

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, March 22, 2005***SENATE***Tuesday, March 22, 2005*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie, Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams, Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, Sen. Rawle Titus and Sen. Angela Cropper from today's sitting of the Senate.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Prof. George Maxwell Richards:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MRS. JOAN HACKSHAW-MARSLIN

WHEREAS Senator Joan Yuille-Williams is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, JOAN HACKSHAW MARSLIN, to be temporarily a Member of the Senate, with effect from 22nd March, 2005 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Joan Yuille-Williams.

Senators' Appointment
[MADAM PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, March 22, 2005

Given under my Hand and the Seal
of the President of the Republic of
Trinidad and Tobago at the Office
of the President, St. Ann's, this
21st day of March, 2005."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL
RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and
Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad
and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MRS. MAGNA WILLIAMS-SMITH

WHEREAS Senator John Jeremie is incapable of performing his duties as a
Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as
aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in
exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, MAGNA WILLIAMS-
SMITH, to be temporarily a Member of the Senate, with effect from 22nd
March, 2005 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of
the said Senator John Jeremie.

Given under my Hand and the Seal
of the President of the Republic
of Trinidad and Tobago at the
Office of the President, St. Ann's,
this 18th day of March, 2005."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL
RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and
Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad
and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

Senators' Appointment

Tuesday, March 22, 2005

TO: MS. ROSE JANNEIRE

WHEREAS Senator Martin Joseph is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, ROSE JANNEIRE, to be temporarily a Member of the Senate, with effect from 22nd March, 2005 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Martin Joseph.

Given under my Hand and the Seal
of the President of the Republic
of Trinidad and Tobago at the
Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 11th day of March,
2005."

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL
RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and
Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad
and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MS. BONNIE LOU DE SILVA

WHEREAS Senator Rawle Titus is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of illness:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, BONNIE LOU DE SILVA, to be temporarily a Member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the period of illness of the said Senator Rawle Titus.

Senators' Appointment
[MADAM PRESIDENT]

Tuesday, March 22, 2005

Given under my Hand and the Seal
of the President of the Republic
of Trinidad and Tobago at the
Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 22nd day of March,
2005."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL
RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and
Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad
and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MS. ALTHEA ROCKE

WHEREAS Senator Angela Cropper is incapable of performing her duties
as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as
aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in
exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(c) and section 44 of the
Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you,
ALTHEA ROCKE, to be temporarily a Member of the Senate, with immediate
effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the
said Senator Angela Cropper.

Given under my Hand and the Seal
of the President of the Republic
of Trinidad and Tobago at the
Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 18th day of March,
2005."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Joan Hackshaw-Marslin, Magna Williams-Smith, Rose Janneire, Bonnie Lou
De Silva and Althea Rocke.

PAPERS LAID

1. The audited financial statements of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) for the year ended September 30, 2001. [*The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith)*]
2. The audited financial statements of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) for the year ended September 30, 2002. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]
3. The annual administrative report of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation for the period October 1, 2003 to September 30, 2004. [*The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas)*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the San Fernando City Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill)*]
5. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the San Fernando City Corporation for the period January 01, 1998 to September 30, 1998. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
6. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2000. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
7. Reply of the honourable Attorney General to recommendations of the Joint Select Committee contained in the First Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to enquire into and report on government ministries with responsibility areas as listed in Part I and on statutory authorities and state enterprises falling under those ministries. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**Trinidad and Tobago Embassies and Missions**

- 47. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs:
- A. Could the Minister inform the Senate of:
 - (i) the total number of information and labour attachés assigned to Trinidad and Tobago embassies and missions in foreign countries?

- (ii) the names and qualifications of each information and labour attaché and the location of their present posting?
- B. Could the Minister further inform the Senate whether the positions of information and labour attaché are contractual positions?
- C. If the answer to B is in the affirmative, could the Minister state:
 - (i) whether the positions of information and labour attaché were publicly advertised;
 - (ii) what criteria were used in selecting these information and labour attachés;
 - (iii) the duration of these contractual positions in embassies and missions belonging to Trinidad and Tobago; and
 - (iv) the terms and conditions of employment of the various information and labour attachés at the respective embassy or mission?

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift): Madam President, there are four information attachés attached to Trinidad and Tobago Missions in Ottawa, New York, London and Miami.

There is one labour attaché who was selected by the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development in 2002. He is assigned to the Consulate General in Toronto. The expenditure of the labour attaché has been borne by the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

The names and qualifications of the information attachés and labour attaché and the location of their present positions are as follows:

NAME	QUALIFICATION
Andrea Chambers-Wilson Information Attaché, New York	Master of Public Administration (Florida State University); BA (French and Spanish) University College of Wales; University of Malaga, Spain-Spanish Language Fluency Programme; Teacher Training Programme for English Language Teachers, Université de la Sorbonne, Paris, France.

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Elvin Edwards, Information
Attaché, Ottawa

Ryerson Polytechnic Toronto, Canada; Programming Language 1; Courses in Managing Organizational Transformation (UWI Institute of Business); Basic Project Management (American Management Association, Trinidad and Tobago); Executive Development Programme-Economics, Human Resource and Financial Management, Marketing (ROYTEC)

Ashton Ford, Information
Attaché, London

Served as Mayor of Arima, Member of Parliament for Arima, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Public Utilities; worked in the Information Division, Office of the Prime Minister (1991—1995); Communications Officer (Office of the Leader of the Opposition); Media Analyst, Ministry of Public Administration and Information and Ministry of Legal Affairs; Chairman of the Human Resource Committee of the Eastern Regional Health Authority; journalist at the Express and Guardian newspapers; Production and Circulation Manager at the TnT News Centre.

Harvey Borris, Information
Attaché, Miami

Pursuing Associate of Science Degree in Business Management; Certificates in Protocol & Business Etiquette, Effective Management, Sales & Marketing, Managers' Guide to Developing Quality Service, Executive Member of the San Juan Business Association; 16 years as a Local Government Councillor; held sub-managerial and managerial positions in private sector companies such as British American, Guardian Life and CLICO.

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Rudy Rampersad, Labour
Attaché, Toronto

BSc Agronomy (UWI), Post Graduate
Diploma in Public Administration.

The positions of Information Attaché and Labour Attaché are contractual positions.

The positions of Information Attaché and Labour Attaché were not publicly advertised.

The criteria used in selecting these Information Attachés and Labour Attaché included a combination of qualifications and experience with proven track record in achieving goals and objectives.

The duration of the contractual positions of the Information Attachés and the Labour Attaché is three years.

The terms and conditions of the Information Attachés are as follows:

Mrs. Andrea Chambers-Wilson (New York):

Salary	TT\$7,000
Monthly Foreign Duty Allowance	US\$2,715 (married)
Entertainment Allowance	US\$60 per month
Car Allowance	Transportation allowance US\$120 per month. Reimbursement on submission of claims of expenditure incurred in excess of this amount in travelling in the performance of official duties.
Warm Clothing Allowance	TT\$900 (initial allowance) TT\$450 (after two years)
Outfit Allowance	TT\$1,500 (initial allowance)
Housing Allowance	Provision by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GOTT) of appropriate housing accommodation at a rental of 10% of salary

Mr. Elvin Edwards (Ottawa):

Salary	TT\$9,000
Monthly Foreign Duty Allowance	CAN\$3,778 (married)

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Entertainment Allowance	CAN\$60 per month
Car Allowance	Transportation allowance CAN\$150 per month. Reimbursement on submission of claims of expenditure incurred in excess of this amount in travelling in the performance of official duties.
Warm Clothing Allowance	TT\$900 (initial allowance) TT\$450 (after two years)
Outfit Allowance	TT\$1,500 (initial allowance)
Housing Allowance	Provision by the GOTT of appropriate housing accommodation at a rental of 10% of salary
Mr. Ashton Ford (London):	
Salary	TT\$9,000
Monthly Foreign Duty Allowance	£1,920 (married)
Entertainment Allowance	£75 per month
Car Allowance	An advance of TT\$100,000 (maximum) to be repaid at 6% interest per annum; an advance to cover the cost of motor vehicle insurance premium at 6% interest per annum; an advance to a maximum of \$15,000 at 6% interest per annum to effect repairs to the motor vehicle of the person engaged.
Warm Clothing Allowance	TT\$900 (initial allowance) TT\$450 (after two years)
Outfit Allowance	TT\$1,500 (initial allowance)
Housing Allowance	Provision by the GOTT of appropriate housing accommodation at a rental of 10% of salary
Mr. Harvey Borris (Miami):	
Salary	TT\$8,000
Monthly Foreign Duty Allowance	US\$2,715 (married)

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Entertainment Allowance	US\$60 per month
Car Allowance	An advance of TT\$100,000 (maximum) to be repaid at 6% interest per annum; an advance to cover the cost of motor vehicle insurance premium at 6% interest per annum.
Warm Clothing Allowance	TT\$900 (initial allowance) TT\$450 (after two years)
Outfit Allowance	TT\$1,500 (initial allowance)
Housing Allowance	Provision by the GOTT of appropriate housing accommodation at a rental of 10% of salary.
 Mr. Rudy Rampersadsingh, Labour Attaché as at December 2004	
Salary	TT\$10,000
Foreign Duty Allowance	CAN\$3,500 (married)
Warm Clothing Allowance	\$900 (initial allowance) for self, spouse and children over 16 years; \$450 (every two years); \$154 (payable annually) for children up to 16 years
Outfit Allowance	TT\$1,500 (initial allowance)
Transport Facilities	Either an advance to be repaid within the term of engagement to a maximum of \$85,000 at a rate of interest of 6% per annum to facilitate the purchase of a motor vehicle or an advance to cover the cost of motor vehicle insurance premium at a rate of interest of 6% per annum or a transport allowance of \$1,400 per month or provision of an appropriate vehicle for use in the performance of duty during the period of engagement.
Housing Allowance	Provision of appropriate furnished housing accommodation at a rental of 10% of salary.

Medical and Health Benefits	The person engaged to be a participant (on behalf of self and family) of approved medical insurance plan operative at the Consulate General, Toronto; 75% of the cost of coverage shall be met by the employer and 25% by the person engaged.
Vacation Leave	20 working days per annum
Sick Leave	14 calendar days with full pay in respect of each 12 month period
Gratuity	20% of gross salary earned over the period of employment

Sen. Mark: Madam President, I enquired into the qualifications of the Information Attaché. The hon. Minister provided us with a dossier of the person's background which is complimentary. He has not provided this Parliament with details of the qualifications of Mr. Ashton Ford who is located in London as Information Attaché.

Madam President: Minister, do you have any further information to give that answer?

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Madam President, I would have thought from the standpoint of experience and work exposure, the attributes of the Information Attaché in London are being well articulated here. I believe that no one can fault him for his qualities in being appointed to that position. I cannot make any connection between the question and the performance of the Information Attaché in London.

Sen. Mark: May I reiterate. Maybe, he did not get me clearly. Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs indicate to the Senate, the qualifications of the Information Attaché, Mr. Ashton Ford who is located in London?

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: For the information of this honourable Senate, the appointment of officers in the category of attachés remains the sovereign prerogative of the head of government. In his discretion he does not have to account for any qualifications in making such political appointments. It is his sole discretion to make his political appointments whether they be ambassadors or attachés. These posts are not advertised. This is the sole discretion of the Prime Minister. Those on the other side fully understand it because in their time they had attachés appointed in various missions.

Sen. Mark: Is the hon. Minister indicating to this Senate that in the case of Mr. Ashton Ford, Information Attaché, he is not qualified? I am trying to get answers.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Is the Senator saying that he does not have a degree? Is a degree the qualification that he is looking for? His qualifications are spelt out on the basis of experience. I sense that you are saying that he needs to have a degree. We have said that the basis for his qualification is his work experience.

Sen. R. Montano: What experience and what qualification? That is all we are asking. Does he have a School Leaving Certificate?

Sen. D. Montano: The question was asked and answered. Qualifications do not necessarily refer to academic qualifications—

2.00 p.m.

Sen. Mark: This man is always interrupting! [*Inaudible*] Who is he?

Madam President: Senators, please!

Sen. D. Montano: —anymore than Sen. Mark has any qualifications to be a Senator.

Madam President: All right Senator, thank you.

Sen. Mark: Where are we going with this?

Madam President: Sen. Mark, please do not call—[*Interruption*]

[*Sen. Mark stands*]

Sen. Mark: But he is imputing improper motives.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, I am standing.

[*Sen. Mark sits*]

Sen. R. Montano: Deal with the question!

Sen. Mark: He is talking nonsense.

Sen. R. Montano: This is not “dotishness”; it is a question! What is the answer to the question?

Sen. Mark: Madam President, we are just asking questions.

Madam President: Yes and the Minister has answered to the best of his information.

Sen. Mark: So he has no qualifications.

Madam President: Well, whatever the conclusions that would be yours to draw. Could we move on, please?

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could the Minister of Foreign Affairs indicate why these posts are not advertised in this country? Is it because, as he said, it is the sovereign prerogative of the political leader of the PNM and Prime Minister of the country to determine who he will—Why are these posts not advertised?

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Madam President, I am sure I dealt adequately with that question before. This is the sovereign prerogative of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. The same way that you do not advertise for ambassadors as political appointees, you are not obliged to advertise for similar positions, which are also political appointees. This is in the sole discretion of the Head of Government as Prime Minister.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could the hon. Minister indicate whether these persons, who are appointed to these offices, are allowed to carry on private practices? As these appointees work as information officers or labour attachés are they allowed to conduct private consultancies; real estate business? Is that allowed under our arrangement?

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Such appointees, Madam President, to the best of my knowledge, are not allowed to carry on private businesses.

Sen. Baksh: Could the Minister inform this honourable Senate whether the Labour Attaché in Canada is still employed?

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Madam President, that question was also answered. I did use the word in the past tense. At the time the question was formulated he was there. He has been reassigned to Port of Spain.

Thank you.

Madam President: Could we move on to question No. 52, please?

**National Broadcasting Network
(Sale of)**

52. Sen. Wade Mark asked the Minister of Public Administration and Information:

- A. Could the Minister inform the Senate whether or not an agreement for sale had been entered into with any person, firm or corporation for the purchase of the property owned and occupied by the National Broadcasting Network (NBN) on Maraval Road from which Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) broadcasts?
- B. If the answer to (A) is in the affirmative, could the Minister provide the Senate with full particulars of the agreement including, but not limited to:
- (i) the date on which the agreement was entered into;
 - (ii) the parties to the agreement;
 - (iii) the sale price;
 - (iv) whether or not the property was ever advertised for sale?
- C. If the answer to (A) is in the negative, would the Minister state whether any talks are currently taking place with any person, firm or corporation for the sale of the said property?

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, in response to part (A) of the question, there is no agreement for the sale of the property owned by the National Broadcasting Network (NBN) on Maraval Road from which Trinidad and Tobago Television broadcasts.

In response to (B), since the answer to (A) is in the negative none of the questions in (B) are relevant.

With respect to (C), there are no talks currently taking place with any person, firm or corporation for the sale of the said property.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could the hon. Minister indicate whether it is the intention of the Government to dispose of the property at No. 14 Maraval Road, which is the head office of the former NBN?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith: Madam President, I do not know in how many ways one can say no. What is in the future, I do not know, either for this Government or any government that follows it. At the moment there is no agreement to sell; there are no discussions taking place to sell and, no, no, no.

**Ramgoolie Trace, Curepe
(Housing Project)**

- 54. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the Minister of Housing:
- A. With respect to the National Housing Authority (NHA) housing project located at Ramgoolie Trace, Curepe, could the Minister provide this Senate with:
 - (i) a detailed breakdown of the expenditure incurred as at January 18, 2005; and
 - (ii) a detailed report of the present state of the project?
 - B. Could the Minister also provide the Senate with the names of the contractors employed on this project and the amount/value of each contract awarded?
 - C. Could the Minister further indicate:
 - (i) the proposed number of houses and apartments to be constructed; and
 - (ii) the number of houses and apartments that have been constructed as at January 18, 2005?

The Minister of Housing (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam President, with respect to question No. 54, the sum of \$22,544,401.54 was expended on the NHA housing project located at Ramgoolie Trace, Curepe, as at January 18, 2005. This sum represents a payment to Winchester Industries International Limited with respect to a contract awarded to this company for work completed at Ramgoolie Trace, Curepe. This sum represents 88 per cent of the total sum of which Winchester Industries International Limited claims it is entitled. A detailed breakdown of the expenditure incurred as of January 18, 2005 is as follows:

Preliminaries, bonds and insurance	\$ 3,971,503.29
Building works for single-family apartments units, duplexes, townhouses, site infrastructure works, roads and drains	\$ 9,744,321.64
Plumbing and electrical infrastructure	\$ 1,359,285.00
Design fees: architectural, civil/structural mechanical and electrical services	\$ 3,528,717.50

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Developers fees	\$ 1,000,000.00
Subtotal:	\$19,603,827.43
Attached to that is VAT at 15 per cent	<u>\$ 2,940,574.11</u>
TOTAL:	<u>\$22,544,401.54</u>

The contract between Winchester Industries International Limited and the NHA was awarded on April 25, 2003 but was, however, terminated on October 28, 2004. The reasons for the termination of the contract are as follows:

- (a) From the start of the project, the contractor failed to meet deadline dates for deliverables.
- (b) Even after making allowances for difficulties encountered on site, the contractor failed to progress the works satisfactorily.
- (c) The quality of work on site was not satisfactory and this was because the management of the site was inadequate for the size of the project.
- (d) The contractor was given several opportunities to show how he intended to complete the project. The contractor made certain proposals but failed to deliver on his promises.
- (e) For the period April, 2004 and thereafter to present, the contractor virtually abandoned the site with almost no work being undertaken. On many occasions, there were workers on site with no materials.
- (f) The National Housing Authority concluded that the contractor was unable to complete the works.

Since the termination of the contract awarded to Winchester Industries International Limited, the National Housing Authority divided the project into nine separate packages, with the intention of awarding contracts to nine separate contractors. They are as follows:

- (a) Construction/completion of 16 single-family units, which has been awarded. Work is ongoing and is expected to be completed by March 4, 2005.
- (b) Construction/completion of 7 blocks of townhouses, each block containing 5 townhouse units. Tenders for this package closed on Friday, February 11, 2005 and construction is projected to be completed by June 27, 2005.

- (c) Construction/completion of 4 blocks of townhouses, each block containing 8 townhouse units. Tenders for this package closed on Friday, February 11, 2005 and construction is projected to be completed by June 27, 2005.
- (d) Construction/completion of 26 buildings, each building containing 2 duplex units. Tenders for this package closed on February 11, 2005 and construction is projected to be completed by July 26, 2005.
- (e) Construction/completion of 6 blocks of townhouses each block containing 7 units. Tenders for this package closed on February 11, 2005 and construction is projected to be completed by August 25, 2005.
- (f) Construction of 180 3-bedroom apartments. Tender documents are being prepared. Construction is projected to be completed by June 22, 2006.
- (g) Construction/completion of the plumbing infrastructural works. Negotiations are ongoing with the licensed plumber who started the works.
- (h) Construction/completion of the electrical infrastructural works. The electrical installations are being redesigned.
- (i) Construction/completion of roads, drains, pavements and fencing. These items are being redesigned.

It is projected that construction will be completed in phases and units handed out in accordance with the projected completion schedule.

Part (B), the names of contractors employed on the project at Ramgoolie Trace are as follows:

- (i) Contract 1: Awarded to Winchester Industries International Limited. Contract sum: \$87,000,000. VAT inclusive. Contract terminated.
- (ii) Contract 2: Awarded to R2K Engineering Limited. Contract sum: \$1,086,658. VAT inclusive.
- (iii) The other eight contracts are in various stages of the contract administration process and to date no contracts have as yet been awarded.

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With respect to (C), the proposed number of houses and apartments to be constructed are:

- (i) 16 single-family units;
- (ii) 109 townhouse units;
- (iii) 52 duplex units and
- (iv) 180 apartment units

The number of houses and apartments that have been constructed as at January 18, 2005 are:

- (a) 16 single-family units. These are 90 per cent completed. The outstanding items are the installing of fixtures and cupboards.
- (b) 7 blocks of 5 townhouse units. These units are 45 per cent complete overall.
- (c) 4 blocks of 8 townhouse units. These units are 35 per cent complete overall.
- (d) 26 blocks of 2 duplex units. These units are approximately 20 per cent completed overall.
- (e) 6 blocks of 7 townhouses. These units are approximately 10 per cent completed overall.
- (f) 4 blocks of 4-storeys 24 units each: 2 blocks of 7-storeys, 42 units each. These units are approximately 3 per cent completed overall.

Thank you, Madam President.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could I ask the Minister of Housing, in light of this statement whether he intends to refer Winchester Industries International Limited to the Fraud Squad, having regard to this particular information that he has provided to this honourable Senate? Could the hon. Minister also give this Parliament an appreciation of the original cost of this project and exactly where are we in terms of physical occupation of citizens at those particular housing projects that he mentioned?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam President, I do not know that the determination of a contract necessarily involves fraud. We have no information that there is fraud involved. If the Senator knows that there has been fraud he could provide us with that information. I did give details as to the basis on which the contract was

determined. I also spent a long time answering the question completely. I indicated the original sum of the contract; how much work has been done; how much was paid to the contractor who was fired. We broke the contract into packages and I gave a detailed breakdown as to where each structure was in terms of percentage completion. Madam President, I can assist no more at this time.

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, could the Minister please state—having regard to the fact that, basically, as I understand his answer, that is to say that looking at the completion status as of January 18 of this year that this project is, essentially, less than half complete—how much money it is going to cost to complete this project?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam President, that is a new question. If the Senator asks the question I would be happy to oblige. I do not think it is reasonable to ask me that at this stage. I do not have that information. What I have given is the original scope of the project; the works to be done and projected deadline dates. That is the most I can do at this point in time.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Madam President, could the Minister say whether C(ii) on page 4 of the handout, represents work done by Winchester Industries International Limited? The contract was terminated on October 28, 2004, but this says: "...that have been constructed as at January 18,...". I would like to know if Winchester Industries International Limited did all of this.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: All the work mentioned there, the percentage completion, is work done by the contractor, who was fired. We have brought in other contractors to finish the work. I did give a range of where each block was: some were 80 per cent complete; some were 60 per cent; some were 40 per cent and in some cases some were 3 per cent. That was work done by the contractor who could not progress satisfactorily and, therefore, we now have to pay the difference to complete the works.

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, is this honourable Senate to understand that Winchester Industries International Limited was essentially paid \$19 million, plus VAT, for less than half of the project being completed, which incidentally is the construction—

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam President, if that were so then we would have gotten a bargain. I did tell this Senate that the original sum of the contract was \$88 million, so if we did pay Winchester Industries International Limited \$22 million for half we got a big bargain. I did not say that. I gave details of what we paid and what we paid for. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: 88 per cent?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: 88 per cent of the claim of the contractor.

Sen. Baksh: Madam President, the hon. Minister stated in this reply at A(ii) that:

“Construction/completion of 16 single-family units. This has been awarded. Work is ongoing and is expected to be completed by March 04, 2005.”

Could the hon. Minister state if the work has been completed?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: As soon as I find out from the NHA I will let you know.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could the hon. Minister share with this honourable Senate the experience and background of this particular company called Winchester Industries International Limited? Who is Winchester Industries International Limited? Does Winchester Industries International Limited have a track record of constructing homes?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam President, I came here to answer a question. I have answered the question fully. If the hon. Senator has other questions he would like to pile in the potpourri, I will be happy to oblige.

Madam President: Thank you. Can we move on please?

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURE REPAYMENT

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [January 25, 2005]:

Be it hereby resolved that this House condemns the use of State funds for party political purposes by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago;

And be it further resolved that this House recommends to the Government that steps be taken to have all those persons responsible for ordering and/or allowing the use of State funds for the said advertisements repay same to the Treasury forthwith failing which this debt shall attach to their persons and property jointly and severally and be enforceable in the same way as if it were a judgment enforceable by the High Court of Justice. [*Sen. R. Montano*]

Question again proposed.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I think we know all those who have already spoken; Sen. Robin Montano, Sen. the Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie, Sen. Roy Augustus and Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand.

The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Madam President, thank you for the recognition. Entering this debate on the Motion brought by the hon. Senator gives me absolutely no pleasure. Usually, while listening to and contributing to debates in this Senate, one notices the reasoning, the learning and even the passion in the exchanges that generally mark this Senate, as it should be. This usually makes it an experience and duty within which one finds pleasure and honour.

Madam President, one is usually educated by encountering new information, new facts, new perspectives or new constructions on political, legislative or public reality, as presented by our Senators, particularly, Senators on the Independent Bench and, of course, Senators of the Government, in the main. Oftentimes one is entertained by the theatrics of some opposite, as we witness a struggle to validate the illogic, the irrelevance and often the unreasonableness that mark the term of this present Opposition. Of course, sometimes one is not amused and is even annoyed by the attempts at parliamentary disruption, especially when employed in support of an ongoing, worthless and unpatriotic campaign of civil disobedience as advocated by their party.

Madam President, I think I could expect your understanding when I say this afternoon gives me no pleasure. I am convinced, as are my colleagues, significant portions of the public and various commentators, that this Motion follows the penchant of the mover; that is, this Motion is a wanton waste of valuable parliamentary time. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, this Motion is the product of a parliamentary illiterate or, worse, the product of a malevolent mind; a mind that is conscious—

Sen. Mark: Madam President, on a point of order. “A parliamentary illiterate”, I think the Senator is going too far. I do not think you should call a colleague a “parliamentary illiterate”.

Madam President: Yes, I agree. Senator, please be more moderate with your adjectives.

Hon. Senator: He does call people “dotish” and “donkey”.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Madam President, there are some rules with which we come to Parliament and there is a concept that we have to be careful in this Senate. I am suggesting that we either are very clear on what basis we draw these relationships that we have, or we deal with the fact that we have to be conscious that minds among us are conscious of our natural willingness to be sociable and

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accommodating and would use that very accommodation and sociable nature to destroy the fabric that holds our society together, that would turn the very institutions we are trying to build, including the Parliament, which guards the State against the State and individual citizens of the State. Madam President, we must be sure that we are not party to it; we are not accommodating it or, we are not sociable when we see it in the full glare of the public light in which we interact with each other.

Madam President, during his presentation the Senator demonstrated to my mind what you said I cannot call him. He confused himself, or, in pursuit of a malevolent intent had attempted to subvert this Senate and confuse the population on significant principles of parliamentary democracy and good governance. Whichever way, the Senator, having demonstrated in his presentation, either an ignorance of parliamentary responsibility, principles and practices, or, in a gross attempt at misrepresentation of the Government's action, intent and purpose, has rendered his Motion invalid.

Madam President, it is without pleasure, but with the pain and observance of ignorance or an observance of a tendency to indiscipline that I am forced to use valuable parliamentary time to set the record straight; to correct the misrepresentation and to rebut the churlish and uninformed analysis of the Senator.

The parliamentary role of government includes the responsibility to act as an advocate of good governance, through the process of communication in the promotion of good public policy as consultative partner with the population that is governed. These are the subsets of the legislative role of the formulation of public law and policy. This is what leads to good governance and development of society. Therefore, when one argues that the conduct of such activity is an attack on the parliamentarians, "subversive"—and the use of words like that—I am suggesting to you that we have a problem understanding the role, or, we are deliberately confusing the role and attempting to confuse others. We cannot have it outside of that framework; it is either one or the other.

Madam President, given the specialization of roles that have developed in the society, when we come to law making, it is the representatives who are normally directly engaged in the legislative process. One thing we can all agree on—all observers, all students, all commentators on parliamentary democracies—is that on some very special occasions it is not enough to leave the decision making in the hands of the parliamentarians without influence from outside and that we need to get the population directly involved in the conception, in the advocacy and the formulation of public law and state policy.

In the case of the Police Service Reform Bill, 2004; the Police Complaints Authority Bill, 2004 and the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill 2004, it is the position, and was the position of the Government, that these were very special pieces of legislation, impacting on the way to conduct life and practice in Trinidad and Tobago, that it required the direct participation of the population in the legislative process. Let us not forget that these Bills were special; they were special given their targeted impact; they were special in that they required a special majority and they were special given their mode of origin. These Bills were the product of some of the best minds and capacities in this country, meant to promote community safety and crime reduction; initiatives that were critical to every community, every household, every family and every individual in this nation as a whole.

Madam President, it was therefore fitting that at every dinner table, every street corner, in every taxi or bus, at every site of our social economic and other transactions in this country that this nation be engaged in the debate. In fact, the mobilization was successful and the people of Trinidad and Tobago spoke out on their own behalf and expressed their support for the change. The pity, of course, was that the parliamentary colleagues of the mover of the Motion ignored the people.

2.30 p.m.

When the mover of this Motion describes this national mobilization of a people in their own interest as pressure on the Members of Parliament, it can be interpreted that he, and by extension, his party colleagues in Parliament, have no interest in the ongoing communication with the people of this country.

“Elect me and shut up,” seems to be the Opposition’s role. They have climbed the electoral ladder and they kick it down in the faces of the people. They climb on the backs of their supporters and they leave them burdened. They offer them no benefit. They suggest to them that they have cut the communication with them and say nothing. The people are abandoned while they strut into Parliament with an agenda of “civil disobedience”, a mantra of, “we shall support nothing.” The people should not talk to them on the street, over the phone or anywhere, according to the mover of this Motion. The Opposition says: “We shall hear nothing from the people. Once in Parliament we abandon communication with the people,” and we note that even in Opposition, they are anti-people.

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Madam President, the conception and development of the Parliaments of the world, and the systems of governance that hold them to be essential pillars of sustainability of the best in the human condition, rest on the expectation that the representative standing in place of the citizens as a collective, must be in communication with the citizenry.

When a Senator, who owes his place in the Parliament, albeit twice removed, to the development of a relationship between citizen and representative, condemns the advocacy of any mechanism useful in the continuance of the communication that is necessary to sustain this relationship, I could only suggest what I cannot say. I suggest an ignoring of the construct called Parliament is betraying or, Parliament is being betrayed by the construction that we are putting on it. Any other construct leads one to violate the advice of my goodly mother, a situation that I will strive to avoid. I would only want to say good, but it is clear that we have to guard ourselves.

The Bills being considered involve amendment to the Constitution, and in such cases, the population must be informed as to reasons and the processes in which we are engaged. That is the policy of this Government and, of course, it is a requirement of good governance anywhere and everywhere. It is a given parliamentary practice that an amendment to one's Constitution does not and should not come as a thief in the night, but only after extensive and exhaustive consultation and dialogue with the people, whether that dialogue is led by Government or includes the Opposition. I dare say, that in the process of constitutional reform and change, the parliamentary representatives of the people would be involved in the communication process. Are the Opposition, even as they go about the country pretending to make constitutional reform their number one priority, telling the country that they will not be involved in any communication with the people? Are they? God forbid, and I am suggesting that if they are not intending to do that, then the Motion is a mockery.

It is also very important that the Government create awareness among the population of the national initiatives required to combat crime and I want us to remember that these initiatives were not the construct of this party called the PNM. This was a construct of all parties working together and again, enlisting some of the best minds and best training available to this country. This communication was especially required in light of the public announcement by the Opposition that it was, and is engaged in a national initiative of civil disobedience. Because, it demonstrates that they had removed themselves from the process of legislative activity and, therefore, it was required that the people be brought into the middle

of that process. If you leave the job or you have abandoned the job, then someone must do it, and the only people whom the Government can engage must be the people themselves when one has abandoned one's job.

That initiative being pursued by the Opposition is an initiative by which they have promised to make this country ungovernable. They have argued that this country, in pursuit of their initiative of civil disobedience, is going to be made ungovernable. We are suggesting that there is another way to ensure that this country remains governable, and that it continues to serve and seek the aspirations of all citizens, that is in direct communication between the Government and the people, and the people must have the right to call on their representatives in Parliament to represent the interest of the people, and that is the initiative that was conducted by that communication process.

It is also public knowledge that the stated policy of the Opposition was to oppose everything. An irrational spin is put to every initiative that is brought to the House, every initiative that is made public, every initiative that is brought to the Parliament; the party will apply a policy to oppose. Those are the words coming from the mouths of the Opposition. We hear them week after week; we hear them on the streets Monday after Monday.

Madam President, the goodly Senator has not brought any facts whatsoever to substantiate his Motion that this is an abuse of process, nor, has he brought the concerns of any other citizen to us. The reference to authority that the Senator attempted to parade is also off the mark. A declaration of principle is not demonstrated. Nothing that the Senator quoted demonstrated that a principle was violated or a principle of political practice and governance was, in fact, brought into question.

The words—read them again, are now available in the *Hansard*; no reference demonstrates to us and gives us cause for pause. In fact, the Senator has admitted, and again, if you read his contribution you will see it, that this Motion is about his personal opinion and the opinion of his party and it seeks to recruit us to that opinion.

Madam President, the likelihood that the mover of the Motion can gain the support of the people who have looked at how the personal opinions of the mover have been brought on the table, I am sure is quite remote.

We are familiar with the barrage of misinformation that is brought to this Senate week after week, and I am sure that an examination of the Motion and the way it is presented, will demonstrate that it is not worthy of the support of this Senate.

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The Senator is, in fact, saying that the Motion is about public mischief. He does not expect this Motion to be passed but in the process of debate he expects to create enough public mischief. We could check the record, we will know his insatiable desire for mischief. It is displayed here week after week. I see no reason why this Senate must satisfy his lust for public mischief or support his search for such mischief.

Madam President, the Senator brought the Motion to this Senate, and he also brought his own set of rules by which the Motion is to be debated. We must not discuss the merits of the Bill; we must not discuss whether it was a good thing for the Bills to have been passed; we must all just agree that the Bills were intended to promote the greatest falsehood that he can place on the table, the political agenda of the PNM. That is his argument. And it would be interesting to apply his own set of rules to his Motion; we will not discuss the Motion, we will not discuss whether it is a good or bad thing to pass the Motion; we must all agree that the Motion is intended to promote the political agenda of the United National Congress. Those are the rules the Senator brought to the Senate. Should we apply those rules? The goodly Senator has recognized that rules and disciplines are important for parliamentary debate, and these rules must be imposed on the Government. My surprise would be left unsaid.

Any observer may justifiably claim that when the Senator proposes that Government activity is equal to the PNM political agenda, and confuses the legislative agenda of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that was built by the Opposition when it was in government, and it is being continued by the Government now that it has responsibility to carry it, then that is the crux of the problem. The mover of the Motion is confused. If they were not bent on opposing every initiative brought to the Senate by the Government, and they had agreed to act as a responsible and responsive Opposition of the people, then he would have made the distinction between party and Government.

Madam President, it is difficult to escape the proposition of some people, as we proceed with our various discussions in this Senate. I am fearful that if one is not careful one may come to the conclusion that we hope for trouble, we hope for a skyrocketing of the murder rate, we hope that we will have unfortunate experiences.

Sen. R. Montano: On a point of order.

Madam President: What is the point of order?

Sen. R. Montano: I have risen on this point of order with great reluctance because, my view is, I was letting all kinds of things pass—

Madam President: Senator, you have not told me what is your point of order.

Sen. R. Montano: My point of order is imputing improper motives. I have been called all kinds of names by the Minister, that is all right, let it go in. But when the Minister starts saying that we on this side are hoping for an escalation in the murder rate, when he implies these things, that is going too far.

Madam President: Hon. Senator, I heard your point of order. Hon. Minister, I would suggest that you do not make any sort of personal references to that—I did hear you mention something about hoping for an escalation of crime or something to that effect. I think you just need to be careful there, please.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Madam President, as a national population we have to be very serious and be very clear. I am suggesting that when our representatives come to our various forums, and they seem to exult in misfortune—

Sen. R. Montano: On a point of order. Madam President, the same thing. To accuse us of seeming to exult in national misfortune is imputing—that is uncalled for, it is unnecessary. I am giving notice that the hon. Senator can call me any name he wants this afternoon, I will get a chance to reply and defend myself but, I will not accept either my patriotism nor the patriotism of my party, nor that of my colleagues being called into question. I simply would not accept that.

Madam President: Senator, you are being a bit brash in your language. Please just take care.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Madam President, I am sure that it gives every citizen of this country pleasure to hear that nobody in the Senate, nobody in the streets of Trinidad and Tobago takes pleasure in the misfortunes of anybody in Trinidad and Tobago. Nobody in this country, nobody in this Senate, no representative of any party can have their patriotism called into question. They are all patriots, and we all moan when there is the occasion to moan, and that we all have problems and share in the pain and are empathic with every single person who is suffering in this country. That is a revelation that the country would exult in.

But I have heard with my own two ears in this country, I have heard in this Senate that we will make this country ungovernable.

Sen. Mark: In this Senate?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Yes.

Sen. Mark: You are wrong.

Sen. R. Montano: Who said it? Give us a direct quote or withdraw it!

Madam President, nobody on this side said it and I object to that. It is either the hon. Minister proves it or he withdraws it.

Madam President: Minister Dumas, do you have a direct quote of anybody saying that in this Senate?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Madam President, I will be happy to provide the record from the *Hansard*. [*Crosstalk*] Withdraw what? What would I withdraw?

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, this has gone too far. I object. Either that statement is withdrawn—

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: What statement is withdrawn?

Madam President: I request both of you to sit down. I would like you to repeat what you said so I can be sure of what was said. Let me hear what you said, Minister.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Madam President, I said that I have heard in this country [*Crosstalk*] I am not finished—I will continue to say what I said. Dianne Sandy did not make liars for children. I said that I have heard in this Senate, Members say that we will make this country ungovernable.

Madam President: Thank you. The Minister did not say in particular which person, which side of the Senate or who said, so I do not think he was casting aspersions on you in particular, or on any Member on your side. It could have been Senators on this side. [*Crosstalk*] Please let me finish. I do not want to hear the word, “lie” again in this Senate.

Hon. Minister, if, in the meantime, while you look for the evidence that such was said it, I suggest that you withdraw the little piece where you said in this Senate. Thank you.

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, that is not fair. That is absolutely not fair. When this happens on this side and we say things like that we are ordered to withdraw.

Madam President: Did you listen to what I said?

Sen. R. Montano: Yes, I listened to what you said.

Madam President: Please sit down. I asked the hon. Minister to withdraw the piece where he said people in this Senate made this statement. Please, hon. Minister.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Madam President, I will withdraw the statement in the interest of continuance and in observance of your ruling and your dominance in this Senate.

[By order of the chair, remarks withdrawn]

Madam President, this Government has a history that it can hold high, that we promote the policy of engaging public participation in the formulation of public policy and legislation. Transparency, public participation and integrity are our guides.

We can trot the evidence out. Whether we are talking about the police, we are talking about the prison, we are talking about YTEPP, we are talking about housing, land distribution in agriculture, whatever is the area of activity, and this Government's record is a proud one.

When the Senator spoke about setting precedence in his Motion, a party's political motion, though he sought to clothe it, it was based on irrational reasoning because the Senator is suggesting that in order to promote crime reduction in the community, attempts to consult with the public by disseminating relevant information on the Bills is to be considered partisan political.

Madam President, the consultation on these Bills was started by the UNC. It was under the leadership of the then Prime Minister that these Bills were conferred. They consulted with the hon. Patrick Manning now Prime Minister, and the PNM on these Bills. It was agreed by the PNM and the UNC that these Bills were critical in the fight against crime. Our only sin could be that we brought the general public into the discussion, and if we are suggesting that together you brought this matter to the table, how on this side can we be accused of making the general public a part of the discussion? The Bills were formulated by the Opposition while they were in government. It was therefore impossible for them to be part of the political activity of the PNM. The PNM sought to depoliticize crime in this country. It sought and gave a unified closed fist, all-inclusive set of resources and thus a country's capacity to address crime to the then Government, and that is the approach we are taking today. They agreed on the Bills themselves.

When the UNC approached the PNM on these Bills, at that time was the UNC guilty of coercion? Were they guilty of attempting to use the then PNM Members and, therefore, subvert the assembly?

Sen. Mark: We did not approach you.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: I accept the correction. It is even more critical to accept that because what the Senator is not telling us is at that time, the then political leader of the government threw his hands in the air. He did not know what to do. My Prime Minister had to run to him and say: “Brother you cannot give up, you have to do something and put something on the table”. That was the situation. The absence of responsibility and responsiveness was so evident that the then political leader of the PNM had to run to you and say: “Brother, you cannot give up the country. What are we going to do about it?”

Madam President, the one important admission to date, is that the Bills were based on a learned political agenda and the only way I could understand the argument is if they are suggesting that they took teachings from the PNM and agreed this would be part of the political agenda of the UNC. But we do not hold it by ourselves any more. It is now part of the political philosophy of the country, part of the political and legislative agenda of the country and we cannot then be accused of being partisan. But certainly, it cannot be appropriate to suggest that we intimidated Opposition Members of Parliament or that Opposition Members of Parliament intimidated us into supporting the Bill. That is the kind of ludicrous reasoning that comes from that source.

Madam President, I would like to know, did the then UNC government commit a breach of privilege when it tried to influence the then PNM opposition into supporting those Bills? [*Interruption*] That is the argument of the Motion, that in attempting to communicate with people and convincing them to pass the Bills, you are creating a breach of privilege. The Senator must be aware that it is an essential, acceptable and desirable practice by Government to engage public participation in policy formulation. In so doing, the Government must make the population aware of the initiatives by placing the information in the public domain.

Marketing an idea these days, advocacy of a good thing must take its rightful place and space in all the media. Whether it is radio, television, newspapers, Internet, or public meetings, surveys today tell us that just about—let me not quote the figure. Let us just say that a significant number of our population that

goes home to watch news expects that anything that is important will occur in their experience around that time, whether it is by advertisement or by actually placing it as a news item. Certainly, you would want to capture that.

The Opposition is going about the country every Monday and having public meetings here, there and everywhere; in some places with nobody but themselves but still they are having the meetings. They must be commended on their attempts at communication but, that very practice they condemn when it is employed by the People's National Movement or worse by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, the role of educating the public on the initiatives of the Government is unavoidable. Giving relevant explanations for the initiatives of the State is an expectation of the people, and we must engage in ensuring that there is a consultative process that provides feedback from the public. And, of course, we must report the results, outcomes, and achievements to the public. The only problem is that some people use this process conveniently. It is only what they want to hear; it is only what they want to say; it is only what they want to tell us must be in the media. Everything else should be wiped out, blanked out, and not reported. This Government does not act like that. But this Motion has its basis only in one fact, the fact that the Senator is aggrieved; the mover of the Motion and his colleagues are aggrieved that the Act can expose to the population the flip-flop position of his colleagues on these Bills. This Motion is the result of the profound embarrassment facing the Senator and his colleagues because of their flip-flop position on the Bills, and on their support for the country's activities in dealing with some of its problems.

Madam President, this party makes a boast and can support the boast that in every village, every community, every corner of this Trinidad and Tobago, however you may slice it, horizontally, vertically or otherwise, the people of this country are represented in the party and in government. This is a government of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And in that context, our record as a government for all, a friend of all, and an enemy of none is an enviable achievement that other governments may seek to emulate. We know that when they were in Government they fell short of that ideal. The assurances that we give, as a government, that in formulating policy, in enacting legislation and in undertaking programmes to deal effectively with several burning social, political and economic issues communication with the people will be a part of our activities as a Government.

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We make it clear that the principles of good governance would guide our actions. We also make it clear that no threats to the health, security or otherwise of the nation—

Sen. Mark: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Do not forget they published a picture two days ago that showed you in 1995. [*Interruption*]

We were explaining why the parliamentary Opposition's support was required for the passage of the Bills and we demonstrated that the parliamentary Opposition continues to attempt to execute a carefully thought-out but myopic strategy to obstruct and disrupt the smooth functioning of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] They promote civil disobedience. They subvert the notion of parliamentary democracy. They stifle the expression of popular will and certainly remove themselves as agents in the expression of the people's will.

They attempt to curtail opportunities for citizen participation and involvement in decision-making and, of course, by their actions outside of the Parliament, they paint a grim picture that they know is not true—a picture of social instability, et cetera. However, the unfortunate thing is that they even seek to do it outside our borders. [*Interruption*] To make the country ungovernable? [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*]

Madam President, this Government recognizes the crime situation as a serious problem, but with stoic resolve, with imagination and with determination, unlike them, we are not giving up and we are sure to win both the battle and the war. We will not “carnivalize” crime as the Leader of the Opposition did. He threw his hands in the air, as the popular calypso said, as if he did not care. We are unlike the Opposition, which, when in government, did not adhere to the principle of widespread participation and involvement in decision-making and policy formation.

We are committed to ensuring that the population will be part of our activity. We will practise and demonstrate that this is a representative government and that the public awareness and sensitizing campaign of the Government on bills that are critical will continue. It is our intention to ensure that all individuals, groups, organizations and institutions in our social diaspora are aware of the critical issues as they relate to crime and other matters. We are committed to ensuring that we gather the views of all and we channel them into this Parliament. We will not turn back in the face of this Motion.

The Motion seeks to have us fail. The Motion fails to demonstrate common sense and responsible behaviour. The Opposition opposes almost every measure the Government brings to this Senate to promote good governance and the well-being of citizens. Opposition to a public awareness campaign and matters pertinent to these Bills is tantamount to suppression of the right of the public to know and to scrutinize legislation and have an input in the nature and content of the legislature as it acts in the Parliament in the name of the people.

It is significant that this Motion is a continuance of activities that were promoted during the promulgation and consideration of the Bills. The Bills could not have been passed because of a lack of Opposition support, which, given the nature of the composition of the Senate, required a special majority.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: The obstruction of the Bills could be construed as the Opposition suppressing the popular will.

Sen. Mark: We did not obstruct; we voted against it.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: As is well known, there is an overwhelming support among the population for the measures contained in the Bills. The pattern of the Opposition's persistent penchant for non-support of the crime initiatives and other measures of this Government has left me to conclude—I cannot say the word that I have here, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you very much.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Having been in office and having demitted office, oftentimes the impression is given that “we must be in office at all costs” and “nothing must happen in this country unless we, the Opposition, are members of government”. That is an unfortunate and an irrational—one would even say a selfish and less than honourable posture to take in public affairs in this country. When one says what is right, proper and moral, and one begins to use these words, one has to examine oneself. As one gentleman said, “Look oneself in the mirror”.

When we talk about building a country and the precedent we must set, we need to be careful. When we trot out the history and the precedent we want to walk away from—a precedent that has been set by the Opposition when it was in government—I am sure that among them is not one that will be talking about expenditure that can be traced; expenditure for which an account can be given; expenditure that is employed in public discourse about a public matter that impacts on every community, every home and every family. Certainly that cannot be bad expenditure of public money.

Madam President, open government and transparency were never the hallmarks of the now Opposition when it was in power. How dare the Senator question the Government? The Senator's leader was quick to retort that nobody would attack his government and remain unscathed. Those are not words one hears from this side. They attack us every day and nobody has been scathed. *[Interruption]* He never heard those words. *[Interruption]*

One would have thought that having brought the Motion, they would want to hear what is being said. Again, I am saying that it is subversion of the parliamentary process.

Madam President, the flip-flop of the Opposition, in terms of the conduct of the parliamentary session preceding this one, was so well known and well broadcasted that for the Senator to bring it as a validation of his less than responsible Motion; his less than clear advocacy of his own Motion, would be laughable if it were not being used in public time; using public resources, with people whom we have brought from all walks of life, all over the country. The Senator must know the reason for which we had no Parliament was a straight construct of the way his party and his then leadership conducted public affairs.

The Senator is very well aware. He practises activities, which he hopes would bring the public spotlight on his party and his non-policy every week, attempting to catch the eyes of the media of communication that inform this country. Yet he brings a Motion that suggests that he does not believe that it is an acceptable, essential and desirable practice of Government to ensure that public participation, involvement in policymaking and legislative decision-making should belong to all of us. He should practise and catch it every week, but he should deny it to the Government and the rest of the people. That is the construct that has to be put on it. This Government will continue to engage in public consultation. This Government will continue to engage the public in all matters that impact on the public's welfare.

In doing so, this Government will make the population aware of its initiatives by placing the information in the public domain, through the modern media available and through the best marketing skills available to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Whether it is through the radio, the television, the newspaper, the Internet and, certainly, we will join you in those public meetings. We will educate the public about the Government's initiatives by providing relevant explanations. We will engage in a public consultative process by encouraging feedback from the public and we will report the results of those consultations as far as we have the mechanisms.

It is the right of this Government to galvanize support from the public for any initiative that will redound to the benefit of the entire population. We will not engage knowingly in bad precedent and the posturing that marks the behaviour of the Opposition. We will attempt to ensure that we are not sucked into such behaviour.

The fact that these Bills were the product of a deliberate process and that they failed because of the recalcitrance and the flip-flop of the Opposition will not intimidate us. We will come again. The kind of reasoning that led us to feel that we can bring a motion here; that tells us that we should condemn communication; that we should call communication between people and representatives "contempt of the Parliament", I am suggesting that somebody is going off the middle road when that happens.

The Government will seek to ensure public safety and a stable and secure democracy. The Government will attempt to enlist the population support in its fight against crime and that support has been coming from every other institution except the Opposition.

We distinguish between party and government. If the Opposition has difficulty with that, then we can understand some of the arguments being made. The public awareness campaign on crime was a governmental activity and certainly the Opposition's cavalier attitude in matters of national importance, such as that very matter, has made such campaigns very necessary because they have abandoned their roles. In other words, when people are maimed, killed, kidnapped, robbed and murdered, the Opposition's response, instead of "I told you so" should be "The same way we could have climbed the steps to meet you, to say let us approach this thing together; let us present the criminals with a closed fist; let us give the resources to the people who have the responsibility". That is what we are asking of them. We will engage them in seeking that support.

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Madam President, we suggest that the campaign of civil disobedience, the campaign of non-cooperation on matters that are critical to the safety of every individual, family and community in this country is unfair, unjust, immoral, hypocritical and, certainly, undemocratic. The actions and posturing of the Opposition as they carry out this campaign must end. The people must tell the Opposition that they must end that campaign. Twenty persons sitting, whether in a hovel or in a castle, should not hold this country to ransom as we seek to move forward in battle in one of our most critical issues in this country. That is why the blood and the pain of the maimed and the murdered will remain on the hands of the members of the Opposition as they continue their recalcitrance.

Madam President, I urge this Senate to reject this Motion.

Madam President: Before I call the next person, I remind Senators that although I am very tolerant about reading their speeches, I would like them to try to refer to their notes and talk rather than read.

Sen. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Madam President for allowing me the opportunity to participate in this Private Member's Motion brought by my colleague, Sen. Robin Montano.

“Be it hereby resolved that this House condemns the use of state funds for party political purposes by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago;

And be it further resolved that this House recommends to the Government that steps be taken to have all those persons responsible for ordering and/or allowing the use of state funds for the said advertisements repay same to the Treasury forthwith, failing which this debt shall attach to their persons and property jointly and severally and be enforceable in the same way as if it were a judgment enforceable by the High Court of Justice.”

I thought I should read that because I think it is important for us to understand what we are about. After listening to the last speaker, I really heard nothing on this particular Motion that enlightens this Senate in terms of where we want to be and what position we want to take on this Motion.

Allow me to congratulate my colleague, Sen. Robin Montano, for bringing to this Senate a principle and, in his sober way, trying to debate this very important principle. We must never underestimate the value of principles such as this in the maturing of any young nation.

Ours is a young nation, striving to become a 21st Century leader in this region. We hear this every day—a young nation among nations; a region trying to find its place. You know that it is through principles like this that we can improve and set standards for democracy, governance, transparency and accountability. I hope the last speaker understands that.

We do not just jump up and say that we have democracy. We do not just jump up and say that we have governance. It comes with the principles that we adopt. I make this point, which is more important, that we tout this Westminster model and continuously make a mistake when we look to rules and laws to guide us in our behaviour.

In the Westminster model, we depend on traditions, ethics, principles and conventions developed over years and years. This is why, when we look at the Westminster model, we get confused because we do not operate under those same traditions, conditions, conventions and ethics. Those who operate under this model do so in accordance with that model. In other countries, for example, where there is that model, we must understand that when they do not agree or conform to that tradition, they develop their own rules and laws to replace those traditions.

The Motion here today is about a principle that we want to get right. I thought I heard my colleague very well and when I reviewed the contributions to the *Hansard* from all the Senators the last day, that was the centre of the issue. Is the principle right? Do we want to get it right? Let us understand that. Do we have the political will to get it right? I do not think we understand that. This is why my colleague was very clear when he spoke on this Motion. He even indicated—when Sen. Dr. McKenzie and Sen. Prof. Ramchand said they did not agree with the wording of certain parts of the Motion—that it was not about the wording and that if they disagreed with the wording, he would amend the wording. He wants to get the principle right.

In the same way we look to the Parliaments of other countries and try to understand and appreciate them so that we could enlighten ourselves, we must remember that one day this very Parliament would be looked to by other countries in the region. In the same way Sen. Dr. Saith talked about technology, in the same way that we go to the House of Commons in the UK and look at what takes place there, we have tparliament.org and we must remember that other people will come to our website to understand what we do in our Parliament and the principles we want to adopt, so that they can shape their own; so that they can be enlightened and governed in the same way. We must remember that we are doing that also. This is the problem I have.

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What has presented itself here in the case of this advertising campaign is an issue we are trying to deal with. This is why my colleague said that we are not about debating the Police Reform Bills; we are debating the advertising campaign.

Let me pull out that advertisement and read it. It is a copy of the advertisement from the *Trinidad and Tobago Mirror*, dated Sunday, June 13 which asks what the anti-crime legislation means. I do not think that we understand the distinction. It was a government advertisement that was in all the newspapers. It goes on to talk about the anti-crime legislation. It talks about the Police Service Bill, 2003, the Police Complaints Authority Bill, 2003 and it says exactly what they are trying to achieve.

I heard people talk about public education, but the part that we take offence with is the last part of the advertisement that advertises if persons want an effective police service geared for the job of winning the war on crime, they should contact their MPs and “demand” that they vote for this legislation. This is the issue we are dealing with here. Is this correct? Is this the way that we want to deal with the law-making process in this Parliament?

If that is the case, so be it. If they want to vote for the law-making process being this way; if we want to intimidate the other Members on the other side, fine. We must also understand that when this—

Sen. R. Montano: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes. “Demand” that they vote for the legislation. Who is demanding that they vote for the legislation?

Madam President: Please speak to me, Senator!

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: My apologies, Madam President. Sometimes I really wonder what goes on in the minds of people on the other side. I really do not think they are at all synchronized with the population. When this advertisement came out, the many complaints that were generated, not by us because we were not intimidated; but a number of people called about the advertisements.

There were two specific issues: one was the amount of money being spent on the advertising campaign; and secondly, why were they trying to impose their point of view and position without getting their views? Madam President, I wanted to make that point because after hearing the last speaker, I was not sure that we were debating Sen. Robin Montano’s Motion. However, in true debating

style, we would have to respond and I hope you would allow me to. This happens all the time on that side. They get up and they make these wild accusations one after the other.

Let me start from Sen. Dr. Saith's contribution. He spoke a lot about the communication technology available to us and he compared it to years gone by. He talked about when there was only radio communication available; he talked about the Internet technology. I say to Sen. Dr. Saith that in no way are we saying we want less communication with the public. That is not what we are about. We are talking about how you communicate with the public. We are all for communication with the public. You must improve communication and we have no problem with the frequency, but how it is performed. That is what we have a problem with.

We agree totally, you must communicate. We must communicate the ways of the Government programmes, the facilities available to the people of the nation. We have no problem with that.

I want to go on to Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie's and Sen. Prof. Ramchand's contributions. One of the things that centred on Sen. Dr. McKenzie's contribution was the whole issue of public education. Is this public education? We are taking this to be public information versus political propaganda or intimidation. That is where I want to centre my contribution this afternoon, Madam President.

We all agree—and it was stated clearly when I summarized it—that between the various contributions there are two principles: One is that we all have no disagreement—and I am quoting from Sen. Prof. Ramchand—“on the principle that no government should use public funds to further its political agenda”. We on this side agree. I do not know what they on that side are saying. They are probably saying that we should. However, the principle is that we should not be using taxpayers' funds to further a political agenda. [*Interruption*]

I heard Sen. The Hon. Dumas talking about the Monday night forum, to which I assume they all listen. Every Tuesday, we hear a response from this Senate to something we said on Monday night. It seems that our Monday night meetings are working and we do not spend a million dollars on advertisements. Hats off to that! We do not spend a million dollars in advertisements and, furthermore, it is not taxpayers' money that we are using to communicate with the public.

Madam President: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I would not have to reply, but I do need to reply through you, Madam President.

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This is very important because we are not using taxpayers' money to promote or to further our political agenda. [*Interruption*]

Madam President, I will respond to his issues. If he wants to ask a specific question, I have no problem; I will give way. He can ask his question and I will answer him. [*Interruption*]

The President said no crosstalk. No government should use public funds to intimidate, pressure or, in any other way, bully an opposition. That is the problem we have here and the principle we want to get right. What seems to be the debate here is what constitutes a violation of that principle. [*Interruption*]

Madam President: Mr. Montano!

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Let me tell him, Madam President, what is a political agenda. The Police Reform Bills was a political agenda. When those Bills were in this Senate and they heard the expressions of all the Independent Senators and not one person was going to vote for those Bills, they withdrew the Bills and sent them downstairs, post-haste. That was a political agenda.

When they knew they were not going to get the constitutional majority they needed in this Senate, they took it to the other place because they wanted to ensure that when they did not get the support they needed, they could say it was the UNC's fault. They want to blame crime on the Police Reform Bills. That is a political agenda.

Why did they withdraw it from the Senate? We were preparing to debate it here. All the Independent Senators came out publicly and expressed their views on why they would not support it. That is what caused the problem. [*Crosstalk*] They cannot take it, but that is political agenda. You talk about crime. Crime is not about Police Reform Bills. What you wanted to do with the Police Reform Bills was to dictate. You wanted to control.

Madam President: Senators, I have sat long enough and listened to two of you arguing across the floor. I expect you to address me, Senator, and not Minister Montano.

3.30 p.m.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Madam President. My apologies, but I thought I was speaking to you.

Madam President: You were not. When you say "you and you", you are speaking to him.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: But I am still going to address the issue.

Madam President: Go ahead.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: The issue has been raised, but I am speaking through you. Madam President, the whole purpose of the Police Reform Bills—we held consultations. The Opposition held two weeks of consultations in its office. We attended those consultations. We met with the IRO. We met with the various sectors of the business community. What are they talking about? Every constituency had a discussion on this particular Bill. Everyone understood our point of view, on the lack of the constitutional safeguards, without appropriate amendment to the Constitution, and constitutional reform to facilitate these Bills. They all said: "Do not support those Bills." We were not acting on our own. We were acting in accordance with the wishes of our constituents; the people that we represent in this country. It was not only UNC supporters. The people who attended many of those meetings would be considered PNM supporters. I want them to understand that. We will always take the interest of this country first. That is why we carry the fight.

I want to say through you, Madam President, to Sen. Dumas, when it comes to this country, we will continue to fight for this country. The editorial in Saturday's *Guardian* states that the Opposition needs to put more fire in the Government. It is the press which has been calling for the Government to be put under pressure. They are the ones demanding that. When we stay quiet, they would ask what has happened to the Opposition and why is the Opposition not doing enough. We will continue doing the job of the Opposition. [*Interruption*]

I am speaking to Madam President, and I have to talk above his voice. That is the problem here. I will then hear that I am shouting. I have to speak above him. That is why I wanted to raise this issue.

Sen. Dumas said we must not talk about the Police Reform Bills. Let us come to an agreement when you want to talk about the Bills and we will deal with the Bills. We are coming back to the political propaganda part of it, and the intimidation. What we have to determine in the Senate, is whether or not we want to use taxpayers' money to support an advertising campaign or we want to use that money to promote a public education and information programme. We have to be very careful when making the distinction between the two. There is a fine line.

Sen. Dr. McKenzie spoke about it; what comes across as political, public information, public education and political propaganda. I say this because we must remember that all Members in this Senate or any House has the right to

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exercise that vote independently and without undue fear, pressure or intimidation. One must be able to exercise that right, based on one's conscience, free of fear and favour. That is what we are trying to deal with here. The problem we have here is that most of the time, we have a serious problem when it comes to PR communication. Sen. Dr. Saith is right when he said that communication in itself has changed its mode because of all the avenues that are available now for communication, through the media, electronics and the Internet. We must also understand with that comes some danger and we have to be careful that it does not become a bombardment. Sen. Dr. McKenzie spoke about that. I will give you an example.

The problem we are faced with today is that there are similar problems elsewhere. One such example is the spin doctoring. There have been many articles. I took this off the *BBC News, United Kingdom Politics* Website. One of the problems that have come about is the issue of spin doctoring, PR consultants and the special advisors who are deemed PR consultants. It is clear that there are some new policies. There is new legislation.

I am not sure if we are aware that there is a committee that was set up by Lord Neil to look into the issue. The Government agreed that it must curb its standards in response to the Neil Committee. The Committee was set up to look at the standards in public life, which has expressed worries over the rising number of special advisors and spin doctors paid for by the taxpayer. This is the same issue we are dealing with today. Anybody will tell you that the whole issue on the Police Reform Bills had a lot of spin doctoring. If we go through the Ministries of the Government we will see how many highly-paid special advisors and spin doctors are being hired. Because of that, we are having a serious problem in that there may no longer be any honesty and truth in our communication with the public. That is what we have to be very careful about.

The United Kingdom's House of Lords is looking at the whole issue of how we can bring back integrity into what they call "political communication". They have been setting some new standards and are looking at passing legislation as such.

Sen. Dr. McKenzie talked about the issue of public education versus political propaganda. In her contribution she mentioned that sometimes the Government's work is shown in pictures. Many of our Ministers' faces are on the news saying what they are doing and handing over things. I wonder whether the emphasis should be there instead of the people saying what they have achieved, while

making use of the Government programmes, thus encouraging more people who need to make use of the Government programmes to talk out rather than have the Minister do it?

This is the essence. Sen. Dr. McKenzie hit the nail on the head. She was making the separation that it is no longer about communication/spin doctoring. The whole issue of Ministers appearing in ads, trying to convince the public that this is what they are doing, is an act of spin doctoring. It is being prepared by the spin doctors who are hired by the Government Ministers. At the bottom of it, we want to communicate. We want to use taxpayers' money to communicate. We must be communicating about the Government programmes, how to access these programmes and what facilities are available.

I have to use an example that is close to me. We keep hearing the Government saying that the business community should become more involved, and that it is time for the population to rise and take equity ownership in the energy sector. We need to have more private enterprises. I am trying to show the difference between what is spin doctoring and what is public education. The Minister would say that they are interested in doing so and so and that they want to promote—compared to another advertisement that says: "If you want to get involved in bpTT..." bpTT has opened up its fields and are selling the Teak, Poui, and the Samaan fields. If the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is saying they are going to facilitate this process, they want private equity ownership and they want the people to be involved, did they say: "Let me design this" and put out an advertisement as to how this can be done? Have they said: "All those interested investors this is what you can access. This is how you should approach it. This is how you can gain equity ownership. Come up with your ideas." If there are some incentives to come with it, tax incentives or otherwise, the Government should advertise those incentives. To me, that is public education versus the spin doctoring and PR advertisement campaign. That is how you tell people how to access. I say this because we keep hearing all the time that the business community must get involved. How do they get involved? We have no information. There is nothing that tells the business community to do this, that or the other. There is no other expert, as Sen. Dr. McKenzie was saying, to say this is how we did it; this is how we were able to access this particular facility.

Madam President, probably the reason is that the Government has no idea what to do. That is why it has to come up with all these ads with the Ministers' faces saying what they are doing. I hope the business community in this country understands that the Government is not interested in the private sector and that it is interested in running every business member out of the country.

Listen to Fitzgerald Hinds. Friday morning, on Radio Shakti he said: "I do not know why everybody is complaining about kidnapping and criminals, look at the business community and the number of things they are doing underhand." That is in direct response to Mr. Jerry Aboud's saying that we do not like our wives being beaten, and we do not like being kidnapped. That was in direct response. Mr. Hinds has justified why the business people must have their families kidnapped, beaten and tortured. What else do you expect? He has totally justified the situation. I have heard nothing coming from that side, stating that they deny it. They talk about crime!

I listened to Sen. Dumas when he spoke about crime. We have a Minister of National Security who says: "I am not responsible. What can I do for crime? It is the police, it is not me." What else do you expect from the Government?

The Government has indicated that it does not have the political will to deal with the crime situation. They have no interest in dealing with it, so what else do you expect? That is the problem. This is why we have Police Reform Bills that are packaged in nice ads saying: "Demand of your MP to vote for legislation". That is why we will have that, because they want control of the police service. They want control of every independent institution in this country.

Sen. Dumas spoke about participation, democracy and good governance. He said we want public participation by the people, transparency and good governance. I want him to understand something. I have always said since I entered this Senate I have never seen such a waste of taxpayers' money. It is because of this. This Government has usurped the role of the Parliament; everybody knows it. From the time they want to move out of the Red House and put the Prime Minister in, they have placed no significance on the role of the Parliament.

Madam President, that is the same Senator who came here and refused to answer a question on WASA and how the management was able to improve their salaries. To this day we have never—that is openness and transparency.

Sen. Dumas: On a point of order. That is misinformation. That is not correct. This Senator has answered all questions put to him except the ones that imputed people's private affairs.

Madam President: All right. Besides that, it is irrelevant. Please come back to the matter at hand.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, he stood there and spoke at length about good governance, public participation, and how much the UNC does not want good governance. I am replying to him because he has made those statements. It is this Opposition who has been calling for openness and transparency of this Government. It is the population of Trinidad and Tobago that continues to call on the Opposition to demand openness and transparency of the Government. That is the role of an Opposition. This is why we are defined in the Constitution as an alternative Government. The Senator says that we want no public participation. We are the ones in this Senate who would ask for a particular piece of legislation to go before a committee so that we could have public consultation. How many times have we asked?

One example is the CSME Bill, which we asked to go out for public consultation. How many times have we asked, with respect to the Police Reform Bills, that the Government hold public consultations; not the joke consultation they carried out where they paid for everything?

The Government went to the Maha Sabha and carried the programme live on the radio station and the taxpayers paid for that. The Government is not interested in hearing the other side. The Government is not interested in hearing the counterarguments. That side is never willing to hear the counterarguments. Any time you stand here and you ask for accountability from that side they would ask us what accountability we are talking about.

This is the first government I have seen, which has taken the Parliament to the limit. When it comes to questions, they are irrelevant. They answer questions, but there is nothing in the answer pertaining to the question. How many times have they stood, including Sen. Dumas, and read a long answer with no relevance? Sen. R. Montano would get up and indicate that the answer is of no relevance to the question. But does that matter? The Government would say that they cannot be compelled to answer any question.

We talk about the Westminster model, that is because the Government fails to realize that there is a particular tradition, convention and ethic that we follow, which the Government does not want to fulfil. The Government cannot make the distinction between the Executive and the Legislature, all the time. They cannot separate in their minds, their roles as a Cabinet Minister and a Member of Parliament. That is what creates the problem. They feel that the Executive controls the Parliament. I do not know what Sen. Dumas is talking about.

Coming back to the same Police Reform Bills, the Government says that this is a Government policy. You communicate with the public about your policy but the time that policy is placed in this Parliament, in the form of a Bill, that policy is no longer yours. It does not belong to the Cabinet anymore; it belongs to the Parliament. The Parliament will decide how it will massage it, reshape it and do what it will until it eventually emanates out of this Parliament as a result of Parliament's input. The Members of this Senate—we never get that coming across. This is why they do not understand how important it is when you take up a Bill like this and present your side. You do not want to hear the counter side. You did not pay for any ads to say that the Opposition or the Independent Bench should come out and present their argument as to why they will not support it. The Government did not listen to that. The Government did not use taxpayers' money to do that. The argument is that we justified using taxpayers' money to do that, why not justify the use of taxpayers' money to do it on the other side so that the country gets a fair, balanced and equitable view, so that they can take all the facts into consideration before they make a decision? What we had was a bombardment.

The Government continues to do it. The Government bombards everyone into what it wants them to think. That is the point Sen. Augustus was making throughout his contribution. They want to bombard and force people into a particular way of thinking. That is the sign of a galloping dictatorship. Whenever we want to force people into thinking in a particular way and we are not willing to hear counterarguments, it is a form of a galloping dictatorship. That is the problem I have with this particular Government.

The Government spent approximately \$400 million in advertising, to this day, through all those ministries. I have never seen—they are controlling the Parliament. That is fine, but they are controlling the media with \$400 million.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Point of order. Could the Senator give us the basis on which she came up with the \$400 million, or is it a figure she has pulled out?

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, I was looking at the amount of money that has been allocated over time. I know the Minister said \$330 million, but we have been getting various ministries—we have not been getting a whole view. At one time we got from the Ministry of Finance and we talked about state enterprises, but I feel that it is even higher than \$400 million when we think of all the state enterprises and the amount of advertising that took place. Tell us what the figure is.

Sen. Dr. Saith: The point of order is really to say that in the same way the Senator objected to statements being made without backup, do not pull \$400 million. It could be \$4 billion. She is pulling figures out of the air.

Madam President: I get your point of order, Minister Saith. Senator, you cannot make statements without some kind of proof. If you have it in the *Hansard* or whatever, get it and bring it.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, I specifically remember the Senator saying \$330 million. I carried it up to \$400 million, because I added all the other state enterprises because you just have to look. It is my assumption that it is \$400 million. I am sure it is over \$400 million. The Minister said \$330 million and we have not taken into account all the state enterprises. If it is wrong I have no problem; correct it.

Sen. Dr. Saith: Madam President, we are talking about principles. We just hauled Sen. Dumas over the coals when he said that somebody in his House said something. He was told to go and find the *Hansard*. The Senator has pulled figures out of the air. That is all I am saying.

Madam President: Senator, that is what I said to you. Until you can bring the proof, stop saying it, until you can bring the *Hansard* proof. Just as I said to Sen. Dumas, I am saying it to you, all right.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, is the Minister saying that he did not say \$330 million? I am at a loss. I am saying if you look at the ads—

Madam President: You said \$400 million. I am saying bring the proof of \$400 million.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, I can express a view.

Madam President: Senator, I am on my feet to start with. No, you are saying that—you are bringing a specific figure. Go and bring your proof and then you can state that figure. Let us continue with the debate, please.

Sen. Dr. Saith: The Government said that it was \$330 million. It is my estimate.

Madam President: Senator, did you listen to my ruling? Please sit down! I said to move on.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I have seen other people in the Senate express their views. I thought I would express mine too, but I did not realize that I cannot do my own estimations. I will be guided by your ruling, Madam President. The

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Minister said \$330 million but I am saying that it is a lot more than that. Anyhow the Government's very expensive advertising programme is what is an issue now.

The Government has agreed to curb. I will give you an example. I am quoting from a document entitled *BBC News, United Kingdom Politics*. I am reading from the section with rising cost which states:

"They will also include a section on the direct media contacts of advisers."

They are asking that all the special advisors be registered. They must be declared, properly registered and the value of their contract must be known. Many special advisors to Ministers also act as the spin doctors, acting as Government spokesmen handling the media. The number of politically-appointed special advisors has risen alarmingly. This is the UK environment.

When you look at what has happened this is exactly what has created the problem and prompted the setting up of this particular committee. I started off on this issue, which is one of the things that we need to look at in this place. We need to look at the number of advisors. Through you, Madam President, let me give you an example, Max Cuffie in the Attorney General's Office, who does all the spin doctoring and Mr. Overand Padmore, who sits in the Ministry of National Security and does all the spin doctoring. He probably drafted these ads and said: "Okay, this is how you should phrase it." That is what we are talking about. There is now a code under which they can operate. There is a way that they must communicate. It is about putting back integrity, truth and objectivity into political and government communication. That is what I am dealing with. That is why I raised the issue. I think it is very relevant to our times, because this Government is going down a very dangerous road. [*Crosstalk*] They do not want to hear the figures. I do not want to be shouting, but I cannot speak above these people. You will not hear me without thinking that I am shouting.

If we want to continue along this line we have to bring—if we want to have these special advisors and we want to carry out this kind of communication—codes, principles and guidelines as to how this is effected. This is the point I am trying to make. Right now we do not want to debate the Motion. We want to talk about the UNC and how ungovernable they are. The Government wants to throw out the Opposition. The Government used the Anti-Corruption Bureau to persecute the UNC and reputable people in the community. Why?

Sen. Dr. Saith: On a point of order, again. I am following this debate and Minister Dumas was told that he cannot impute improper motives to any side. The Senator is saying that Members on this side are using the Anti-Corruption Bureau to intimidate people, imputing improper motives. What is good for the goose—

Madam President: Exactly the words I was going to use. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. I have held your point of order. I have to hold this one. Please stop imputing improper motives.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, I apologize, but I know it is hurting, especially on our Monday night forum. To this day, they will never investigate LABIDCO. They knew that there was a \$10 million bribe, and they will not do it. The Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney General know it, but they will not do anything. They have everything. The Anti-Corruption Bureau knows it, but they will not investigate it. Why? We do not know.

They will continue to say that they are doing an aluminium smelter. Prof. Ken Julien represents the people of Trinidad and Tobago. His son, Phillip, represents ALCOA. That is okay. Nothing is wrong with the integrity in that. That is perfectly all right according to the Government's standards. Nobody hears anything. But we hear about everything under the sun with the UNC.

Sen. Dumas said that we do not want to support anything in the Senate. Let me respond to him. The Occupational Safety and Health Bill, we gave our support. We begged and hurried the Government. Anything they wanted for the Occupational Safety and Health Bill, we gave because we wanted it passed in both Houses. We had an interest in the labour community to prevent all the accidents that are taking place today. The Government has that blood on their hands. That is their problem. They will live with that for the rest of their lives. I hope they understand that.

With respect to the Equal Opportunity Act, we said over and over, bring it and we will give them the support. Bring the amendments. Because they are not committed to equity and equal opportunity, they will not bring it. It is not that we do not support. We support Bills that come before this Senate that are in the interest of this country and the people, to protect the citizens of the country. We will not give away the citizens' rights in this country, whether it is the Anti-terrorism Bill or the Police Reform Bills, to harass and terrorize anybody in the country. We will do this until the end.

Madam President: I did not wait this time, but please. There you go again. Let us be equal in what we are doing in this Senate. Please continue.

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, you could have done that when Sen. Dumas was on the floor, but you did not.

Madam President: Please continue.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Madam President, I want to answer Sen. Prof. Ramchand as well. There were a couple of questions Sen. Prof. Ramchand raised. I think it is important that we deal with them. I want to go back to Erskine May. I want to quote what Sen. Montano quoted. I think I should do it over.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the Senator has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Sen. Prof. Ramchand asked four or five questions in his contribution. He wants to understand what we mean when we say that we put pressure on Members of Parliament. I want to quote from page 129 which speaks about "conduct not amounting to a direct attempt...improperly to influence a member in the discharge of his duty, but having the tendency to impair his independence in the future performance of his duty". They talked about the influence by private solicitation in that case. It also talks about molestation on account of Members' behaviour in Parliament.

When we say: "Demand of your MP that they vote for this legislation". I want to ask the Senator, what is the difference between coming to the Senate and as you get out of your car someone stops you and harasses and intimidates you that you must vote for that Bill that would be debated now? Is that not a form of molestation and intimidation? When you start inciting the public to tell them that they should demand of their Member of Parliament to vote for the legislation, how can their Member of Parliament exercise that independent right to vote? That is where we are drawing the line when it comes to intimidation and pressure.

The second question that Sen. Prof. Ramchand raised was: if Sen. Montano wants to show that what was done on television was not public education and information. We cannot show the television ad here, but it was along the same lines. If you listen to the radio and television advertisements you would see and hear the same thing. It was "demand, demand". There were these images coming out at you to demand, demand. It was three or four times. That, to me, is intimidating.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand asked to show qualities of repetition, not encouraging people to think for themselves and forcing people to take your point of view. It is forcing people to take your point of view when you bombard them with only your

point of view and muzzle the other side. No funds were generated or given to the other side for them to put their points of view out. We were only hearing one point of view.

The Government did not go out and decide to have a public education exercise. The ad was not designed to say these are the Police Service Reform Bills and this is what they will achieve. The Government did a bit of that and went straight into the demand that the MP should vote for you. All I keep hearing in the advertising campaign is how much and why the UNC does not want to support the Government. We never heard the issues; the real merits and demerits of the Bill. To me, that is not allowing people to think for themselves.

The other question Sen. Prof. Ramchand raised was if it was done in recent months in relation to other Bills. I cannot think of any other Bill with which it was done. This was the first of its kind.

Another question he raised was whether the advertisements were in any way conditioned/coloured by a sense that the other side had a point of view. There was absolutely nothing in any of these ads that said that the other side had a point of view.

Furthermore, I have a serious problem when the Government goes to speak to people such as the Maha Sabha, or any other institution and their carriage is paid for on the media. To me, that is bombarding on one point of view.

The other question was whether there was any implication that the Opposition had no right to oppose or disagree, or that those who did not agree were unpatriotic or not nationalistic or irresponsible, or supporting crime. Sen. Prof. Ramchand, I think you just have to listen to what Sen. Dumas said earlier and that answers your question.

Sen. Dumas said that we were irresponsible, unpatriotic and we were not being nationalistic. I do not think I need to say anymore. The ad said it and he confirmed it.

I think those were the questions raised by Sen. Prof. Ramchand.

When we talk about independence—I want to quote from these two documents, which talk about the whole role of the spin doctor because this is what is driving our advertising campaigns by the Government. For those who did not know, when we talk about a spin doctor, we are talking about a person who tries to display a slant on an event. We use the term "doctoring" because you are patching up, falsifying and manipulating. *[Interruption]* Not doctor in that sense, Madam President. Madam President, I got this off the Internet.

Madam President: I was just about to ask you.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Do you want me to read it properly? It was in the *Oxford English Dictionary* which gave its definition for "spin doctor". It states that it is a combination of spin and doctor; spin being that we took for a political party to put their political spin or particular slant to give a favourable interpretation of events to the media. This is what is meant by "spin". They went on to talk about "doctoring". It is not doctoring as medical doctor.

Madam President: Thank you.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: It is doctoring in terms of patching up. When we talk about "doctoring" a document, we are talking about patching up, falsifying and manipulating. I had the same problem and I made a note of that. It was on the Internet which stated that it was from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Sen. Dumas: I want to ask a question, if I would be allowed.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I am out of time.

Sen. Dumas: It is part of what we do. We had some names. The particular Senator called the names of persons she suggests are spin doctors. She is accusing those persons or indicating that they were our spin doctors? Is the Senator accusing these people of falsifying public information? I am wondering if she wants to amend that.

Sen. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I am out of time. I know this is the term that is given to these people whom they hire as their special advisors. This is why I thought I should give the definition. It was important enough in this article that they put the definition, so that we understand where we are going when we use these PR consultants.

There is the argument that the PR consultants are being used as spin doctors. It is up to you to decide what you are doing and to set your proper guidelines. We see it every day and this is the view of the population of Trinidad and Tobago that there is a lot of spin doctoring going on by this Government. The Government puts out advertisements and press releases, but it puts out one side and patches up the story and goes on like that. That is a perfect example. Let me give you an example.

"The Invisible Political Actors

Furthermore, public opinion in recent years has tended increasingly to perceive the government's media strategy not simply as a strategy to control

the asymmetric political activism of the media, but as a strategy to deceive the public. When a government's media management operation ends up generating allegations of anti-politics, something somewhere has clearly gone wrong.

He describes in some detail how the business of trading unsubstantiated pieces of information operates and how politicians and spin doctors seek to trade 'off-the-record' information in exchange for favourable media stories".

Beware of what is going on. This is a trend. It is not only here. Other governments are taking check. They are looking at what they are doing. Major negotiations take place and it is leaked to the media.

"Nicholas Jones also suggests it is the responsibility of government to end the damaging cycle of private briefings, leaked information and off-the-record comment."

Madam President, I have to look right here at the articles—letters that were released to the media. Who would have leaked that? It must have been the spin doctors who leaked that information. Today we see in the *Guardian*—How did that get in the *Guardian* about the Prime Minister going to appoint a tribunal? This is the same issue that we are raising. The Government wanted to control the Parliament. It controls the media and now it wants to control the Judiciary. What is the Government doing? This is going to bring the country into serious problems when the Government continues to do that. I want to know who leaked all of this information to the press?

I want to warn this Government that Sir Ellis Clarke, a former president of this country, is the one who indicated that instead of us going the way we are going and instead of the Prime Minister appointing a tribunal, he should be amending the Constitution to take out that power of appointment of the tribunal by the Prime Minister and give it to the President. He said that is the way to go. You cannot be judge, jury and executioner. Instead, the Government is intent along a particular line. That is a line of dictatorship in this country. The Government wants to take over all the independent institutions.

Nothing in the country functions. Every institution right now is not functioning under this Government. That is why it is like that. We see it in the newspapers. Just this week, in the *Sunday Guardian*, Dhanasar Mahabir and other economists spoke about the issue of setting up state enterprises. When we told the Government that this is not the way to go, they want to go that way. Why? It is because they want to avoid the Central Tenders Board. That is what the Government wants to do. The Government does not want open and transparent tendering procedures, so it sets up a state enterprise to milk.

Advertising Campaign Expenditure Repayment
[SEN. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

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Yesterday's *Guardian* editorial spoke about that. All the Government is doing is setting up state enterprises to milk them in order to promote its political agenda. That is not what we understand. We go through the advertising route and now we want to go through the point where we want to set up state enterprises to do that. The Government wants to further its political objectives. Why? I have always said that this is a Government that is so obsessed with staying in power after 2007—they have shot down some of their own good initiatives from 1991—1995. That is the problem we have here. This is why you see all this nonsense going on.

I hope and I know I am out of time—I am out of time because they keep harassing me. I am sure I would have been finished well within my 45 minutes, but the Government loves when I speak. I stood for my full hour because of them.

I hope this Government understands. I hope they understand that there is an important legislative process that we must follow. Legislature is still—I hope they put back the supremacy that Parliament deserves. They are not doing that. I can only appeal. This is why this Motion is here.

I hope that we can set an example for other countries to follow. They are saying: "Well said". I hope they take it to heart because we are a leading nation. We want to become a leader in the region; probably in years to come, in the hemisphere. Let us play that role of a leader and let us set the right examples. Let us put the principles and let us be guided by those principles.

Madam President, I thank you.

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, April 05, 2005 at 1.30 p.m., at which time we would debate what is item 3 on the Order Paper, a Bill to provide for the vesting of the operational undertakings of Caroni (1975) Limited. If we are unable to complete that debate on Tuesday, April 05, we will continue on Wednesday 06, 2005.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, there are three matters to be raised on the Motion on the Adjournment by Sen. Mark. We are dealing with one. I think it would be better if we took the tea break now and then come in. [*Interruption*] It is only one we are taking. That is fair enough. Hon. Senators, we would then go ahead to the first matter.

**High Incidence of Crime
(Government's Inadequate Measures)**

Sen. Wade Mark: Thank you very much, Madam President. The Motion deals with the failure of the Minister of National Security to put in place adequate measures to deal with the high incidence of murders and kidnappings in our country.

It is a fact that Trinidad and Tobago is under virtual siege by criminal elements who virtually overrun—and sometimes one feels like the national security forces are losing control.

In 80 days the record would show that we have 73 murders. I understand that 77 murders occurred in approximately 81 days. We have had 12 kidnappings for ransom and there have also been numerous robberies, larceny and extortion which are not being reported to the police. The Government has lost complete control over this crime wave.

In fact, the Minister of National Security, in the *Daily Express* of Wednesday, March 16, 2005 on page 7 was under a heading: "Joseph: "Fighting crime is for cops." In this article he went on to say that the Government has lost control in stemming kidnappings and was alarmed by the prevalence of this crime. This is the Minister of National Security. He has thrown his hands in the air virtually and he has admitted that the Government has lost control over the kidnapping situation in our country. This is in black and white. This is dated Wednesday, March 16, 2005 on page 7 of the *Daily Express*.

"To take away the responsibility of his office and the Government's responsibility for the security and safety of the citizenry of this country, hear what our hon. Minister of National Security said:

"Fighting spiralling crime is the responsibility of law enforcement and not directly that of the Government..."

Madam President, I did not know that. I thought when a government was elected to office they are supposed to execute policies that would ensure that the first duty is to protect your safety and your security, and my safety and my security. Do you know what is happening? The Government has collapsed on this particular point.

It goes on—I am glad that the hon. Minister is here, that is the junior Minister of National Security. I thought the senior Minister would have been here but seeing that they have sent the junior, we will deal with him as well. Hear what the

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junior Minister of National Security is reported to have said in the same newspaper dated Wednesday, March 16, 2005 on page 6. I quote:

"At least here we know where the hot spots are."

This is what the junior Minister of National Security is saying:

"We know who the criminals...are...you can keep your ground and stay away and avoid that, but (for) those outside it is really traumatic indeed."

That was the junior Minister of National Security telling the country that the PNM Government is aware of who the criminals are, yet the criminals are in charge of our country.

No longer can we claim that the police does not have vehicles, resources or equipment. They have money. Hear what the *Guardian* is saying in this editorial:

"More vehicles, more manpower and equipment and bigger budgets have had no effect on crime."

They have money, resources, manpower and equipment but no effect on the crime level. Why is this so?

The sum of \$61 million was spent in the purchase of Israeli spying equipment which was brought to this country sometime in 2002 and we do not know where that equipment is located. Is it in the hands of the police service? If it is in the hands of the police service, how is it that they can spy through TSTT on the telephone conversation of the Chief Justice? They can identify the newspaper, when he called, who he called, what number he called and how long he stayed on the phone, but this Government has been unable to trace one telephone call of the kidnappers who are extracting millions of dollars from ordinary citizens

Mr. Gregory Aboud, President of DOMA is now claiming, as we have said over and over—I want to quote him from this *Express* story of Wednesday, March 16, 2005 on page 6:

"He said this will continue to drive away entrepreneurs and citizens and 'no amount of gas and oil...no amount of money or social programmes will be able to solve them."

If you do not have safety, security and peace in a nation where you, ordinary people and myself whether they are businessmen or working-class people, or middle-class individuals—if you do not have safety, we can have all the oil, gas

and resources, it means nothing because your life is cheap. Mr. Aboud pointed out that kidnappers are now torturing their victims; burning them with cigarette butts and lighters. They are torturing women and children.

There is a particular individual who was dragged through a pig pen by these kidnappers. Scores of families are leaving this country every single day because the regime that is supposed to be dealing with criminal activity is involved in criminal activity. That is the problem we have in Trinidad and Tobago. The Government is unable to stem crime because of its association with criminals. That is why we have a situation today where, in spite of all the resources, equipment and manpower the Government is unable to deal with crime. There is a reason for it. Unless this Government deals with this matter very seriously people are going to take the law into their own hands. I want to warn this regime that people are losing faith in the system.

The year 2005 had started off with a bang. Two hundred and sixty persons were murdered in 2004. The rate at which we are going today, we may pass almost 360 at the end of this year. When are we going to solve this problem? There are Ministers of Government, instead of taking responsibility for crime and saying "let us devise policies to address crime, they are copping out. They are blaming businessmen, citizens and the people, rather than taking responsibility. Do you know why? Every single programme that the PNM has introduced from Operation Anaconda to a number of other anticrime initiatives have all failed. All we get from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; whether it is from the acting Prime Minister at the time, the Minister of National Security or the junior Minister, they have plans and they hope, like our colleague said this afternoon, they will win the war and also the battle.

By the time the PNM wins the war and the battle the number of people who would have been murdered and kidnapped in this country—we are coming like Guyana. We are heading down that road. I do not believe that it is a policy of the Government. People are saying on a daily basis that there appears to be some kind of symbiotic relationship between the criminal elements and the policy of the Government. They want to know if there is an official link between the kidnappers and the Government. I do not want to believe there is a link but that is what people are saying. People are saying on the ground that many of the people who are being kidnapped today happen to be of one particular race and ethnicity. Sometimes people get the impression—I am not on that particular course—that there is a silent policy by these kidnappers to decimate and depopulate. Why is it that the Government is so silent on these kidnappers? Why is it that the

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Government has not used the equipment they have in their possession to track down these criminals? Why is it that the Government is only using the equipment to spy and harass people whom they do not support of who do not support them?

The time has come for the Government to act. I want to warn them this afternoon that if they continue to play footsie and pussyfoot with people's lives in the country, the people will take the law into their own hands because the security forces and the Government of this country—in particular the Government; I am not blaming the security forces. I am blaming the PNM Government for the escalation of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. If the Government does not take this thing seriously the people will take to the streets. The people will take the law into their own hands and protect their family and children.

I call on the junior Minister and the Minister of National Security to give this country some kind of policy position and assurance that they have the situation in control and that this question of kidnapping and murders, in particular kidnapping, could be brought to an end in the quickest possible time.

I thank you very much, Madam President.

4.30 p.m.

The Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very warmly, Madam President and Senators, for your welcome on my debut in this honourable place. Madam President, once again, I construe what I heard from Sen. Mark to be another attempt on the part of those on the other side—excluding, of course, the Independent Benches—to create confusion by deception in this nation. The way the Motion was phrased, and the intention of the Motion before us, makes this very clear.

In fact, I listened to the hon. Senator for the last 15 minutes and if he was not so deceptive, one could have mistaken him for a very vibrant preacher or, perhaps, at the worst, a town crier of the golden days. What we heard here was a perfect lesson in hype, exaggeration and typical rabbleroising.

The Senator said that the Government has lost control. If you go down St. Vincent Street or Frederick Street, you would see police officers on duty; if you go to any police station, you would see citizens going there to make reports; and if you go to legal offices, you would see citizens going to lawyers to take their legal difficulties. The people of Trinidad and Tobago have respect for law in the main. They go to the law to resolve disputes. The Government has not lost control, as the Senator said. That is wishful thinking on his part, but he will have to wait another 20 years in Opposition to see that.

Madam President, recently, the hon. Minister of National Security tried to explain sensibly to the national community that the Government's responsibility is to formulate and share its policy position with agencies within the purview of the Ministry of National Security. He was trying to explain that he does not wear police or army boots; he does not do a patrol in Penal, Moruga or in the hills of Laventille. He is not personally involved in dealing with those issues but, as the Minister of National Security, he is responsible for purveying Cabinet's policy position to the agencies—including the police service—and providing them with the resources as much as the State could afford and, of course, providing general management. Minister Joseph is not a police officer or a soldier. That is all he was trying to say, but that simple point escaped the hon. Senator.

The Senator commented on something that I said recently in response to a particular question. I was making a point to a journalist that we who live in Trinidad and Tobago understand, see, hear and know the reality here, but for those living outside, news of the levels of crime in Trinidad and Tobago is doubly and triply traumatic.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we have a sense of where we must go and at what time. That is a common sense position. In every country and every town you have that, but for the person outside—it is not Laventille; it is not Carenage; it is not Penal or Chaguanas—it is Trinidad and Tobago. That is the point I was making. I hope the Senator understands that.

Hon. Senators will recall that in the Prime Minister's 2004 budget presentation he said that the population was being terrorized as criminals have declared virtual war on the society. In saying that, the Prime Minister was resolved that the Government must and will respond. At that time, we were committed to do whatever was necessary within the four corners of the law, to return this nation to a state where our people can conduct their lives in safety and security—circumstances to which they are quite entitled.

However, we recognize that the issue of crime is a highly emotive one. The crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago must be viewed against two distinct perspectives: the prevalence and the reality of crime and the fear that it generates. The first category is quantitative and, therefore, measurable; but the fear of crime being psychological; being about feelings; and being about emotions is clearly more elusive. It is in this area that the UNC tries with its hype, exaggeration and hyperbole to stimulate the population into thinking that all is lost; the Government

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has lost control; there is no Parliament; there are no courts; there are no police; and there is no government. That is all unreal and figments of their imagination, and to put it colloquially, “bananas of their mind”.

The Government is fully aware of both dimensions, and it remains resolute in its efforts to reduce the levels of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. To this end, we know that we have a direct responsibility to ensure that our law enforcement agencies are provided with the necessary resources so that they can successfully respond to the challenges relating to crime, criminal activities and general lawlessness. We would never sound as though we are rejoicing at crime as Members of the Opposition would often do. Every crime is too much for us. It is painful; it is traumatic; and we are saddened by it as our citizens are killed, maimed, kidnapped and hurt. We do not rejoice at it. I get the distinct feeling that our friends rejoice, hoping to gain some kind of short-term political mileage.

Sen. R. Montano: Madam President, on a point of order. He is imputing improper motives. I am not going to take that!

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: How could you say crime is a figment of our imagination?

Madam President: Mr. Minister, please do not suggest that the Opposition is rejoicing at crime.

Hon. F. Hinds: Madam President, the Ministry of National Security has been monitoring the crime situation very closely. Recently, we told the nation—based on statistical analysis—that we discovered that 65 per cent of the serious crimes committed in this country were conducted in 18 police station districts. We took a decision, quite properly and sensibly, to direct more resources in those areas to deal with that 65 per cent of crime. We are monitoring this situation closely.

Madam President, some of our many efforts have been the increase in budgetary allocation to the Ministry of National Security from \$1.6 billion in 2002 to \$1.8 billion in 2003, and now a whopping \$2.1 billion for fiscal year 2004/2005. [*Desk thumping*] That is a clear demonstration that we understand that dealing with crime and national security is second only to the business of the nation’s education which received the largest chunk of the national budget. There were increases in actual funding, not just budgetary allocation, but measures to transform the management of the police service.

We came here with a police reform package, which was flatly rejected by the other side. We brought Prof. Mastrofski, a man with expertise in managing police services and improving inefficient police services. We told the country openly that it will cost \$5million for the year and more that he will be here with his team to make the police service, our major crime fighting platform, more efficient, and they criticized that expenditure. They had offered us Giuliani at \$12 million for six months. We mentioned \$5 million in the context of demonstrating to the national population and, to them, that Prof. Mastrofski and his team would be here for one year and we are assured of value for money. To date, he and his team has been worth every single cent in gold. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: Crime has come down!

Hon. F. Hinds: Madam President, we introduced the Special Anti-Crime Unit, led by Brigadier Joseph, and they are now fully on stream. We have accelerated and intensified their efforts. All that I can say to this country, without saying more, is that the impact of the Special Anti-Crime Unit is worthy of the highest commendation and praise.

With respect to strengthening the legislative enactment framework, we came to this Parliament and we increased the penalties for firearm offences substantially. Remember that!

Sen. R. Montano: And crime has gone done!

Hon. F. Hinds: We are detecting many more firearm offences by the day. One just has to read the newspaper. I could produce the official record. On a daily basis, the police are retrieving firearms and putting people before the courts. The one concern I have is the way the courts will deal with these new sentences. Recently, a man was found guilty of possession of a firearm and 15 rounds of ammunition, and a magistrate put him on a bond to keep good behaviour for two years. That weakens and demoralizes the efforts of the troops, but we will urge them to continue.

Madam President, we constantly and sensibly collaborate with international organizations to establish and maintain a global approach towards crime fighting because, obviously, crime fighting is global in its purview; it is more organized and, certainly, international. We have intensified our training programmes across the range of all the agencies in national security, under our jurisdiction, as we seek to develop the human resource capacity to put them at the cutting edge to build their morale and to build their confidence as they fight this devious, hydra-headed beast that is crime.

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Madam President, I want to assure you, the Members of this Senate, and the national community that at the Ministry of National Security, we are abundantly and wholly aware of our responsibility. We are doubling our efforts in order to deal with the situation. We take no comfort in the following figures, but let me do a minor review of some statistics.

For the year 2003, there were 16,974 reported serious crimes. These are the facts, whether you like it or not. They can be verified. For the year 2004, there were 16,077 reported serious crimes, which is a minor reduction—nothing to scream about—of 5.6 per cent. I only highlighted those figures to demonstrate, not from a position of emotion, but from a posture of fact that serious crimes have reduced. That is all I am saying. We can boast because this is a historical fact.

In 2003, we had 51 kidnappings for ransom. At the close of 2004, we had 28 kidnappings. That did not happen by chance, but that happened as a result of specific actions and techniques that were put in place by the Anti-Kidnapping Unit and the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We saw a positive response.

Sen. Mark: What has happened this year?

Hon. F. Hinds: You take your time. Drink your porridge cool. Do not get so hot. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] Save the heat for elsewhere, not here. This is an honourable House. [*Desk thumping*] The kidnappers know full well, to use the term “hot”; they know that the battle is getting hotter; they know that we are closing the gaps; and they know the strategies that we have put in place last year have brought about that substantial reduction that I have just demonstrated; and the action continues.

Sen. Seepersad-Bachan: What happened to this year?

Hon. F. Hinds: I will answer you, but before I do, let me remind you of all the many kidnappings that we have had. Madam President, kidnapping is one issue and the question of murder is another issue. As we speak, we are dealing with some hot spots in this country where we have applied resources. In one of the communities where we have applied resources to deal with the issue of crime, there has not been a single murder since we began an operation recently. We are now expanding to other areas and honing our skills, and operations are continuing.

With respect to the question of murders, I find it preposterous that if there is another murder, people will say: “Minister Joseph, one more murder” as though Minister Joseph took up a knife or a gun and did somebody something.

Sen. Mark: It is you we are calling now; “Hinds, another murder”.

Hon. F. Hinds: Recently, a father in Siparia, unfortunately and horribly, put poison down the throat of a 6-year-old and his own throat. How could you blame Minister Joseph for that?

Sen. Mark: We are blaming you Fitzgerald Hinds.

Hon. F. Hinds: Two friends were arguing in a bar in Penal and one killed the other. How could you blame Minister Joseph for that?

Sen. Mark: We are blaming you.

Hon. F. Hinds: To the extent that there are illegal firearms in the country, and illegal firearms are used in the commission of crime, then we have some responsibility. I want to conclude by telling you that we have ordered and we are in the process of procuring three ocean patrol vessels—

Sen. Mark: Oh gosh! Oh Gosh! Eighteen months—

Hon. F. Hinds:—with strategic helicopter and interceptor capacity. The Members opposite were in government for a brief while, and they know that this is not like popcorn, where you could go and buy it in a shop; this is not like when you buy a doubles in Curepe or coconut water on Independence Square. We are very professional. We do not do it like them, but we go through the correct legal procedures.

I want to conclude by telling the Members that whilst they are complaining about crime, that they have contributed significantly to the crime statistics. They have! Madam President, that is for another occasion.

Madam President, we are upgrading police stations across this country; we are tooling and resourcing all the units under the Ministry of National Security. In respect of 2005, to date, there have been 11 kidnappings, and from that number, two persons are still outstanding. I have been told that a number of persons were released by the police, and a number of persons were released by their kidnappers for small ransoms. I do not have the time to tell you all of it.

Madam President, we are confident with the action that we are taking in the interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We will continue to fight. We would like their support; we crave their support legislatively, but with or without their support, we are going to fight in the interests of Trinidad and Tobago, and we are confident that we will win.

God bless Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Hon. Senators—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. R. Montano: We are very safe.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, do you know that they are part of “NATO”—
No action, talk only”?

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.45 p.m.