they are using is causing tremendous harm and damage to our natural resources and whatever little shrimps and fishes we have in our waters.

I was shocked this week to learn that right here in the Caroni River these big fishing vessels are now coming into the river and into the area we call black dirt and in El Socorro South. They are coming up in that area and when they come with their nets and other equipment they use for their fishing purposes: What is happening? They are not only catching fishes, whether it is a big size grouper they are looking for or what have you, they are cleaning the bottom of the river and destroying whatever little stocks we have. That tells us that there is a need for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, being the agency in charge of fisheries to implement proper management practices and systems to be put in place to ensure that the way in which we carry out our fishing exercises is done in a way that will do least damage to our resources, whilst at the same time, getting the most value from whatever resources we have.

Mr. President, at the end of the day you look at the people involved in fishing. The fisheries sector in our country affects thousands of persons in our country, particularly in rural areas and this is very pertinent to the Motion which Sen. Prof. Spence has brought. Mayaro is one of the places in this country that is closest to my heart and it saddens me when I go there to see the fishermen after hours of pulling in that seine to see two and three fishes alone in the net. Why? What is happening? In the Mayaro area we understand that with the new areas other countries are allowed to fish in, there are vessels out in the Atlantic Ocean. What kind of surveillance do you have for monitoring these vessels and the way they are fishing and shrimping in our waters especially in the South East Coast? It is a pity Sen. Sadiq Baksh is not in the Chamber now because he of all people would know about what I am talking because one of his closest colleagues, Mr. Guptee is a gentleman who is controlling that whole Manzanilla Coast and we would like to know what systems are in place to have proper monitoring and surveillance of the type of fishing practices in that East coast area?

Now they are talking about a port in Toco. I do not know at present how many vessels are available to the Coast Guard, but if they are confined right here in the West Coast and they are unable to monitor the vessels there, what can we expect with respect to the East Coast? We know that there are restrictions in the North Coast, one should not be trawling within two miles of the coastal area, but yet vessels are known to come into the waters. You need equipment, properly equipped vessels with the kind of devices that can monitor whether the vessels are keeping in line.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, I know we have passed the tea break, but I will be winding up in a short while. This question of our fisheries brings us to the concerns of the environment and the destruction of our resources in the waters and I raise this particularly with reference to the Caroni River. One of the biggest problems—and it is a fact that has been acknowledged by this Government too—is the extent to which pollution of our rivers and watercourses has been taking place in our country and particularly by some of the big companies. You just have to go down the Caroni River where there is something called climbing. For years this pollution problem has been in existence. With all due respect to those who may have interest in these particular companies, it is a known fact that Caroni (1975) Limited and I think Fernandes Distillers are two of the main entities that have been involved in this pollution. We need to do something to ensure that companies and citizens in our country become sensitive and aware of the need for us to protect our environment and wetlands, and most importantly, and stop the destruction of the mangrove that is taking place at present.

Hon. Minister, I make an appeal to you and the current Minister of Housing and Settlements who go back a long way and for many years have been struggling for the people of the country, but now look at what is happening. The hon. Minister of Housing and Settlements had a vision and a grandiose plan to reform the Western part of our country and certain things are happening at a pace that is really unbelievable. He has been talking about bypassing the tendering process and things—

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. President, I wonder if the hon. Senator will not agree that it is most unlikely that the Government would sell the rum section to Angostura because this will be creating another monopoly like the cable monopoly. Surely this country is not going into the area of monopolies in every industry.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, whilst these monopolies are being created, all I am asking is to get the companies to contribute something towards reducing the levels of pollution in our rivers and watercourses.

As I come to the destruction of the mangrove, it is a fact that some dredging work has started. I understand at Sea Lots, they have started to dredge out in the sea and at the mouth of the river. Whatever is taking place, please ensure that it is done in a way that our mangrove will be protected. I do not know to what extent the Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out, we would hear much more about that.

Mr. President, another important aspect is the known fact that for some time now, there has been a sewage pipe that has been leaking right off Sea Lots into the Gulf of Paria and near the Caroni River. There is a little island in that area that is commonly referred to as “Crabia Island” and because of the constant flow of sewage there, very soon that whole island is going to be destroyed. I remember hearing the Minister of Public Utilities talking about moneys being allocated to do a feasibility study with respect to the sewerage plant in that area. That was about three to four years ago in a budget document. We had done the studies and we were going to convert that sewerage plant or repair it in a way that the waste water would have been filtered to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate so that there would be no need for a desalination plant. But no! This Government came into office and God alone knows what has happened to this sewerage plant. Every year they are doing a feasibility study, I think the last one cost some \$7 million, by now it is probably \$10 million and the pipe is still leaking in the area and that is causing a lot of destruction to the mangrove, the river, the gulf and our fisheries resources there. So Mr. President, I am asking the hon. Minister to look into this matter.

When it comes to fishery it is difficult to count and identify how many persons in our country are involved. I think an estimate had been done some years ago and there might be some 8,000 fishermen but when you look at families affected, it could be about 40,000—50,000 persons and particularly in our rural areas fisheries are an important source of livelihood, to many. It is the major contributor to the fabric and the balance of our society.

I know for a fact that when the PNM demitted office, there was a policy paper dealing with policy directions for marine fisheries of Trinidad and Tobago in the 1990s. It is dated October 1994. I would like the hon. Minister to tell us what is happening in terms of fisheries and the management of our fisheries in the country. What is taking place, what is the stated policy direction of this Government? We would like to know what is happening with it because it is a very critical part of the agricultural sector and we need to work together with the people in our community in order to develop and organize our fishing industry and the fishermen in our country.

Mr. President, there is another area dealing with agricultural access roads. The Access Roads Programme had been started under the former PNM administration—that is a fact. In 1992 and 1993, I know for a fact in the Aranguez area that several roads in the agricultural area South of the highway in Aranguez, agricultural access roads were being built. Since that time we know that other roads had been built, but what is happening with the maintenance of these roads?

There is one other issue I want to raise with the Minister before I take my seat and it has to do with the teak industry. Last week I remember reading in the *Daily Express* Wednesday, July 19 2000, on page 4. I trust that the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources still reads the *Express*. The headline says:

“This chair’s not for me

Tanteak chairman declines post

The new Tanteak chairman has declined to take up the position.

Barely 24 hours after Agriculture Minister Trevor Sudama announced the appointment of a new Tanteak board Monday, the Chairman named has refused the post.”

It continues:

“The news gets worse for Tanteak. A recent legal victory Tanteak won against a UK company has brought up allegations of impropriety and bribery of former Tanteak officials.

A \$28 million breach of contract action initiated against Tanteak by Silverspear plc in May 1998 was followed by a Tanteak counter-claim after the company’s attorneys produced evidence which ‘implicated former Tanteak officials,’ the outgoing board said.

Silverspear recently announced financial insolvency, thus bringing the matter technically to an end.

‘It appears from the findings that somebody (at Tanteak) was the recipient of inducements. But further investigations as to who were involved are being conducted.’ Sudama said.

Hon. Minister we are waiting to hear more from you about this.

There is another article which deals with the underselling of teak in the *Trinidad Express* of July 26, 2000 on page 4 and it deals with the selling of teak, I understand, for something like \$2.5 million. A gross undervalue again in terms of the real value of the teak.

It is all here in the article and I hope that the hon. Minister would provide us with some answers because I know he is very different from many others in the Government. He is a man in whom I have confidence and would come clean and straight because over the years in his political life, he has always spoken out against corruption and nepotism and the fact is that two wrongs do not make a right.

We would expect to get higher standards from the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the current Minister of standards, and moreso, those around him, and I am making an appeal to him because I agree with Sen. Dr. St Cyr when he said that Minister Sudama is perhaps an ideal choice to do a good long-term policy for agriculture in our country. All I am asking hon. Minister, is for you to be open and transparent with us. Do not cover up the wrongs. If you see something taking place that is wrong—

Mr. Sudama: Let me inform the Senator that the sale of Caroni's teak was done in a very transparent manner, that is, it was put out for public tender. Those who had an interest tendered, it went through an evaluation process, and the person who had the best bid got the tender. Let me also tell her that when the Director of Forestry Division sells teak to Tanteak, they get the teak at \$1.60 per cubic foot. When it is sold to private wholesalers, they get it at \$8.40 per cubic foot. The teak that was sold in this instance fetched a value of \$15.00 per cubic foot, all transparent, all above board and it was given to the best bidder. I just want to tell you that in no way would I sit in my ministry and condone corruption.
[Desk thumping]

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, I feel very heartened to hear and get that commitment from the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and I just hope that no one is pulling wool over his eyes, and we hope that when the sale takes place tomorrow, he will come out openly and be brave and honest with us and the nation and would not allow the oligarchy to control his mind and actions. He is the Minister in control and in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

4.50 p.m.

The hon. Sen. Carlos John continues to laugh, but this is no joking matter.

So, Mr. President, just before I take my seat I wish once again to appeal to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. In the few days or weeks or months that he has left in office, please try to leave behind a legacy which, in terms of his contribution, as short as his term in the Agriculture

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Ministry may have been, will take our country forward in terms of the agricultural sector. This is a very passionate appeal I am making to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Thank you very much, Mr. President.
[*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Compassion, great compassion, yes. Mr. President, before moving to adjourn this honourable Senate, I take this opportunity to inform my colleagues of the order of business at the next sitting of the Senate on Tuesday, August 8, 2000. I would indicate that we are going to deal with Bill No. 2 first, that is, “An Act to amend the Dangerous Drugs Act, 1991”. We would then proceed to Bill No. 5, that is, a Bill to amend the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, and then we will revert to Bill No. 1 dealing with the licensing of bailiffs and other related matters. We go to Bill No. 3, “An Act to amend the Patents Act, 1996”; and then we go to Bill No. 20.

Sen. Mohammed: Are we going through all—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: No, I am just informing you, my dear. So, Mr. President, we go to Bill No. 20 and after that we want to deal with Bill No. 6, which is a Bill to amend the Citizenship of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act. I hope it is clear to everyone that we are dealing with six Bills. We are starting at 10.30 on Tuesday then we come back on the Thursday after, that is the 10th. We want to complete this exercise so that—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Mohammed: Six on Thursday?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: No, six between Tuesday and Thursday, then we will come back the following Tuesday to deal with some others.

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday August 8, 2000 at 10.30 a.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned 4.52 p.m.