

*Joint Select Committee**Tuesday, November 04, 2003***SENATE***Tuesday, November 04, 2003*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE****Integrity in Public Life Regulations
(Appointment of)**

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from Hon. Barendra Sinanan, Speaker of the House of Representatives:

“November 03, 2003

Sen. The Hon. Dr. Linda Baboolal
President of the Senate
Parliament
Red House
Abercromby Street
PORT OF SPAIN

Dear Madam President,

Resolution — Joint Select Committee

Please be informed that at a sitting held on Friday October 31, 2003, the House agreed to the following resolution which was moved by the Honourable Minister of Legal Affairs and Acting Attorney General:-

‘BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to Standing Order 79, and notwithstanding Standing Order 76, this Honourable House appoint Five Members to sit with an equal number from the Senate as a Joint Select Committee for the purpose of considering the Integrity in Public Life (Prescribed Forms) Regulations, 2003 and the Integrity in Public Life (Period of Furnishing of Information) Regulations, 2003 and report to Parliament thereon;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Joint Select Committee be mandated to report to Parliament, no later than December 1st, 2003 and be

Joint Select Committee
[MADAM PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, November 04, 2003

empowered to receive expert assistance and advice from Members of the Integrity Commission'

The House subsequently appointed the following five Members to serve on the Committee:

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP

Mr. Colm Imbert, MP

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux, MP

Ms. Gillian Lucky, MP

Mr. Subhas Panday, MP

Accordingly, I respectfully request that you cause this matter to be placed before the Senate at the earliest convenience.

Respectfully,
Barendra Sinanan, MP
Speaker''

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I beg to inform the Senate that motions to give effect to the matters referred to in the correspondence to the hon. President, would be dealt with under Item No. 14 on the Order Paper later in the proceedings.

PAPERS LAID

1. The Professions Related to Medicine Rules, 2003. [*The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith)*]
2. First Citizens Trust and Merchant Bank Limited Financial Statements as at September 30, 2001. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill)*]
3. First Citizens Bank Mortgage and Trust Company Limited Auditors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended September 30, 1998. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]

COMMISSIONS OF ENQUIRY (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL

Bill to amend the Commissions of Enquiry Act, Chap. 19:01 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
Integrity in Public Life Regulations
(Appointment to)

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I beg to move the following Motion:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 71, and notwithstanding Standing Order 68, this Honourable House appoint Five Members to sit with an equal number from the Senate as a Joint Select Committee for the purpose of considering the Integrity in Public Life (Prescribed Forms) Regulations, 2003 and the Integrity in Public Life (Period of Furnishing of Information) Regulations, 2003 and report to Parliament thereon;

And be it further resolved that this Joint Select Committee be mandated to report to Parliament no later than December 1st, 2003 and be empowered to receive expert assistance and advice from Members of the Integrity Commission.

And be it further resolved that the Senate appoint the following Five Members to serve with an equal number of the House of Representatives on the Joint Select Committee:

Sen. Glenda Morean-Phillip

Sen. Martin Joseph

Sen. Danny Montano

Sen. Dana Seetahal

Sen. Wade Mark.

I beg to move, Madam President.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, my name was submitted tentatively and the reason it was done so had to do with some clarification that we would like to have through you. We do not support this matter going to a joint select committee. Madam President, you would know that some weeks ago regulations were laid in this Parliament on the very item that is now being referred to a joint select committee. We were looking forward to debating these regulations as quickly as possible in this honourable House and we were taken by surprise, somewhat, that the Government is seeking to have this matter referred to a joint select committee.

Joint Select Committee
[SEN. MARK]

Tuesday, November 04, 2003

We have some concerns and we would like the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information to provide some clarification.

I have the Integrity in Public Life Act before me and under section 11 of this Act, Members are given—

Sen. Dr. Saith: On a point of order, Madam President. Are we debating the Motion?

Sen. Mark: No, we are not debating the Motion, Madam President.

Madam President: Sen. Mark asked for some clarification but, Sen. Mark, I think you have asked already for the Minister of Public Administration and Information to give you that information and I would call on him now to do so.

Sen. Mark: He has not heard my case, you know, with respect.

Madam President: Yes, but we are not into a debate.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, the Speaker of the other place has written to the President saying that a joint select committee has been appointed and that we should name five people to that committee and I am merely seeking to name the five people.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, the Speaker is seeking our support. He cannot dictate to you and he cannot dictate to this Senate. We on this side are saying that we do not support the establishment of a joint select committee and on that basis I was trying to indicate to this honourable Senate, through you, to get from my good friend, Dr. Saith, some clarification. This is what I was trying to do before you indicated to me that we are not debating it. I know we are not debating it, but before we can do anything, we need to get some clarification on some matters.

First of all, under section 11, a Member has until May 31 to file, but thereafter if he fails to file, he has six months thereafter, to November 30.

Sen. D. Montano: Madam President, that is in the realm of debate—
[*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Just one minute. Gentlemen, I cannot have both of you on the floor at the same time. I am going to give the Senator two more minutes to just clarify for me what it is he wants clarification on.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, the Speaker is seeking, through you, to get this Senate involved in a joint select committee to report by December 01. I am saying under the law, November 30 is the deadline for the filing of applications. So can

we amend the date that the Speaker is seeking to get this committee to report and bring it to November 15 or 18, so that thereby all Members of Parliament, members of state boards, would be able to be caught under the net? If we go after the 30th, as is being proposed by the letter, then you would have people escaping, unless it is going to be made retroactive. I want some clarification.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, I really am not in a position to clarify the matter. To me, the forms were laid in the Lower House and here too. In the other place they took a decision that they would like this to be sent to a joint select committee with a deadline by the end of the month and we are merely responding to that. If the hon. Senator does not wish to participate in the joint select committee, then he is quite free to do that, and we move on. I do not see how we can begin a debate on this matter now.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, through you, it is not a debate, Sen. Dr. Saith. What we are trying to get is some clarification. My understanding is that November 30 is the deadline for submission. It is in the Act; that is what I am saying!

Madam President: Senator, there is no need to shout at the Minister.

Sen. Mark: I am not shouting.

Madam President: Members, I think we are getting into, not unnecessary, but I do not think that there is much either Dr. Saith or even myself can say as far as this is concerned. As Dr. Saith has explained, it has come from the Lower House where it was accepted and we here have to decide now—the Government is appointing three people to the joint select committee; we are asking the Opposition for one and the Independents. The Independents have given me a name, and you have given me a name—

Sen. Mark: No, no, my name is just—

Madam President: Okay. So your decision, therefore, is whether you want to name somebody or not. Remember, in the lower House you have two people named to the committee. So if you do not want to name somebody, the Senate will accept this or not accept it, as the case might be, and then we move on. So could I just put this to the Senate and get an acceptance, yes or no?

Sen. R. Montano: Before you do, Madam President—

Madam President: Sen. R. Montano, just one minute. Other than that, the fact is, at the end of it we are going to take a vote, whether you agree or you do

Joint Select Committee
[MADAM PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, November 04, 2003

not agree. So until then, if the Senate does not agree, well then we send it back to the Lower House.

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, given all that has fallen from the lips of everyone, including your good self, this afternoon, is it possible, bearing in mind the importance of the matter and bearing also in mind the urgency of the matter, that we ask the Senate to suspend the Standing Orders so that we can have a debate this afternoon on this very subject? Actually, I should not say, “is it possible”. The short answer is, it is possible because we can regulate our own procedure. The question is whether or not the Senate would want to do that. So through you, I am asking, can we do that?

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, I am not sure where we are going. If we are going to debate this matter, I would have brought the Cabinet decision and the statement prepared by the UNC that they were going to make in Parliament asking for a joint select committee on this matter. Sen. Baksh was in the Cabinet; he knows that was the decision of the UNC. So I do not know what is going on. We have something before us; we need to get it done as quickly as possible; they have set a deadline of December 01 for this committee to report and I am merely trying to get the committee set up so that it could go and do its work. There would be Members of the Opposition, Members of the Independent Benches, and if they could complete the work in one week, they would complete the work in one week and come back. I think that is the time that Sen. Mark—if he remains on the committee—can make his points.

Madam President: I am going to put this to the House.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, I am not, in any way, trying to detain this sitting. All I am trying to get and I am yet to get—we would like to serve on the committee. We want to get clarification on issues. That is why I thought that Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith or the Attorney General would be able to help us on this side.

Madam President: I think, Sen. Mark, how I read this is that when the joint select committee meets, as often and as quickly as possible and brings a report to both Houses as quickly as possible, then you would have the clarification and then that report could most probably be debated. The idea of this whole thing is to get it to the committee where the work can be done very quickly and then brought to the House.

Question put.

The Senate divided: Ayes 23 Noes 5

AYES

Saith, Hon. Dr. L.
Yuille-Williams, Hon. J.
Morean, Hon. G.
Joseph, Hon. M.
Montano, Hon. D.
Enill, Hon. C.
Gift, Hon. K.
Chin Lee, Hon. H.
Dumas, Hon. R.
Abdul-Hamid, Hon. M.
Titus, R.
Sahadeo, Hon. C.
Ramroop, Hon. S.
Hackshaw-Marslin, Mrs. J.
McKenzie, Dr. E.
Deosaran, Prof. R.
King, Mrs. M.
Quamina, Dr. D.
Thomas, Amb. C.
Seetahal, Miss D.
Anmolsingh-Mahabir, Mrs. P.
Khan, Brother N.
Ali, B.

NOES

Mark. W.
Baksh S.
Kernahan, Dr. J.
Montano, R.
Seepersad-Bachan, Mrs. C.

Question agreed to.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I seek leave of the Senate to deal with Private Business instead of Government Business.

Agreed to.

**TELEVISION AND BROADCASTING OF DEBATES
(JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE)**

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Madam President, I have the honour to move the following Motion which stands in my name:

Be it resolved that the Government arrange, with appropriate permission, for full debates and the business of both Houses to be transmitted to the public through the electronic media (television and radio) in an equitable and discreetly edited form on fixed days of the week and with such transmission to begin before the end of the year 2003.

Be it further resolved that a Joint Select Committee of Parliament be appointed to consider and report on this matter so as to facilitate Government action.

Madam President, there is an amendment which I believe is now being circulated, changing the year from 2003 to 2004, so I am taking the opportunity to move the amendment at the same time.

Madam President, my Senatorial colleagues, in a sense this Motion can be treated quite mechanically because it calls for some restructuring of the proceedings of Parliament. In another sense, it is intended to be a historic step in modernizing this country's legislature, thereby falling in line with what is happening, increasingly so, with parliaments all across the world, from Australia to Canada, from New Zealand even to little Dominica in the Caribbean, and I can go on and name all the other countries which are now having their proceedings broadcast. Some of the reasons I will, of course, explain so as to encourage our Government, our legislature, to follow likewise, especially since one of the paradigms we are setting upon is towards Vision 2020.

In the context of this Motion, it is really an opportunity for us to modernize our Parliament, enhance its reputation in the eyes of the public it serves and possibly to gather a greater respect from the population to the Members of Parliament. There are some specific reasons I would now enunciate so as to facilitate the debate that will ensue. The first reason is that our Members of

Parliament, including Senators, should be brought closer to the people, and there is no more effective way to do this than for people to hear exactly what goes on in their Parliament.

It is said that perhaps not everybody would wish to listen. That may or may not be so. But the more important consideration is that the opinion leaders of the country, those groups we call non-governmental organizations upon whom we depend so much to facilitate and to participate in Government policy; researchers, locally and internationally, such broadcast will provide an authentic record of what happens in our Parliament in a very convenient manner.

Madam President, if you would permit me to make a practical reference, I teach two courses at the university, one dealing with the research, theory and practical applications of poverty alleviation and the other one on the prevention and reduction of crime. It occurred to me during the budget debate that if my students had the opportunity to listen in a live broadcast to what Sen. Yuille-Williams was saying about her poverty and community development programmes; if those students—over 200 of them, final year and graduate students—had the opportunity to hear what Minister Abdul-Hamid had to say, with what his Ministry of Social Development is doing and, of course, last but not least, even what Sen. Howard Chin Lee would have been saying, or not saying, with respect to crime, it would have given such a scholarly community, some of the potential policy makers, an opportunity to see how policy development works where it matters, in the country's Parliament.

2.00 p.m.

Madam President, there are several uses in terms of bringing Parliament closer to the people. At the same time, we need to breathe fresh life into this Parliament and, more specifically, the relationship between a Member of Parliament and his or her constituency. I think it would be quite useful for a particular constituency to sit and listen, in their village councils, homes and schools, or even in their churches, when the Member of Parliament for that particular constituency is speaking in Parliament. That has been totally absent, except what we read or hear through the television, commercially, or through the print media. There is a deficiency, therefore, in what you call the grassroots democracy of this country. I believe that is a matter that should be remedied.

Madam President, on this same point of representative government, and the deficiency arising from the lack of contact, I think we have, in practice, what we can call a bastardized form of proportional representation. This is where the

whole country is seen as one constituency, with the contact between a Member of Parliament and his or her constituency almost invisible, and to the point where a Member of Parliament would tell you that he or she—especially if he is in Opposition at the time—has no power, has no leverage and has no say. But I think if this broadcast is brought fully and directly—direct and live, as the Jamaican would say to the people—there would be a greater and a more lively response from the community in getting what it deserves through the Member of Parliament. Public opinion is a vital source of empowering different communities. I believe in this light, broadcasting in the way the Motion outlines it, will bring this type of life.

Madam President, I want to take this opportunity to make these comments because it suits, what are several contemporary concerns. My third point has to do with the behaviour in Parliament, which has drawn various kinds of concern. It is my view, and I respectfully submit, that if the public gets an opportunity to see exactly what happens in Parliament, not a little line here, and not a dramatic snippet there, but from the beginning to the end, I think they will see, more fully, the context in which such behaviour takes place. And, Madam President, over time and more importantly—perhaps it is my faith in human nature—incrementally, I believe that the Members of Parliament will show some significant improvement in their behaviour. They would recognize that there is a fuller audience witnessing, whether it is their antics or their gracious behaviours, and eventually we would be able to separate, more precisely, the goat from the sheep, rather than making a blanket condemnation of all parliamentarians. This is something that I find reprehensible because it seems to refer to me, and I do not think I deserve such unholy nomenclature.

Madam President, as I said at a previous debate, I had the privilege to be in the Canadian Parliament, and while speaking with the staff they made mention of that accomplishment; that the fuller the debate to the people is the better the behaviour has become over the years.

My fourth point, Madam President, is one over which I believe I have the greatest concern. When I speak about contemporary problems in the society, and the role that our Parliament could and should play, I think the Motion seeks to satisfy that requirement. Madam President, with all the education we have in this country and the new ones to be opened up through the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, there is mass ignorance in this society. There is almost a culture of deliberately held ignorance in this society—over essentials. In other words, one might say that we have educated ignorance in this country,

and from that is spawned a lot of fears. But fear is the child of ignorance and fear is also the father, subsequently, of ethnic hatred. I think Parliament has a responsibility to play in this, in the specific manner of having our debates enlightening and based not merely on frivolous opinions, but on some empirical grounding.

I believe that challenge would be taken up if Members know that their constituents are listening to them; that their professional peers are listening to them. Madam President, that is what is needed, a kind of parliamentary debate in which one would have opinions and, of course, freedom of speech. We would be encouraged to remove some of this ignorance by having the quality of debate that will do just that.

This is not a black and white society where everything must be seen in black or white; you are against this or you are for this. Parliament could play a role, by having a better quality of intervention, in healing the wounds that are outside in the society by a more reputable form of debate. There are too many things in-between, not just black and white, or you are for the PNM or the UNC, or you are for East Indians or Africans; there are too many things in-between.

For example, Madam President, there is a point we should make, and it has been made in Parliament, but it has not reached the national community. We have spoken about ethnicity and education in this country, and the point had been made but it had not reached the public properly, that there is a group comprising 20 per cent of this population, they are called “Douglas”. It is as if nobody speaks for the “Douglas” in this community. They are people too! Perhaps I will be the one to speak on behalf of the “Douglas” in this community. They need that spokesperson! So the East Indians/Africans contortions that we hear and read about are in themselves a deficiency, and it is captured by pseudo intellectualism. Parliament has a role to play in these serious matters, because the alternative is for us to continue to fall back on race as the key mobilizing element in getting our politics moving.

This Parliament has a responsibility to insert some more seriousness and data-driven content in meeting public knowledge. When I speak about pseudo intellectuals it reminds me as well—when one speaks about pseudo racists, Madam President, if you will permit me a minute—*[Interruption]*—the word “pseudo” really means false; it means something that is not real. If you say you are a pseudo racist it means that you are not a real racist. It means that you are a false racist. *[Laughter]* So it is quite distinct from being a racist, which is the real bothersome issue. But if you say you are a pseudo racist, I do not know if that

should be taken as seriously as perhaps it seems to have been taken. So I am saying that we have a role to play here, not in perpetrating that mass ignorance we have out there, but in producing some light, some virtue into civil society and transmitting that, through the kind of broadcasts for which this Motion seeks to ask.

Another example is this College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) issue. This issue of ethnicity, social demography and educational achievement has been raised in this Parliament recently, because it is a critical issue. We are dealing with a plural society, group rights, and the extent to which a government should look after different groups, equitably. I, myself, raised the issue in a previous debate and the bottom line to the issue was that if a government allocates resources to certain groups, it may or may not be justifiable; it depends on the need or what the data actually says. I went on to say that if a high proportion of resources is used on the East-West Corridor, in my view, that is justifiable because it is the most troublesome area in Trinidad and Tobago. It happens to be coincidental that the vast majority of people who live on the East-West Corridor happen to be of one particular ethnic background. That, however, was not my primary concern. So there is a justification if you want to identify certain ethnic groups for emphatic consideration, as the COSTAATT policy of recruitment seems to imply.

Madam President, here again that issue and that discussion did not reach the public in the way it was supposed to reach, because of inherent limitations in the private media. They do not have a full page to give to us. They have other things to publish. They have to compete with one another and duly so. They are a commercially-driven enterprise, and we have to understand what are their limitations. As I have said before, however, it is time in modernizing this Parliament that we look after our business. In the case of the COSTAATT issue and the question of 17—24-year-old males of Afro-Trinidadian descent, it seems as if the whole policy was presented badly, in a deficient way. There should be some concept paper, driven by some empirical analysis to justify the target groups. But that is a bad habit that governments have had. They do not do their homework; they come up with very strongly opinionated policies, and when they are challenged, it ends up in a flurry of controversy. The Government has to stand responsibility for that. Not this Government alone. It is a bad habit of governments having policies such as this one that is not supported properly by the relevant data.

Madam President, if you will permit me. You were a Minister of Social Development so you will know the critical need for the relevant data in driving

social and economic policies. In terms of national security and crime, it is a disaster when it comes to a lack of proper information. This debate and the Motion at hand, is intended to have these matters discussed, as they have been, but in this instant transmitted to the public.

Madam President, I am trying to use that route, through Parliament, to emphasize the value of having our proceedings fully and properly transmitted. This issue of ethnic inequity, especially with respect to young people, has been raised in this Parliament several times in the past year. Several of my colleagues have raised it. Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie has raised it. What bothers me is that it seems as if people have freedom of speech, but freedom of speech is like a eunuch, it is not effective where it matters, because freedom of speech without having people listening to what you are saying becomes null and void. So all the fancy talks, and perhaps all the high quality contributions we have had here on so many occasions, have not received their just reward by reaching the ears that really matter.

I am, in a sense, making a plea, and once again I refer to the question of ethnic inequity because that is where the mass of ignorance exists; spiteful hatreds, unnecessary bitterness, propelled by these pseudo intellectuals, and by people who claim to be leaders of one group or another, but none of them can speak for me because they do not reflect my views! So thousands of other people in this country are not properly represented when it comes to the ethnic discourse. The quarrel is not between the different groups in Caroni, Laventille, Morvant and Sangre Grande, the quarrel seems to be a vaporous one, at the top it is a quarrel among self-acclaimed leaders. We, in this Parliament, must play a more responsible role in soothing the rough waters of unnecessary controls.

Madam President, we have made the point in Parliament, and I will say so with great respect but with equal frankness: Governments do not listen. I have to be more convinced that the Ministers who sit in this Parliament really listen. Or, are their minds already made up? I can see that happening, to some extent, in the Lower House, the other place, but some of us come here with a genuine and sincere obligation to do our best to assist the Government and the country.

When the issue of ethnic inequity was raised in a previous debate, I made the point that you would always have these 17—24-year-old males of Afro-Trinidadian descent. Do you know why, Madam President? It is because the educational system is vastly and severely distorted. You have one set of schools that put out a particular kind of high quality students, proportionally speaking, and a vast majority of schools putting out these 15-16-and 17-year-old young people. I

do not need to say anymore. If you do not heal that breach, by taking the courage to do so, in some way, you would always have to look after these 17—24-year-old, who are really the consequence of a distorted educational system, as far as quality is concerned.

Madam President, that is the number one challenge. COSTAATT cannot do it by recruitment programmes because the supply side will always exist. That point was made but it has not reached the national community. They are doing a mopping up job, as my distinguished colleague has said. I do not want to go that route fully, but I am merely using those examples to illustrate the need for us to proceed swiftly.

Madam President, I have put in a date 2004, and I am looking forward to the seconder of my Motion to, perhaps, ask for greater expeditiousness. But, Madam President, we have some work to do, as a Parliament, not just as a PNM side, a UNC side and a group of Independents. We must begin to think, on some occasions, as a Parliament of a country that needs to have itself refurbished and modernized. The Parliament is a primary institution. It is not a government agency. We need a new building, of course. I would wish to see with the broadcasting technology in place and accompanied with what Minister Saith had said about his own information sector developments, in a friendly way, we could have a parliamentary broadcasting unit. Parliament should flourish with its new technology and space, not in cramped quarters in Port of Spain, but put Parliament in Couva or Caroni where there is sufficient space to do what we need to do and what we should be doing.

There are several things that we need to do. If the Government really wants Vision 2020 and it wants to convince its detractors, wherever they might be, these are some of the essential concrete things that it could do as steps towards the way. I believe by accepting this Motion, and perhaps expediting its intent, would go a long way.

I really wish to emphasize the point about getting rid of this mass ignorance, especially as there is so much rage, ignorance and propaganda. Where there is ignorance and fear a community becomes very vulnerable. I think that the Parliament has a responsibility to do something about that. If we cannot heal those breaches, the question will be asked: What use is it that we are representing a constituency that is in need of our enlightenment? I feel very strong on this issue of mass ignorance, and the role our Parliament could play in getting that diminished.

Madam President, I am venturing here again with some reluctance, but I want to do so courageously because I may not have another opportunity on this point. Sometimes I feel that when you present ministers—again I say not of this Government necessarily—with a document that calls for planning and serious thought and analysis, it reminds me of a movie I saw: “Dracula, Prince of Darkness”. Madam President, I see your eyebrows rising, you might want to know what is the relevance of this. It is relevant because it seems to me—as I remember what happen to Dracula, whenever you present Dracula with a cross he cringes and runs away; he gets scared. It seems to me that whenever you present ministers with a document with analysis and data linking policy development with empiricism they get scared. It is too cumbersome. They do not want anything to read. They tell you so. Ministers have told me—I must say yours was a golden exception in your days—[*Laughter*]—“Look, I have too much things to read, you know. I do not want too much things to read. I want some action.” Well, they are getting action, from the criminals, from a broken school system, from poverty increasing; that is the action they are getting. If they come with a plan today and a plan tomorrow, why do they not ask about what is there that is effective about these plans?

They have to do some homework and I hope when we advertise ourselves to the public, in the way I am suggesting, perhaps those breaches will soon be healed and a new mental architecture would arise in terms of public policy. Therefore, I am suggesting that if there is a public broadcasting unit—because you cannot just pass the Motion and leave it; let wind pass through. We have to modernize Parliament and I am hoping that there would be some connection with Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith’s Ministry of Public Administration and Information, in some infrastructural way, for us to give this parliamentary broadcasting system unit a proper kick off.

I must also say towards the end that broadcasting parliamentary proceedings creates a level playing field for all sides in Parliament. I feel some compassion for the Opposition in the Parliament, whether it was when the PNM was in Opposition or now the UNC is in Opposition. We really need to have a better playing field so that some of the frustrations could be diminished, and people could feel they have a presence and that they have a say in what goes on. I believe that is something we have inherited and I have spoken about it recently, I need not repeat that. But again I say that the Opposition is entitled to a level playing field as far as what the national community hears. Here again the private media is correct; they give some precedence to Government’s and ministerial statements but what about the

constituents who belong to the Opposition? Certainly, we need a better balance of things. This is not a political point. This is really a point of improved governance and a better reputation and functioning Parliament.

Madam President, I would suggest in terms of modernizing our Parliament, as well, and if they are really serious about our public policy mission, we could even consider at some time, given the implications of the debate, having a full-time Parliament. I do not see how a Government with so many pieces of legislation, and increasingly so, could continue depending on a half-day session in the Lower House and in the Upper House, generally. You just cannot manage, and that is why there are so many inefficiencies in the legislation that only get highlighted when it reaches the courts, and there would be many more coming. Anyhow, that is another problem. Madam President, you cannot have a half-day Parliament in the face of the heavier responsibilities the Government is having, with almost 30 ministries coming to Parliament with legislation. Certainly, some thinking has to go into it, if not a full-time Parliament, as we might say, but at least two days per week. We have to make a compromise otherwise the bottleneck would be more and more politically claustrophobic.

I believe this is a good opportunity for us to show the country, through this Motion, that the Parliament and its different component parts could work together and set an example. There is precedence for this. In 1989, there was already a joint select committee, which dealt with a matter like this one, broadcasting parliamentary proceedings. One of the members on that committee who supported it was the hon. Patrick Manning. Last year there was a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting where the question of bringing Parliament closer to the people, through broadcasting the proceedings, was supported by that Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. One of the Government members attended that conference and I hope he reported to his Cabinet, his party or to his government that there is a need for us to do that here.

Madam President, I am very happy for the occasion. I have raised some issues which I believe would attract some debate, but I hope in the end we can not only approve the Motion—I have some good news from both sides of the Parliament—and that the implementation would be expeditious to suit the kind of concerns that we currently have about the role and functions of our national Parliament.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

Seconded by Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie.

Question proposed.

Sen. Robin Montano: Madam President, I rise with a certain amount of wonder this afternoon as to why we are debating this Motion. My wonder is as far as I, and those on this side are concerned, the logic is so self-evident that parliamentary proceedings should be broadcast live and direct.

Madam President, for example, do you know that in England, the mother of all Parliaments, the proceedings are broadcast live on the Internet? If you want you can see, here in Trinidad, the debate going on in the House of Commons, with no problem. Well, I do not know about this moment because I do not know if the debate is taking place right now, I believe it is 6.30 p.m. on a Tuesday evening in England now. What I mean is, when debates are live you can look at them.

In the United States, debates in the Congress and the Senate go over C-SPAN live and direct so that anybody who is interested could look at it. In Canada it is also live and direct. Madam President, you have only got to look at it to see if it makes sense, after all, what is a Parliament about? Parliament comes from the French word “parler” which means to talk, to speak. And here is where we the representatives of the people—and I am choosing my words very carefully—not the rulers, not the masters—meet to discuss the people’s business. It is important that the people are able to see and hear what we are talking about on their behalf. Are we representing them properly? Are we putting forward their hopes, fears, and aspirations? What are we doing?

2.30 p.m.

When the Parliament was “invented” many, many moons ago, there were no such things as radio and television. Indeed, in 1956 when we got full internal self-government there was only one radio station, Radio Trinidad 7.30 AM as well as the little American station that broadcast in Chaguaramas, but there was nothing else. 6.10 Radio did not come about for some time and most certainly 7.30 AM Radio did not have the capacity in those days to cover Parliament live. Technology has moved on and here in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, it has stood still like dinosaurs waiting for the media to hit and extinguish it. Why? For example, if we were live and direct, we could see Sen. Ramroop sleeping. Why not? Why can the people not see him fast asleep? Is that what he is supposed to be doing or, is he supposed to be listening to the debate? You can let the people see, hear and understand what is being debated. Let them form their own judgments. There was a classic example this afternoon.

Everybody knows that there is a major issue between the two parties with one party accusing the other of corruption and vice-versa. And the question is: Who

can paint themselves cleaner than clean? This afternoon there was a little argument at the beginning of the sitting of this honourable Senate whereby the Government said that they wanted to push the integrity regulations forms to a joint select committee. There was a big argument as to what would happen because everybody knows—I should say all of us know, but the public does not know that if the forms were not approved by November, 30 which is the magic date, then none of us have to file anything for the year 2002 and all we would have to file is for the year 2003. I became a Senator in October 2002.

Sen. Dr. Saith: On a point of order, Madam President. I do not know what it is. But, is the Senator totally correct? Is he prepared to put his reputation on the line with that statement?

Sen. R. Montano: Yes.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Good.

Sen. R. Montano: The Integrity Act says that one must file the requisite or prescribed form not later than May 31 in the year following the previous year. So May 31, 2003 relates to the year 2002 and May 31, 2004 relates to the year 2003 and so forth. The Integrity Commission, under the law, has the ability and the authority to grant if requested, and it is the Integrity Commission's discretion to grant an extension of time to a maximum of six months. Therefore, if we hit November 30 with no forms, effectively that means that none of us would have to file any forms for the year 2002.

My point is this: If we were being televised live today the country would have seen exactly what happened. There would be no twisting or manipulating of the media. Whether it was reported or not, the population would see it live and direct. The message would come out and the people could then form their own opinions. If a parliamentarian, be it a Senator or an hon. Member of the other place, were misbehaving in one way or the other, and not behaving in proper parliamentary fashion, was being rude, irrelevant or whatever, the public would soon see that and would probably switch off whenever he stood up. On the other hand, if a presiding officer, and I am speaking generally now, Madam President, were being biased or unfair to a particular side, again, the public, via the television, would see that and it would get out—and is that not what we are about? Letting our masters, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, for they are our masters, see how well we are going about their business. Because at the end of the day, it matters little whether we get into these—as I have seen it happen in this Senate all too often—school boy arguments; “you did this,” “no I did not,” “you did that” and so on. The

public would very soon understand who was being the little boy or girl and who was being mature. The public would soon understand the points that were being raised.

In the budget debate, for example, the public would have been able to judge whether or not the Government's beating of its chest for the three days that we sat in this honourable Senate was justified or not or, they could judge whether I was correct when I said none of them gave us any benchmarks. As I said in the budget debate, it is a given that they were going to win the argument because they had the superior numbers, but one does not necessarily win the intellectual argument of the hearts and minds of the people just because one has superior numbers. And in this way we would be making the democracy work. We would be saying to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the people of the world, look we are not afraid.

Madam President, all governments, not just this one, every government from 1956 to date, has found it and no doubt will continue to find it more convenient not to have to answer embarrassing criticisms, not to have to answer to embarrassing slip-ups and just sweep it under the carpet, whatever it might happen to be. But when that is live and direct, there is no sweeping under the carpet because the population gets a chance to see it.

Presently, there is a criticism on this side about the print media. Whether it is fair or not is not my point this afternoon. The criticism is that the print media does not represent and does not publicize what we say. The message does not get out. That there could be a reply to the criticism is not my point; my point is, that is the criticism.

If we were live and direct, the public could judge for itself whether our criticism was valid; the public could judge for itself whether or not the media was indeed biased against us because they could see the altercations and the arguments taking place. They could see the debates taking place and they could understand.

Recently there was a big explosion about race. For the life of me I do not know exactly what happened. I do know, and I have heard it from representatives on my side what happened. I have also heard it from certain reporters, a slightly different version, and so it goes. But I did not see it so I fall into one of those categories, that is, in this particular case I am a member of the public wondering what happened. I have seen comments that it was wrong to "shut down" the debate. I have seen comments that it was right to do it, I do not know. I genuinely do not know but I am a citizen and as a citizen I would like to know that I can

trust—unfortunately I really cannot trust what the print media says because very often I have seen debates and even the television media—I have taken part in debates here, have gone home and turned my television on and looked at the news and what I saw on the news is not what happened here. Furthermore, when I read the story on the next day again, it is so completely twisted, salient and important facts are left out that I wonder in what country, where was I earlier this evening or yesterday as the case may be, and I am sure that I am not the only one, and I am sure that I am not the only person in this Parliament who has had that criticism. I know that there are those on that side who have had that criticism from time to time as well, and that is my point.

For example, if we were to have a debate on race in this Parliament, which no doubt may come up within the next four years—it ought to in my view because it is something that is live and direct in the society. Or alternatively, if there were a debate on the licensing of radio stations we could, for example, deal with this *Newsday* article of November 04, 2003, Radio Power by a chap called Pastor Ram Maharaj—I am using it as an example. Mr. Maharaj points out in his article that there are over six Indian-formatted radio stations but he goes on, despite this massive media exposure, these dedicated Hindu programmes have never been used to attack other religious belief systems.

In fact, he says in his article that they go out of their way to preach tolerance. But he goes on—and as I said, this would come live and direct and the people would get to hear about it. In the article he talks about a chap who calls himself the Gladiator, one Ricardo Welch of Power 102 and he deals with a letter written on June 12, 2003 by an attorney-at-law, Mr. Darryl Alahar who heard a broadcast in which Mr. Welch stood up and vilified the Hindu community and its statues that were put up at the Divali Nagar site.

I know about this because I read the article and I also happen to have heard the particular programme that was racist in the extreme. Frankly, either Welch should have been fired or the licence should have been pulled. But the fact of the matter is this sort of thing could come out. It could come out how the Trinidad Broadcasting Network has been slapped by a certain Hindu group, the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabah, for having a so-called pastor who called on parents to keep their children away from school during the Divali week. He did not want them to see the Indian delicacies Hindu devotees usually share out at this time.

This is serious business and here in the honourable Senate of Trinidad and Tobago, the highest court of the land, it should be paying close attention to what

people are saying in our nation. It should be dealing with issues like that and then the people of Trinidad and Tobago would say yes, the honourable Senate is relevant, yes, its representatives are paying attention, and that is my point. If we do not, then the people of Trinidad and Tobago would ask, “Oh, what are they doing? You all are a talk shop.” I have heard in the past arguments: “Oh well, you know you have freedom of speech in the Senate—and you might malign or libel somebody. We can do that now and it does get out now and it is protected.

With the greatest of respect, that is not a good excuse because the fact of the matter is that there are certain rules about misleading the honourable Senate. Also, what would happen is, if one stood up and said—I am making up this name, I do not know anybody called John Smith, okay John Brown [*Laughter*] and I stood here this afternoon and I called John Brown all kinds of despicable names and everything else, at the end of the day who gets more hurt, John Brown or me? The people see it. Let the people see the hon. Senator or the representative from the Lower House—let them see exactly what is being said.

Very often I have noticed with all governments that people who get into government tend to think of “us and them” and “us” as we are the rulers. Hello! Guess what? Not quite! A democracy is about representing the people. They are our masters, and you would understand everything. These honourable ladies and gentlemen over there are not my rulers. They happen to be my government. I do not like them very much but that is another story. Seriously, I meant as a government; I was talking about politics because there is one on that side that I love dearly—I like you all as a people and as persons but I do not like your politics.

Sen. Mark: Robin, you have to work hard to protect Danny because I understand Patrick wants to fire him.

Sen. R. Montano: If he tries that he would have to deal with me. He would certainly have to deal with me. He cannot make that mistake. [*Laughter*]

Madam President, I agree that one must also have a certain time for—but the point is, I have seen governments behave in this “us and them;” “We are the bosses, we are the rulers.” All of a sudden “X” who yesterday was driving around in a Sentra, is today a government minister and he is driving a Mercedes Benz and his nose is in the air, and people complain they cannot see him, of course, until the next election. It has happened in every single government and that is the truth. The fact of the matter is, the system that we have, which of course leads in to an argument on constitutional reform—and I promise I would not go there this

afternoon—lends itself to that sort of arrogance and to the government of the day becoming divorced from the people it represents and becoming unrealistic in what it wants to do.

One of the many ways to bring the Government down to earth is for the people to see them and see what they are doing, see what they are saying and see how they are saying it. One would find that many of the smart alec comments that come from both sides of this honourable Senate—and if we were honest about it we would admit that there are “cute remarks” made on both sides. These “cute remarks” would either have to get very witty or they would be forced to stop because people would very quickly turn around and say, “Look, what is wrong with him? Why does he not just sit and keep quiet?” They would say that. It is one thing to sort of laugh and joke but you know what I am saying carries truth in it.

Madam President, I could go on, but surely you get the point. We need to have all the proceedings of Parliament broadcast live and direct. Put it on the Internet; put it on television.

A classic example of how powerful the medium of television and radio is, is where last year there were two commissions of enquiry, that is, the Biche enquiry and the Airport enquiry. Both of them were broadcast live. I am so sorry the hon. Senator had not discussed this with me but I do not wish to steal Sen. Seetahal’s thunder; but if she would allow me to say this, that everybody saw it. I would not say much more but I do want to raise this point.

The result was that at the end of the day, it does not matter particularly what report comes out; sanitized or not, because one hears all kinds of stories about the report being sanitized. Forget about whether those stories are true or not. I am not on that issue this afternoon, and I am genuinely trying not to be controversial. I am trying to make a genuine point that every citizen of this country who was interested saw the Airport enquiry and was able to form his own opinion about it. So at the end of the day, it matters little what we politicians say on both sides about it. It matters equally little what the newspapers say about it. What matters is that the people of Trinidad and Tobago were able to form their own opinion. What better way for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to decide whether their government—and I do not mean this government, because this government will come and go. Whether it goes tomorrow as we hope it will go or the day after tomorrow as they hope—I am speaking figuratively my friends, what goes up always comes down; the law of gravity. But the point of the matter is to let the people of Trinidad and Tobago decide whether we are doing good or ill in this

honourable. Senate, in the Parliament. Therefore, I beg all my colleagues on all sides of this honourable Senate to please support this Motion. It is a non-partisan one.

I have tried very hard this afternoon not to be partisan. I have not used my time in a way to be critical of the Government. Any criticism I made is intended against governments in general. I would urge the honourable Senate this afternoon to please let us think about our masters. Let us understand who we are and let us understand who they are and let us understand what we are here for.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Social Development (Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid): Madam President, let me thank all hon. Senators for this opportunity to participate on this particular Motion. I congratulate Sen. Prof. Deosaran for advancing this particular resolution.

Let me begin by extending on some of the jovial comments made by Sen. R. Montano and say that it is our intention to govern this country in such a way that the law of gravity would not apply. [*Desk thumping*] It is our intention to orbit in Government. Let me commend Sen. Prof. Deosaran for his presentation, which I describe as a fine combination of fashion and composure. I agree with most of it and would begin by making reference to what he said to take off.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran made his presentation in the context of what might be described as, perhaps, inadequate or even unsatisfactory coverage of the proceedings of Parliament by the media.

Madam President, this question of coverage by the media is something that is not only a local issue. It is, in fact, a phenomenon that characterizes, perhaps, dissatisfaction with coverage throughout the world. Even in very developed countries, one finds that there are extensive reports by the very media of dissatisfaction with the coverage that is given to various events. In the United States, for example, we found that there were many complaints on the quality of the coverage of the Iraq war, and some of the issues raised were whether the media was, in fact, part of the war machinery and there were issues that were being debated as to where do journalistic principles begin or end as opposed to the loyalty to country. Those were some of the issues that were raised in trying to assess the quality of the coverage that was being given to the Iraq war.

At the same time, there were others arguing that the approach that allowed for a degree of participation on the part of members of the journalistic fraternity

where they infiltrated—I am forgetting what the exact term was, but they did participate and joined the ranks of war machinery and reported from the frontline as it were. Some held the view that was not what should have been done or what could have been done and, in fact, that in some ways would have extended the role of the journalist to being a participant in the actual war effort.

Very recently we heard of the Secretary of Defence in the United States complaining about, post-war, of the quality or the standard of journalism and his complaint was he was dissatisfied with the post-war coverage.

3.00 p.m.

Madam President, even in sport we recall, when the rights to cover the Olympics were given to a particular network, there were some complaints that the network was actually converting what was a fantastic world sporting event into a soap opera. Those complaints were really tied to an approach of the network to give certain kinds of details about athletes, their lifestyles, history and the villages they came from, even while sporting events were taking place. There was dissatisfaction there because purist sports spectators felt that was not something in which they were interested. In fact, they felt that the time could have been better spent viewing other events that may have been taking place at that particular point in time.

Madam President, this issue of the quality of coverage, be it sporting events, world events or wars, journalists and the media have all come under scrutiny and have had to face certain degrees of criticisms as a result of their doing their jobs in the way they think they must do it. Locally we all know that there are complaints levelled against the media as well. The local media, as was articulated earlier, is not without criticism. While it is true that the media does, in fact, hold the ideals of being fair and balanced; of trying to find the points of equilibrium between and among competing interests—they do hold the ideals of attempting not to compromise journalistic principles.

We must remember—I do not intend to defend the media here, but I am hoping to provide some kind of explanation and promote an understanding—that hundreds of thousands of dollars, and in some cases, millions of dollars, are invested in media houses by individuals and corporations. We must understand, from their perspective, that this is actually a financial investment which they must protect; the shareholders in these companies must also be protected. More than that, there is also an expectation of a return on the investment.

When we look at it this way we recognize—Sen. Prof. Deosaran did mention that it was a commercial entity. When we look at the media as an industry, and the

media house as a business unit, we must, at the same time understand that whatever they are—whether it is a television station, a radio station, newspaper or whatever the media might be—we must conduct our evaluation understanding that each house would represent significant investments on the part of individuals and corporations.

What does that mean? That simply means that they must deliver a product which they think they can market. It is an important part of their agenda, that they deliver a product for which they can get a return on their investment. The key, I imagine, in a successful media house is that we must be able to find the balance between the protection and return on an investment and the ability of the individual journalist to be accurate and fair in representing the events on which they might be reporting.

Madam President, nobody is perfect and they are, in fact, going to make mistakes as they do and as we do as politicians in the conduct of our own affairs. The problem really arises where politicians or members of the media—journalists and so forth—tend to become arrogant or belligerent in the face of the fact that we have done or reported something wrong. What has been happening sometimes is that we adopt a certain kind of attitude to the way in which we conduct our affairs. It is a human characteristic that we must all try to escape, but it is the human characteristic that applies to politicians, media persons, the police or anybody performing any function. That characteristic is that we adopt a position that we do not care what the response is to the way in which we conduct our affairs. A media person can adopt a position that “I do not care what they say, I am doing this” and is mindless of the effects or consequences of that particular behaviour on the radio, in the newspaper or whatever might be the medium used to practise journalism.

Madam President, there are a few events or incidents that maybe I can cite to give some examples of what I consider to be, perhaps, unfair treatment that would have been meted out to Members of the Parliament and so on. I have sat here on a few occasions and made contributions of my own. Generally I have heard many very good contributions made in this Parliament which, really, to my mind, added to the quality of information and standard of information and to the body of knowledge available to the Parliament and the country as a whole.

Very often when one looks at news or reads the newspapers the following day one understands that a Member’s contribution may have lasted one hour, and five minutes of that time may have been devoted to some picong across the floor and so on, but all that is reported is the five-minute picong. To add insult to injury, the

parliamentarian is then criticized for the quality of the debate on the basis of the five-minute picong which the media house itself reported. They ignore the other 55 minutes which may very well have been of a high quality. In a number of ways that is unfair to a number of people.

First of all, that is unfair to the parliamentarian because it is not a proper reflection of the quality of contribution he had offered. In a way it compromises the character of the politician. It is also unfair to the Parliament, as an institution, because there are a number of people out there who are losing faith in the institution because they continually think that the quality of debate is at the standard of that five-minute clip that they would have taken, completely ignoring the fact that a lot of quality debate would have taken place without coverage. So, it is unfair to the Parliament as an institution because in such circumstances it becomes easy for members of the population to say they are “kicksin” in Parliament which is not true. I have been in Parliament coming up to one year and I do not share the view that this is a “kicksin” place. The Parliament, as an institution, can be compromised if we do not have proper representation of what takes place and proper coverage of what is taking place.

Madam President, it is unfair to a third group; that is, the population. The population must have confidence in its institutions. If we have a continuous injection of cynicism into the minds of the citizenry then we are going to find that the population lives with a sense that their institutions are failing. That kind of cynicism impacts negatively on the quality of life of the citizenry simply because we all rely on our institutions and hope that they are working properly. Where our institutions are reported to be failing, in spite of the fact that it may not be failing, then we find ourselves losing that confidence.

It must be noted that if the citizens lose confidence in the institutions they have, at some point they are going to want to set up new things and may not choose a civilized route by which to set up those things. Their decision to rebel, as it were, may not necessarily be justified because the institution may, in fact, be working but it is just that they do not know.

Responsible reporting and coverage, by media house or the Government taking the responsibility to ensure that the population gets an accurate picture of what is taking place in Parliament, is something that we must pursue. We have heard the question of some of the debates that would have taken place before. Ethnicity, for example, as an issue, has been discussed in this Parliament. In fact, if the population were to be privy to some of the things that were said, we would have a clearer understanding of some of these major issues that affect the

population. The Parliament, too, is an educational institution in a sense because it is the place where information and ideas are exchanged and, as a result of that, the population looking on can learn a lot. There are people here who have been to university, have done a significant and high quality of research and have contributed to study issues and participated in committees and so forth. When these persons speak, their contributions reflect information and knowledge. As a result of that, persons in the population who may never have seen the inside of a university can, in fact, be exposed to the university standard education if they were to have access to the debates that take place here. They may not be able to come here on a Tuesday or Friday to listen to the debates, but as they sit at home doing their work they can get good ideas and clearer understanding.

I remember, for example, Madam President, a debate on ethnicity where the point was made that there are many definitions of ethnicity and an ethnic group and many theories that apply to ethnicity. We must understand that when we speak about ethnicity in terms of race, that is just a single definition of what an ethnic group is. There are many other definitions that reject that particular definition, the definition of an ethnic group as being a group of people with similar phenotypical characteristics: similar hair, skin, nose or whatever it might be. That is not a single definition. There are other definitions, which, for example, speak to the issue of class, culture and religion as defining an ethnic group. So, one might find an ethnic group being defined in terms of its behavioural patterns and within that ethnic group you find that there are persons of different phenotypical characteristics.

You may have Africans, Indians, whites and so on, all being defined using that theory as one ethnic group and that other persons who may share your physical characteristics are not in your ethnic group because they do not qualify based on the factors as enumerated by that particular theory. That is the quality of debate that has taken place here. Those are all admirable, but the population has very little exposure to those kinds of ideas as discussed here.

Madam President, I sat in this Senate and listened to Sen. Prof. Deosaran speak on the last occasion. I felt that he took his time to be somewhat gentle in the way he was articulating his views and trying to urge the Government forward. When I got home I put on the television and heard the headline, “Prof. Deosaran blasts the Government”. I sat here and did not hear Sen. Prof. Deosaran blast the Government. I heard him make points which, I think, were all very well received. I think I heard him take his time—I do not want to say “tread carefully”, as if he needs to—in the way he made his contribution and he chose his words and

phrases very carefully. I did not think it was fair to him to set him up in the way that “Prof. Deosaran blasts the Government”. Those things take place and we, too, must be understanding. If the headline said something different the media house may think that you may change the station or something and they may lose some money.

Sometimes on the radio, in particular, because we have this radio phenomenon accelerating—When I was a child, if I heard a fact on the radio I trusted that that person who was giving the information knew what he was talking about and was giving me accurate information. I am not so sure today. I heard the ironies, on one of the radio stations, where a particular minister was being severely criticized. In the same sentence the announcer went on to say that Sadiq Baksh was the brother of Nizam Baksh. I am not so sure if that is true. He also said—something of which I am sure—that Anthony Roberts was a Minister in the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation. Now, there are primary school children who rely on this as a source of information. When I was in primary school, if I heard that I would write it down as being correct information and it is not true, of course. Anthony Roberts is a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation. That is an important distinction to be made. Those are the kinds of things we get sometimes.

On a number of occasions I heard an announcer, after the person had made their contribution, use the words “damn stupid”, referring to the caller, of course. That cannot be right or pleasant. That cannot be the kind of standard we want for our citizens, our children especially, to be listening to. It requires a degree of responsibility.

In the newspapers, over the weekend, there was a story headline which read, “Valley pelts chair”. Now, I sit on the other end, but the floor is the same up there and I know how perilously close the wheel of my chair comes to the end of that and it could be very easy for me to fall. Fortunately for Mr. Valley, the chair fell without him. Unfortunately, it resulted in a headline that said that he pelted a chair. Of course, they put it in parenthesis, but I am not sure that the inverted commas would have done the job of softening the impact of the word “pelt”. By and large people do read headlines first and sometimes we move on from the headlines. So, it was quite unfortunate that someone would think that Minister Valley would have pelted a chair. I do not know what Mr. Valley’s tradition in the Parliament has been, but I certainly was surprised to see that he was being accused of pelting a chair.

Madam President, while we understand that people do make mistakes—journalists make mistakes, politicians make mistakes—we pay for them every

day, but we must ensure that we seek the point of equilibrium where we balance the need to look after our economic interests with a need to ensure that the higher standard of journalistic principles are, in fact, observed.

Madam President, I would like to take this opportunity to identify some of the things I consider to be the merits in the proposal as articulated by Sen. Prof. Deosaran. If we were to decide, as a Parliament or a government or as a nation, that we would move in the direction of ensuring that our parliamentary proceedings are, in fact, aired on television—live or otherwise—it is my view that one of the major benefits of that particular decision would be to ensure that we have a better informed citizenry, in particular, with respect to government business and public policy, not only in terms of content, but procedure is something in which an education is needed.

One of the deficiencies I have found in any population is an unawareness of the system of government we operate and the procedures involved in the activities of the government. Why I say the system of government we operate, those involved in work at the university would know that at the third year in the university we have, perhaps, about 30 or 40 people who would have studied political science as a major, in very great detail, which would allow them to be competent in articulating and explaining the Westminster system, the system of proportional representation or any other system of government for that matter.

Madam President, that is too few persons to distribute into the population to ensure that the information they have is, in turn, properly distributed among the rest of the population. What that means is that, certainly in terms of political science, there is a great deficiency in understanding and distribution of that kind of information. So that we sometimes have situations where, as I encountered, secondary school teachers are unaware of what it means to be a Senator or what the Senate is. Or, of the fact that one has to be a Member of the House of Representatives or the Senate to qualify to be a minister. These are bits and pieces of information that are very important in terms of understanding how the system of government operates. Once we have the broadcasting of the proceedings in Parliament one would find that it would serve the purpose of advancing the cause of delivering that kind of education.

Second to that, Madam President, is the question of the procedures involved in creating legislation, for example. Many people do not understand the difference between a bill, white paper, green paper, or any paper, or a committee report. By and large there are many people in our population who do not understand those things or the stages through which a bill must be taken in order to get to the point

where it is proclaimed and becomes legislation. Sometimes an announcement is made of the intention to do something and people feel that is all it takes and it becomes law without understanding all the processes that are necessary.

Madam President, it will be an education every time the Parliament is on air. It will be an education to all our population who would choose to view. It will be an education on the system of government we operate and all the procedures that are necessary to take a bill from one stage to the next before it becomes law at the end of the process.

Madam President, in terms of content, it will allow our citizens to get a clear understanding of what the proposals or the position of the Government is. It will also allow our population to get a clear understanding of what opposing views are and this will, in fact, allow them to create a view of their own which, in fact, may be synchronized or harmonized with one side or the other.

What that information will do is it will create a more informed and better educated citizenry. For those who would have studied Westminster-style democracy, Westminster democracy, as I recall, from the years, relatively speaking, presupposes a degree of education among the population because the Westminster system asks the population to make choices on the basis of the policies, positions, and merits and/or demerits of positions adopted by one side or the other. A better informed citizenry would be then better able to participate in the system of government. I imagine that they would make better informed decisions in terms of the political parties that they chose to support in terms of the kind of parliamentarians they choose to support on the basis of the quality of information that would have been made available to them.

We are likely to experience a greater degree of participation in consultations, for example, because people are going to see the connection between consultations that take place in ministries and across the country; people are going to see the connection between government policy and the decisions of Parliament. Getting that kind of panoramic view of the process is likely to stimulate more interest and activity at the level of the ground where persons become more and more interested and willing to participate in consultation. We are also going to find they are going to be in a better position to comment on papers that are put out by Government on policy positions where government would invite comments; they are, in fact, going to be in a better position because they would understand the policies in the context of what is taking place in the government as a whole.

That, too, in turn may serve to improve the quality of legislation we have. We are going to find that as our population becomes more and more educated that the quality of views that they are going to advance are going to be superior than, perhaps, what might be available today. We would see an improvement in quality in almost every quarter.

Madam President, it is also possible—I say possible because there are demerits to which I would come shortly—that the quality of the debate itself may improve simply because politicians may have a sense that their survival as politicians may be on the line because members of the public are actually looking in. When we sit here, by and large—let us imagine there are 30 persons in the public gallery, you are speaking to those 30 persons and per chance you get some coverage. Unless a person decides to inspect the *Hansard* it is only those of us who are here are exposed to that. So that you have a poor debate, a poor contribution, it may not matter to you that you take the time to ensure that you make a proper contribution. In circumstances where you have the eyes of the public on you, you might find that Members of the Parliament would take more time to ensure that their contributions are well thought out, have substance and can make a positive impact on the society as a whole and the Parliament in particular.

Madam President, there is also the view that the electorate has a right to see and to read that which is taking place in the Parliament because, to put it simply, all activities that take place here do so in the name of the citizens and as a result of that we may find it necessary to include them in the proceedings and the broadcasting may, in fact, be a forward step in that direction. On the other hand, we do run certain kinds of risks. The risks arise largely because of human weakness and ego, but be that as it may, we must recognize the risks because human ego is a part of our existence.

Madam President, the first main risk we run is the risk of the Parliament being converted into a political platform. There are certain kinds of behaviour that, over the years, we have reserved for what we call “being on the hustings”. That kind of behaviour is one that we do not deem satisfactory or proper to present in the Parliament. As a result, we have nurtured a culture over the years where a certain kind of civilized behaviour and a definition of “civilized” is understood among those who participate in parliamentary debates. There are certain kinds of behaviour that are reserved for Parliament and certain kinds that are reserved for outside the Parliament, particularly when you are on the hustings.

3.30 p.m.

In circumstances where we have a debate taking place live and we have a very large audience, we run the risk of parliamentarians taking the opportunity to "grandstand" and play to the cameras. In the same way we saw the possibility that the quality of the debate could be improved, we find that, because we have the ears of the public, there could be the reverse effect where quality is diminished as a result of parliamentarians using the opportunity to "grandstand" and use this forum as a political platform.

The behaviour here, too, may be compromised, quite apart from the quality and content of the debate. Madam President, I draw this to your attention because it would then fall to you to manage that situation. Even in the absence of such a large audience we have problems from time to time. Can you imagine then, Madam President, what might take place if Senators decided to use the Parliament as a forum to be the triumphant politician—to be a politician on the hustings? That is certainly going to have the effect of putting extra pressure on the presiding officers both in the Senate and in the other place. In addition to diminishing the quality of the debate, it would diminish the standard of behaviour and, in the end, might also serve to trivialize the proceedings.

These are very real possibilities, so we must take them into account. I am not saying that they are going to be deterrents, but that we must understand, as we move forward, some of the possibilities that we may be called upon to manage.

There have been incidents around the world where debates are broadcast live. There is one particular incident, which was mentioned to me, where a person present in a chamber used the opportunity to do a perverse act. The perverse act was that he wore a jersey with a political message in the Parliament. That was deemed to be unsatisfactory behaviour. We do run those kinds of risks because persons may calculate that it matters not the consequence, but that what would take place, if it is being broadcast live, is that the message would be out. When they have gotten their message out, it matters not the consequence after. Having said and done that, that person would have committed an act of perversion against the Parliament and compromised the Parliament in some way.

We also have to look at one of the dangers of live broadcast. It impacts negatively on the presiding officer's ability to strike comments from the record. The effect of that will be null and void in the sense that the statement would already be in the public domain. That is the protection of Parliament that we all enjoy. We all enjoy the right, if we are unfairly treated, if certain things that are

said to us and about us are untrue, that a presiding officer can say it must be struck from the record. In circumstances where there is a live broadcast, the effect of the measure by the Presiding Officer will be little or none, so Members of Parliament need to be protected against insults and embarrassment by other Members who do not care to abide by the standards that we would all like.

There are other issues, for example, technical issues. In some countries—and it might seem relatively insignificant; it is not philosophical, it is technical—there have been complaints about the level of discomfort that may be caused by the inclusion of bright lights and equipment. Members of Parliament in some countries have complained that the lighting affects their ability to sit comfortably. Sometimes I get the privilege to sit on the Front Bench and it makes a big difference in terms of the light that gets into my eyes when I sit at the back. I sometimes get a headache sitting in the back simply because the lights are very bright and my eyelids do not provide that kind of protection.

In any event, as gentle as these lights are, they can be a problem for some people and in some countries it is a technical issue. It is not one that should really guide our decision, but it is something to note; and if we decide to go forward with this, we would have to take those factors into consideration. The comfort of parliamentarians is also important.

Madam President, there is also the question of where we are going to get our audience. We do have facilities for members of the public and, by and large, they do not come. Does that mean that they are not interested? It may mean that, but I suggest it is a chicken and egg situation in the sense that they are disenchanted, perhaps, because they do not know what is happening. I suggest that if we were to start to broadcast, their interest would grow because they would have a clearer view and a clearer understanding of the merits of the Parliament. Their interest then would be generated and developed over time. We are going to find that that helps the Parliament as a whole.

With regard to the rules of coverage that have proved to be a problem sometimes in some of the countries, it is always difficult to get persons who might be associated with the coverage to abide by the rules; but these are all things we can work with and work around.

I just want to respond to a few things that have been said earlier. When Sen. R. Montano spoke about a John Brown, I got the impression—and I might be wrong, so I ask him to correct me if I am wrong—that he was saying that if he said something negative about John Brown, more damage is done to him than to John Brown; so allow him the opportunity to say that which is negative about

John Brown. If that was what he meant, if John Brown is innocent, it does not matter who gets more and who gets less, John Brown should get no hurt whatsoever. If John Brown is innocent, he really should not be put in a position where he experiences any hurt as a result of anything anybody said.

In response to Sen. Prof. Deosaran's criticism, perhaps, that Government Ministers do not listen, I beg to differ. In my Ministry, we do not only listen in the Parliament, but we observe what members do outside the Parliament as well—the contributions they make, not necessarily as Senators, but in their various other disciplines. In fact, as I reported in the budget, it was in response to a report by Sen. Prof. Deosaran on, I think, prison reform that we established a committee to develop a comprehensive plan to address the problems with ex-prisoners. It was in fact a major contributor to that idea; not necessarily in his capacity as Senator, but as Professor and researcher.

Madam 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. J. Yuille-Williams*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid: Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Senators. I shall not be too much longer.

A second example I can cite of positive opinions to that which was said is: I heard Sen. King on the radio speaking about co-education and expressing some concern about the system of co-education that we operate. That, too, contributed to an idea we now have—and we are now in the very early stages—where we decided that we need to do some research within my Ministry on the effects of co-education on the student population. That is something that we see to be standard and have come to assume is almost sacrosanct and that we dare not speak about the possibility of the fact that there might be difficulties and that the system might be causing some problems for the students. It is something that is worthy of study and something that I hope we would be able to look at in the not-too-distant future.

We do listen. I might be accused of needing to listen some more, but we have a number of other sources of information. We do have technical people; we do have consultants; we do have researchers, who provide various kinds of information and we just listen to all and at the end come to one particular decision that we think is in the best interest of the country.

Before I sit, permit me, inasmuch as I have 12 minutes more, to take one minute to point out that we are in the month of Ramadan. Today is the ninth day of Ramadan and I know there are Senators in this Chamber who are fasting. I wish them a successful fast—a successful month of Ramadan—and extend those wishes to the nation.

I wish that we would all benefit from this fasting exercise. Even though an individual may not be fasting, there are people around who are fasting and we hope that the entire exercise can redound to greater levels of peace and harmony in the society.

It is noteworthy, and has been pointed out many times, that Divali took place in the month of Ramadan and very soon we will have Eid-ul-Fitr and Christmas. I take the opportunity to wish those persons who are involved in the fasting exercise a successful fast and a happy time and a prosperous month.

Madam President, with those words, I thank you.

Sen. Ambassador Christopher Thomas: Madam President, the Motion before us is a very important one, though not necessarily an original one. We have had examples in the past where debates have been broadcast, not only in terms of Senate and House debates, but also selectively in relation to debates on law of the sea, where the public needed to be engaged in terms of what Government and Parliament do. It is also, as Sen. R. Montano stated, a practice in many parliaments. I do not necessarily believe that when things happen abroad we must assume we must do them, but certainly where they are worthwhile things, it is very prudent if we observe these matters.

While understanding that these things are done abroad, while understanding that we have done them in the past—and I do not quite know why they have been discontinued—I thought I would try to find the utility function of this Motion and I wanted to situate that utility function within three experiences that I had during my stay in the Senate.

My first experience is on my appointment almost three years ago when a young mother of one, a friend of the family, came to me and said: "I heard you were appointed an Independent Senator and my daughter, who is 12, asked me what a Senator does." I discovered immediately that the whole question of the work of the Senate is not as clear to many people as it ought to be. I spent some time with her discussing the matter—I would not bore the Senators with what I said—and the result is that we have ended up with a Saturday class from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon talking about democracy, Parliament, Senate, et cetera, and

this has gone on for quite some time, not only for the young ones, but for mothers as well. That was one of the things that surprised me.

My second experience was an undertaking of the Independent Senators some time ago on their meet-the-people tour. Everywhere we went, whatever might have been the consequences of our visit, the resounding request was that we should continue to engage the people in the whole question of democracy and parliamentary processes. There seemed to be a yearning amongst all the population where we had been. That was the one outstanding consequence of our meet-the-people tour—that people wanted the exercise to continue; they wanted to know more about government; they wanted to know more about what we did in Parliament; they wanted to engage in the democracy of their country.

My third experience was the discussion I had with a very leading columnist in Trinidad and Tobago—someone with whom I had shared many round tables on the television and on the radio; who, on one occasion at a reception at the Hilton Hotel, complimented me, as one of the Independent Senators, on the exercise we had been doing. When I asked him why he did not write something on this, his answer was that it was not a priority for the people of the country at the time.

I found it a curious statement, particularly when our country was on autopilot. There was an extra-constitutional situation where a Cabinet was running the country, contrary to the Constitution, and a leading columnist would say then, that that was not a priority for the country.

What am I saying? The scenario that I am trying to show is that of a young child of 12, who knows very little about our Constitution and what Senators do; her mother who is unable to discuss this with her child; a populace at large wanting to know more and to engage the Senators and generally to understand what is happening and what seems to me a total disconnect between one of our more erudite economist and what the country really needed at the time. That young person might be one of hundreds of thousands. Her mother might also be one of hundreds of thousands. The populace indicated through our meetings that they were interested—and I certainly hope that the columnist was not one of many—but that disconnect told me something. Looking at the scenario as a whole, I found that even without dealing with the Motion of Sen. Prof. Deosaran, there was room for this kind of motion.

It is into this mix that this Motion comes—a Motion that will do several things. One of the things it will certainly do is to create a certain transparency in government. It would engage the population. It would provide another dimension

in terms of how the Government and people should engage and it would certainly educate the people in terms of the parliamentary processes.

Let me digress a little and say that in the United Nations, where I spent a great deal of my professional life, there have come to be categorized two types of delegations. One is delegations that have something to say and delegations that have to say something. I think this Motion will certainly be very useful in that respect because, in addition to the transparency that it would reveal in terms of government, it would provide the basis for exposing predictable empty rhetoric, "grandstanding", as one of our parliamentarians has said, and, at the same time, clear the air on some of the many outstanding issues. It would provide a sharper focus on the dynamics of representation and ultimately it would encourage issue-related governance.

It would also achieve a number of other things that I do not believe I need to emphasize. Many speakers before me have said that but, particularly where we are in a situation of constitution reform where this is very topical, it would certainly provide for, if not a debate, an understanding and engagement with these questions.

I take the opportunity to congratulate Sen. Prof. Deosaran on initiating and introducing this Motion. I hope that it will find support throughout the Senate.

As we all know, the implementation of the Motion has a number of actors if it is to be successful. I want to name just three—the media, our parliamentarians themselves and the public.

Let me first say something on the media. Others have commented on this and I need to make a very simple point. In my experience, I have found that the media has, from time to time, dwelt tremendously on sensationalism and has been cyclopic in its view in relation to our debates in the Parliament. If one says something startling, unless one tries to catch their imagination by suggestion, comment or proposal that may not be directly related to the debate, this captures the news. I feel that the media has an important role to play to inform our citizens. I believe that the hon. Minister of Social Development mentioned that.

Information is important in a democracy and the more citizens are informed—and better informed—the better democracy will be. The media's role should be such that we should have information that is unbiased and information focused on issues, so that we get into issue-related governance.

Our second actor—I hope I have not used the word wrongly; I do not mean that as a result of this we all see ourselves as television actors—would be the

parliamentarians. Here I feel also that they have a very important role to play in terms of how the television coverage or radio broadcasting can be done. If we seek to indulge in sensationalism, that is what we would be feeding the media. We must, therefore, ensure that not only our debate, but also our conduct coincides with proper dignity in the Parliament. I have sometimes been quite disturbed in the other place and sometimes here when we have young students in the public gallery. Although I am aware that we are perhaps well disciplined in relation to a number of parliaments abroad, I do not think it is an example we should really follow.

Both from the point of view of sensationalism as well as from the point of view of conduct, as Sen. Robin Montano has drawn to our attention, the broadcast of the Motion would seek to indicate to the public at large the kind of parliamentarians we have; how they behave; who is relevant and who is not.

My third actor is the public. The public is perhaps our best arbiter. They will determine whether the programme continues or not in relation to how it is received. If our programme becomes boring, laborious and not relevant to the issues, if we use the time "politicking" or "grandstanding", then this would destroy the programme; this would remove all interest in the programme.

So, both media and parliamentarian have an important role to play in terms of how the Motion would in fact be received. The Motion is succinct; it is well focused. *Res ipsa loquitur*—the Motion speaks for itself. It carries its own resonance and we must ensure that the resonance is carried in a way that is useful.

In the final analysis, I have the greatest faith in our public. Public opinion is important; public opinion will fuel a motion or will destroy a motion. I believe that we must place a lot of emphasis on how we behave in this Senate—what we do—otherwise the public themselves whom we are seeking to engage; the public who have said to us that they want more engagement and information and to be involved in the drive of democracy; if we lose that public by this programme, then we lose a very fundamental dimension of democracy in this country.

Finally, I want to support the call of Sen. Prof. Deosaran for the modernization of Parliament and the enhancement of a broadcasting system. It seems to be part and parcel of the future and success of this Motion. I thank him very much for this and for that opportunity.

4.00 p.m.

Sen. Brother Noble S. A. Khan: Thank you, Madam President. I would be very short. We have been hearing some very beautiful contributions. I think much

of what I wanted to say was already covered. To some extent—when we think in terms of time and the stage which we are at in the world scene as far as the flow of information and intelligence are concerned—we should not be debating this. This is something that should have been implemented many years ago. Some reference has been made to the early days of 1956 when we had the broadcast coming through. Those are the good old days we could talk about.

You may hear me repeating very often in my contributions that the part we should play is one of cooperation, collaboration and participation. I am speaking in a whole way to all those who are involved and more so to the people we are supposed to represent, which is the nation at large.

Obviously, the question of decision-making is one that will definitely arise. It is from decision-making that everything else functions. This is one of the pillars upon which one can speak. A very simple model would be against a background of facts, value judgment, goals and objectives of what we hope to achieve when bringing our decision-making processes into play. It is towards this end that intelligence plays a very important part in decision-making. Some would say that if we had all the knowledge concerning any matter, then there would be no need for decision-making to take place; one would know which path to follow. Obviously, one would think in terms of sharing what is taking place in this Senate to help us as far as intelligence is concerned. This is a strong case—which is the obvious, participation, cooperation, partnership and collaboration—which all should be involved in, as far as this country is concerned.

Mention was made of the press, the fourth estate and the fifth column. I recall many years ago Jean-Jacques Rousseau said: “After we have voted, that is where the democracy ceased.” That was many years ago. If there is some creditability in what he said, there might still be elements of that. There is the question of breaking down those barriers that make such statements still valid, they must be removed. I would think that what is before us would help a long way in involving our people and forming opinions of knowing what is taking place.

We do not know the form in which it would take place. We know that within recent times there are certain stations on cable television that run certain types of programmes. There is also a proliferation of radio stations. This is a suggestion. I am hoping that this could go forward and the committee would consider whether there would be continuous stations where one can tune in at any time. Insofar as having this Motion before us, and what it purports to do, I strongly suggest we support it. I do support it. I think it would be an improvement insofar as the quality of governance is concerned. When we think in terms of governance, it

seems that we cannot escape the people whom we are supposed to represent. Whatever we may do here, though this might be an element of the form of government, that participation and reaching out to the people whom they are supposed to represent will definitely enhance the quality, insofar as governance is concerned.

Thank you for allowing me these few moments.

Sen. Dana Seetahal: Madam President, as we speak, within the Parliament building, the proceedings of this Senate are actually being viewed on computer monitors. I am told that it is via a video stream, controlled by the Parliament's Communication and Information Technology Department. If there is any question about the discomfort of the live broadcasting and televising of these proceedings, then we should be aware that the discomfort would be as currently exists; because it is happening. Any Senator who chooses to, can go down to the offices on the ground floor and see whoever is speaking as they speak, just as on television.

It seems we are actually pushing an open door—when I say “we” I mean those of us who support the Motion—as far as the other sides, meaning the Government and the Opposition are concerned. Every speaker who has spoken today seems to appreciate that it must be to the common good that we have some form of live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings. The question to be decided, assuming that I am right, is how do we go about it; whether or not we actually abridge or have a shortened version of the proceedings, or whether we do the full proceedings.

Before I deal with that, I just want to give one other point in support of the view that we should have live broadcasting. It is in relation to the Constitution of this country. In this Constitution we are singular in the Commonwealth Caribbean to have under section 4(e), the right to join political parties and to express political views. I disagree to an extent with Sen. The Hon. Abdul-Hamid, in terms of the content of the suggestion that if we televise the proceedings live Senators will tend to be political. What is Parliament if it is not a political institution? Therefore, it is to be expected, and I think, to be applauded that Senators be political. If it is that they are politically partisan in expressing views and not concerned with the common good, then that is a problem.

We have to remember that Parliament has an oversight role over the Executive. That is all too often forgotten. It is assumed that we come here and we have a few laughs. I am just trivializing it. It is as if Parliament does not really matter sometimes and what matters is the Government of the day. When we had

the 18/18 situation—and this has been mentioned before—we had government by decree of Cabinet. It was clear that the general perception within the country too was that it is Cabinet that really matters. That is not taking into account the oversight role of Parliament. Parliament is to require the Executive to be accountable. It seems to me that to effectively carry out that role, there must be some openness and transparency in doing so. The best mode of doing that is to have the proceedings of Parliament published live and fully. I do not totally support the Motion in that aspect. I think it should be live and fully. I think Parliament should be given an opportunity to carry out its functions fully, through the televising of what happens in Parliament.

Continuing from my constitutional right, if we are singular, to an extent, in having a right to express political views, it seems to me that without the conveying of the expression of those political views, the right means nothing. A previous speaker said that we have a right to freedom of expression and if we do not have that expression being conveyed to the public, then the right means little. I think it is tenfold with this freedom and the right of holding political views.

If I may quote from page 30 of a judgment recently delivered by the Court of Appeal, in particular the judgment of the Chief Justice in the case of *Basdeo Panday vs Ken Gordon*. The Chief Justice is quoting the United States Supreme Court.

“Political views are by their very nature controversial and contentious and more often constitute an attack on the character of some politician or public figure rather than a private individual. Freedom to express political views and to promote free political debate is a very important feature in any free and democratic society.

The inextricable link between public discussion on political matters and good governance has been universally recognized. One example of this recognition is the statement of Justice Brandice in the case of *Whitney vs the People of the State and California*. ‘Those who won our independence believed...that public discussion is a political duty; and that this should be a fundamental principle of the American Government. They recognize the risks to which all human institutions are subject. But they knew that order cannot be secured merely through fear of punishment for its infraction; that it is hazardous to discourage thought, hope, imagination; that fear breeds repression; that repression breeds hate; that hate menaces stable government; that the path of safety lies the opportunity to discuss freely supposed grievances and proposed remedies; and that the fitting remedy of evil counsels is good ones.

Believing in the power of reason as applied through public discussion, they eschewed silence coerced by law—the argument of force in its worst form. Recognizing the occasional tyrannies of government majorities, they amended the Constitution so that free speech and assembly should be guaranteed”.

It seems to me that having regard to what I just read, the reason that we have this freedom in our Constitution to express political views is so that citizens can enjoy that feeling of hope and freedom from fear and repression. We in this Parliament, when we express our views, political as they may be, are representing the views of others; the majority of the populace who do not have that opportunity to do so. For that reason, I think it is vital for the continuation and development of our democracy that the proceedings of Parliament be broadcast live.

Citizens in the country will be able to determine for themselves whether tyrannies—according to the American Supreme Court’s Justice Brandice—of government majorities are suppressing the freedom of speech and the freedom to hold political views. If it is that we express those views as we see it in this Parliament—that is those who are not of the majority—it will be reassuring to the populace that we enjoy these rights to the fullest. For that single reason we should vote for the Motion, but not in the form that is.

That brings me to my second point. It is my suggestion that the debates and proceedings be televised fully. I say this because if we were to abridge the proceedings—I had that view formerly—then we would be risking two things: possibly an action for defamation and secondly the suggestion that we are being biased in how and who we trim.

Publishing the whole debate protects the individuals from actions in defamation. As we all know, parliamentary proceedings are absolute privilege, as are proceedings in court. If however, there is an extract of those proceedings and it is delivered in what may be considered a garbled or partially garbled form in its report, then the protection afforded to the speakers will be lost. The occasional inconvenience to individuals, arising from the full publicity of proceedings, must yield to the general good. That is why I say publish the whole debate. As someone somewhere else said—which I do not actually embrace—publish or be damned might be a good way of describing it. If we do not publish fully, we might be damned to be living our parliamentary life in an anachronistic fashion. Other countries have moved on.

In 1986, the courts themselves recognized that the *Hansard* proceedings were no longer sacrosanct. That should be a push to parliamentarians themselves that our proceedings should not be closed.

Finally, there is one matter I should refer to. It might be suggested that there is too great a cost. Although I would ask: “Can we put a price for freedom?” That might sound a little too idealistic. Suffice it to say that for a whole year it was thought fit to show live on a daily basis—I might be corrected, someone might say it was 11 months; almost a year—proceedings every day, of that infamous commission of enquiry. A whole television station was utilized for it. It would seem to me that it would not be unreasonable to use a television station for two days a week to show what has been generally better run proceedings by far than the proceedings in that commission of enquiry where the leader of the proceedings referred to persons as drunkards and the like.

Who will listen? One of the previous speakers asked. Members of the public braved the weather and paid their high transportation costs—not many of them have cars—to come here and listen to us. People do that when they are supremely interested. There are many people who would be at their office or far from here, Tobago and elsewhere, but are interested. They should be able to turn on a button and hear the proceedings of Parliament.

I would go no further than this. I think I have made my point. I think that there should be no reasonable resistance to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago enjoying their entitlement to freedom of expression. The converse of freedom of expression is the right to listen to your parliamentarians exercise that freedom on your behalf. Thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, November 11, 2003 at 1.30 p.m. At that time we would deal with the Motion on the Professions Related to Medicine Act, followed by the Bills in order of their listing.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.20 p.m.