

**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON OCTOBER 17, 2002

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**SESSION 2004-2005**

**VOLUME 9**

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**SENATE**

*Tuesday, April 05, 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. Angela Cropper from today's sitting of the Senate.

**SENATOR'S 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: 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, 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 31st day of March, 2005."

*Oath of Allegiance*

*Tuesday, April 05, 2005*

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE**

*Senator Althea Rocke took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.*

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1994. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1995. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
4. Report of the Princes Town Regional Corporation for the period 2002 to 2003. [*The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith)*]
5. The 17th Annual Report of the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago for the year 2004. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]
6. The Telecommunications Tenders Rules, 2005. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]
7. The Animal (Importation) Control (Amdt.) Regulations, 2005. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]
8. The Regional Health Authorities (Amendment to the Second Schedule) Order, 2005. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]
9. The Minimum Wages Order, 2005. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Madam President, I also wish to advise that the Statutory Instruments Committee considered the regulations, orders and rules and found that there is nothing to which the Senators attention should be specially drawn. The minutes of the committee were circulated to Senators.

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****Government Employed Advertising Agencies  
(Details of)**

- 55. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Finance:
- A. Could the hon. Minister provide this Senate with the names of the various advertising agencies employed by the various government ministries, state enterprises, statutory authorities and other government agencies and departments over the period May 01, 2002 to December 31, 2004?
  - B. Could the Minister provide the Senate with a breakdown of the expenditure per agency in respect of the various government ministries, state enterprises, statutory boards and other government agencies and departments over the same period?
  - C. Could the Minister further state the amount of monies utilized in both the print and electronic media in a detailed way over the same period, as well as, the various events hosted, promoted and advertised?

**Expenses Incurred by G Tech  
on behalf of the National Lotteries Control Board  
(Details of)**

- 58. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Finance:
- A. Could the hon. Minister provide the Senate with a detailed breakdown of the various costs/donations incurred or made by G Tech on behalf of the National Lotteries Control Board for the period January 01, 2002 to January 25, 2005?
  - B. Could the Minister further provide the Senate with the names and addresses of all beneficiaries from this arrangement with G Tech and the National Lotteries Control Board?

**The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill):**  
The answers to questions Nos. 55 and 58 to the Minister of Finance are not yet quite ready. In those circumstances, therefore, I have spoken with Sen. Mark who has kindly agreed with me that a one-week deferral is most appropriate.

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**Terms and Conditions of Contract entered into  
with International Shipping Partners**

**59. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister provide the Senate with:

- (i) a detailed breakdown of the terms and conditions of the contract entered into between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and International Shipping Partners; and
- (ii) a copy of the contract?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan):** Madam President, I rise to answer question 59 as posed by Sen. Wade Mark and to inform this honourable Senate that the terms and conditions of the contract entered into between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the International Shipping Partners are detailed in the copy of the contract which has been circulated to Senators. You would receive it in a few minutes. My apologies but we have the entire contract here for your scrutiny and study. Thank you very much.

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, may I speak?

**Madam President:** Yes, go ahead.

**Sen. Mark:** It has become a practice now and I think you need to rule on this matter. I have asked a question and the Minister has indicated to this Parliament that the contract is with us, or has been circulated. We have not seen a copy of the contract as yet. If I would like to ask questions arising out of the contract I do not have the opportunity. I think you need to rule on that. I would like you to consider this matter because it is not the first time it has happened. We are told by Ministers that they have already circulated the document and none of us is in possession of the document.

**Madam President:** I understand. Do you want to say something Minister?

**Sen. D. Montano:** Madam President, perhaps we could simply defer the answer until the end of question time to allow them a few minutes to circulate the document.

**Madam President:** I gather from what you are going through there, it is a very lengthy document and therefore, it cannot be read out.

**Hon. F. Khan:** It is a charter party agreement. They wanted the contract in its entirety. We pondered and for the sake of openness we decided to make the entire

contract available. In that sense I saw no reason to summarize the contract for anybody. What may be pertinent to me may not be pertinent to them. The entire contract is available for Senators.

**Sen. R. Montano:** It is not available and it is nothing to smile about!

**Madam President:** It is a difficult thing. I think the Minister is trying to give as much information as possible by giving the contract but it is also an Oral Question, it is not like a Written Answer that would normally be circulated. Therefore, I can understand the dilemma on both sides; you want to ask questions but he cannot read out that whole contract. What we could do is we can ask the Minister to come back at the next sitting and give you a chance to read the contract and maybe ask him some questions. Minister, will that be all right?

**Hon. F. Khan:** I am very comfortable with that.

**Madam President:** Thank you very much.

**CARONI (1975) LIMITED AND ORANGE GROVE NATIONAL  
COMPANY LIMITED (DIVESTMENT AND BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT) (NO. 2) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo):** Madam President, I beg to move,

That a Bill to provide for the vesting of the operational undertakings of Caroni (1975) Limited in another company and the vesting of the real estate undertakings of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove National Company Limited in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and to provide for the management of and for the development of those real estate undertakings be now read a second time.

Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove National Company Limited (Divestment and Business Development) Bill, 2004 is intended to transfer lands held by Caroni (1975) Limited to the State and to allow the State to determine its use for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

What does this Bill represent? It represents a key aspect of Government's strategy for the effective management and use of the nation's land in keeping with the principles of sustainable development. It is a critical advancement of Government's efforts to restructure the sugar industry including a redefinition of the role of Caroni (1975) Limited.

The objectives of the Bill are: to enable Government to honour its commitments to former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited; to enable EMBD to manage the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove; and stimulate and facilitate economic activity in certain areas through the establishment of light manufacturing estates, agricultural estates, housing projects and commercial complexes.

The mechanisms to achieve these objectives included the vesting of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove real estate undertaking in the State, provision for management and development of business activities on the real estate undertakings and vesting of certain operational assets of Caroni (1975) Limited in the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited (SMCL), a company formed to undertake processing and refining activities.

Madam President, it is important that we take a brief review of Caroni (1975) Limited. In 2002, Caroni (1975) Limited produced just over 101,000 tonnes of sugar. The cost of production at Caroni (1975) Limited was TT \$4,634 or US \$735 per tonne. As a matter of fact, the cost of producing sugar was 1.4 times higher than any other Caribbean territory, two times higher than Africa and 2.7 times higher than the average of the 10 lowest cost producers, which is US \$272.

In 2002, Caroni (1975) Limited received \$90 million in cash and \$489 million in loan support from the Government. There has been a similar pattern of expenditure over the years and it is now common knowledge that the Government undertook a comprehensive review of the sugar industry. The review was conducted in the context of global issues, efficiency and effectiveness and competitiveness of the industry. As we may have noticed, the sugar industries in many countries have been struggling. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister of St. Kitts/Nevis, the Hon. Dr. Denzil Douglas, only recently announced that they too have taken the decision in the closure of the St. Kitts Sugar Industry. As a matter of fact, yesterday, at the Euro Money Conference, he indicated that that sector resulted in much debt. Right now they are also looking at restructuring that industry.

After conducting the review of the domestic sugar industry, the Government formed the judgment that Caroni (1975) Limited, in its existing corporate form, would be unable to discharge effectively and efficiently its principal functions, being sugar cane cultivation and production and management of its considerable real estate holdings. Senators, this decision was taken to restructure the sugar industry.

A critical component of the restructuring arrangement of the sugar industry involved the establishment of a wholly-owned state company, the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited (SMCL). SMCL was established to undertake separately and exclusively the sugar cane processing and sugar refining business formerly conducted by Caroni (1975) Limited. SMCL will purchase cane from private cane farmers and produce sugar for its preferential and local markets. Again, it was stated that in order for this company to be viable the intention is also to introduce a quality-based system for purchasing sugar cane on the basis of sucrose content. The sucrose content will be determined on the basis of tests performed by an independent testing committee.

In 2004, SMCL purchased sugar cane at the factory gate at a guaranteed price of \$180 per tonne. This is also the price established for the current crop. In 2004, the sugar production target was 60,000 tonnes. Unfortunately, the actual production was 4,838 tonnes. Production was negatively affected because of adverse weather conditions, labour issues, low purity in the cane and high volumes of extraneous matter. To meet the shortfall, SMCL imported raw sugar for its refining operations. The refined sugar is being sold to our domestic manufacturing sector and domestic and regional retail trade partners.

Having addressed the issues relating to the sugar industry, Government needed to be assured that the substantial real estate undertakings of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove National Company Limited would be managed in such a way so as to provide maximum value to the national community and in particular to the 9,007 former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited.

On Tuesday, June 21, 2004 I updated this Senate on the status of commitments made to the former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited under the VSEP. Again, on January 18, 2005 I had the honour to present a document entitled: *Post Caroni (1975) Limited, a Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan*. This provided an overview of Government's plan for the future use of lands vacated by Caroni (1975) Limited. This document deals with the reconfiguration of the local sugar industry, the creation of a growth pole of Caroni (1975) Limited lands, training and retraining of the employee base and retention of Caroni (1975) Limited on a non-trading basis, so as to bring to conclusion all outstanding matters. This document is very detailed and comprehensive and I am optimistic that it will provide adequate information and therefore reduce the level of miscommunication we have had on Caroni (1975) Limited to date.

The manpower separation programme included all daily-paid and monthly-paid employees of Caroni (1975) Limited who were offered an enhanced VSEP in February 2003. By August 2003, all employees availed themselves of the VSEP, under which certain commitments were made. In the context of the VSEP, a number of commitments were made to the former employees. The first was the payment of severance benefits. These were all paid and the total payments amounted to \$5.8 million. We also agreed on a monetary enhancement. This was calculated on the basis of a bell-shaped curve ranging from 10—50 per cent; the lowest enhancement in the oldest and youngest age groups and the highest enhancements in the middle age groups. The overall average enhancement was approximately 30 per cent. By the end of August 2003, 9,007 former employees were paid a total of \$737.6 million in severance payments and monetary enhancements. Two days to the end of August 2003, it was brought to our attention that payments were due and a further \$424,000 was paid to the former workers.

Madam President, all of us are fully aware of the various tax legislation which was put in place to accommodate this. The tax exempt lump sum was increased from \$100,000—\$300,000 again, to reduce the incidence of the cost of the tax payment on those former employees. In addition, many concessionary arrangements were arranged with the Board of Inland Revenue to facilitate this process.

We had the severance and monetary enhancement for the daily-paid employees which was recalculated as at February 17, 2003, upon the conclusion of negotiations for the new collective agreement for the period 2002—2004. A similar commitment was made to 1,137 monthly-paid employees. Accordingly, on May 18, 2004, this commitment was fulfilled when two of the associations representing monthly-paid staff executed new collective agreements for the period 2002—2004. At present, there remains two associations representing monthly-paid staff which have not yet settled their collective agreements with Caroni (1975) Limited, namely the Sugar Industry Staff Association and the Association of Technical Administrative and Supervisory Staff. On the basis of those agreements that have been settled to date, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has paid out a further sum of \$54.9 million.

Regarding our commitment to pension, all pension eligible employees will receive pensions on their due dates. As a matter of fact, all pensioners continue to receive their pensions from Caroni (1975) Limited on a timely basis. Notwithstanding the initial lack of credible employment data, Caroni (1975) Limited in collaboration with its various stakeholders including the unions,



actuary, the trustee and insurance company, is in the final stages of establishing a sound and credible framework for the future administration of Caroni (1975) Limited's pension arrangement, which will ensure that pension arrangements are placed on an actuarially sound and creditable basis. The framework is expected to be coordinated by the group of insurance providers, independent of Caroni (1975) Limited.

The sixth commitment included counselling and financial advisory services. These services were provided to employees both before and after their separation from the company.

In March 2003, Caroni (1975) Limited engaged an independent consultant to assist in the design and co-ordination of training and counselling programmes. Programmes for monthly-paid employees have been completed. We had group counselling, individual sessions and financial advisory services. Eighty-five per cent of the monthly-paid employees participated in at least one of those three programmes.

In respect of the daily-paid employees, the implementation of counselling and financial advisory services were delayed on account of an injunction granted by the Industrial Court. Notwithstanding same, the financial advisory services for former daily-paid employees were provided through three open-day sessions held in August 2003, November 2003 and January 2004. Counselling services for former daily-paid employees continue to be administered on an on-going basis, through services provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), namely: the Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago, Helping Each Addict Live (HEAL), Alcoholics Anonymous and the South Cancer Support Group.

Madam President, probably one of the most important and critical commitments was the retraining and retooling. The sum of \$20 million was provided to fund a wide range of professional, technical and vocational programmes for former daily-paid and monthly-paid employees. Out of 1,137 former monthly-paid employees, 720 or 63 per cent have indicated an interest in accessing training and are being placed in 26 training institutions. Courses include: technical skills, academics, computer technology, health, safety and the environment.

By the end of March 2005, out of the 720 individuals who applied, 257 or 36 per cent had completed their training; 215 or 30 per cent are still being enrolled and 248 or 34 per cent are awaiting enrolment. Out of the 7,870 former daily-paid employees, 3,072 employees or 39 per cent have indicated an interest in accessing

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training as at the end of February 2005 and are placed in 15 institutions for training in a number of areas. Some of these areas include: carbon steel welding, pipe fitting and fabrication, construction electrical, industrial mechanical maintenance, building construction trades, agriculture, occupational health and safety, computer repairs, small gas engine repairs and air conditioning and refrigeration. In this development plan we have detailed these programmes. Of the 3,072 interested daily-paid employees, 1,415 or 46 per cent successfully completed their training in agricultural courses, while 85 per cent are still enrolled. A total of 826 or 27 per cent completed training in technical courses, while 746 or 24 per cent are still being enrolled.

It should be noted that individuals were afforded the opportunity to participate in more than one agricultural course. As a matter of fact, we had 231 participants in two courses; 93 employees in three courses; 48 in four courses; 18 individuals, five courses; six participated in six courses; four in seven courses; four in eight courses; two former employees in nine courses; another two employees in 10 courses; one employee in 11 courses and another individual in 12 courses. As you could appreciate, many of these employees take advantage of the opportunity to improve their skills. Hopefully they would also be able to multi-task.

The 7,870 former daily-paid employees included a significant number of temporary and seasonal employees who had some means of alternative employment at the time of separation. For this reason and in light of the fact of the age profile of the former daily-paid workers, it was estimated that approximately 4,000 would have availed themselves of this opportunity. Madam President, we are pleased to note that to date we have approximately 3,000 persons who took advantage of this opportunity.

In order to move forward, the Government launched the People on the Move—[*Interruption*]

**Sen. Prof. Deosaran:** Sorry to disturb the Minister, but this is a vital part of her contribution. I was wondering if she could tell the Senate how was the analyses conducted; by whom, in terms of the people who took courses and whether these courses were certified as having been successfully passed by the people to make them proficient for their subsequent endeavours?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** Many of the courses were administered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. They have been doing this on an ongoing basis. With respect to the institutions which carried the training programmes, an effort was made to ensure that they were registered, which meant

that at the end of the day the certifications would be accepted in the workplace. As a matter of fact, when the first air conditioning course was done we were told that it was inadequate to get them jobs, therefore they were offered a second course which would have put them on the platform which made their certification acceptable in the workplace.

As I indicated, Government launched the People on the Move Initiative which included a series of community outreach programmes. Those walkabouts served to attract additional former daily-paid employees.

Against this backdrop, in December 2004, Caroni (1975) Limited undertook a comprehensive communications programme geared towards advising former employees on the status of their requests for residential and agricultural land. As part of that exercise, Caroni (1975) Limited took the opportunity to enquire as to their interest in pursuing training opportunities. I am pleased to report that this resulted in 200 additional requests for training. The launch of the People on the Move Initiative, as referred to by some on the other side, was targeted to remove some of the miscommunication that was fed to the former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited.

To date, 1,520 former employees who have been trained have received their certificates at six graduation ceremonies. The latest was held on January 20, 2005. Out of these 749 have gained employment. The trace of study is very difficult to collate all the information. However, I am optimistic that more than 749 have been gainfully employed. From our statistics at this time, we have confirmed that 749 have gained employment. Next Wednesday we would be having another graduation for those who have successfully completed their courses in agriculture and other technical courses. We should have 303 former employees also graduating.

Through their chosen training and retooling programmes, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is ensuring that these former daily-paid and monthly-paid employees of Caroni (1975) Limited would now be able to participate more effectively in the many opportunities that come their way. As I said before, many of these employees have found employment. Many of them only worked part-time in the sugar industry and also had alternative forms of employment.

In addition, approximately 4,000 private farmers presently cultivate sugar cane. These are what SMCL would purchase. SMCL's factory and the various shipping terminals employ another 500 former employees. The contractors engaged to harvest the sugar canes have also employed approximately 700 employees.

**Sen. Mark:** The hon. Minister spoke about 749 workers. Could the hon. Minister provide this Parliament with the details on the standing as to where these people are employed? We would like to know where these people are located.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** As I said at the onset, I have 60 minutes to present a Bill which is expansive, is restrictive. My Ministry will provide the data. *[Interruption]*

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, the Minister is giving a reply. She is not finished with her reply. I am waiting to hear what she has to say and you are not giving her the opportunity. *[Interruption]* It is making sense to me.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** Madam President, I can be very detailed and take a very long time and all the important items will not be covered. I will have to respond in this debate and Sen. Mark's questions will be addressed. I do not have the definite information at this time.

Madam President, Caroni (1975) Limited is proactively engaged in the monitoring of vacancies as advertised in the local media and they have implemented a skills bank. As I indicated at the onset, this is not an easy task. We all know the difficulties. Nonetheless, we must congratulate the management of Caroni (1975) Limited for putting in place a plan to train an excess of 3,000 to date and they are continuing with that training plan.

I now come to priority to lease residential lands. The Government gave a commitment to offer priority to lease a lot of land to each daily-paid and monthly-paid employee who, as at January 01, 2003, did not own a house. An Inter-Agency Land Use Planning Team was appointed in January to ascertain which lands would be considered most suitable for the development of residential estates.

In June 2004, Government endorsed the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Land Use Planning Team. Twenty sites were identified for the development of residential lots for the 6,164 eligible former employees. This listing was undertaken and the collation was assisted by auditors Ernst & Young to ensure the process was as transparent as possible. Four of these sites are being developed by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee (SILWC) and there are 16 additional sites. Again, just to save time, they are included in the document in Appendix 7, if I am not mistaken

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, is it possible that the hon. Minister could make available a copy of the Inter-Agency Land Use Planning Team report?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** Madam President, this process has been so transparent, I am certain that we could make these available. We have made available this very comprehensive document but they want the process to be more transparent, I have no problem with that.

There are 16 additional locations which include Brothers Garth Development, Orange Field Development, Cedar Hill Development and La Fortune Development. As I indicated, these are all included in our document on the development plan. The four sites being developed by SILWC amount to 169 lots and are at an advanced stage of completion. I have been reassured by EMBD that very shortly these would be available for assignment.

The development of the other 16 sites is in different stages of development. Surveys for all 16 sites have been completed. The design engineering of one has been completed and the other 15 have been commissioned. One site is at the tender evaluation stage and 15 are awaiting completion of design engineering. The dates for delivery are as follows: in the third quarter of 2005, in addition to 169 lots, we have another 72 lots; the last quarter, 342 lots; first quarter of 2006, 1,357 lots; second quarter of 2006, 564 lots; third quarter of 2006, 1,484 lots. [Interruption]

**Sen. Mark:** Quarterly? Why not weekly or monthly?

**Madam President:** Please continue, Senator.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** Madam President, I was hoping that— [Interruption]

**Madam President:** Senators, can I remind you that each one of you has the opportunity to speak; to raise your concerns and your objections.

**Sen. The Hon C. Sahadeo:** As the infrastructural work is completed in each location, these will be developed on a site by site basis. If the Senator wants to assign these on a weekly or monthly basis, you would appreciate how impractical that would be.

Approximately 1,229 daily-paid employees were considered to be ineligible for residential lots. A list of those persons was submitted to the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union. Moreover, these individuals were formally notified by Caroni (1975) Limited as to their ineligibility and were invited to provide evidence to the contrary if these were available. In other words, we have given them an opportunity to correct this if there has been misinformation.

In the meantime, Government has taken steps to ensure that residential lots are allocated on a credible and transparent basis. Caroni (1975) Limited is in the final stages of determining the eligibility of those former employees who applied for residential lots. A final list of eligible applicants is expected to be available shortly, subsequent to a final screening by commercial banks as to whether those former employees had received financing for mortgage purposes prior to January 01, 2003.

We have a two-stage process. The first stage involves a preliminary allocation to eligible former employees to certain residential sites by the Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning and Development. This first stage will be done by April 30, 2005. The second stage involves the final allocation of specific lots by the end of July 2005. This means that by the end of July 2005 all those employees who are eligible will know the specific lot they would receive as soon as the infrastructural work is completed. I have just outlined the scheduled dates of completion for the infrastructural development.

With respect to the option to purchase the company homes, the monthly-paid employees were given the option to purchase the company house which they occupied as at January 01, 2003 as a condition of their employment. Houses are to be offered at the market value as at February 17, 2003, less 1 per cent for each year of service up to a maximum discount of 20 per cent. This commitment is at an advanced stage, in that a number of houses and associated plots have already been surveyed. As soon as these are completed they will be offered. Again, we are looking at the end of July for the completion.

With respect to the priority to lease the agricultural lands, this Government made a commitment to offer priority to lease a plot of agricultural land to each daily-paid and monthly-paid employee for the sole purpose of engaging in agricultural activities. The Government took due note that Caroni (1975) Limited's lands accounted for approximately 25 per cent of the arable lands in Trinidad Government. The Government needed to be assured that the sites on which these—[*Interruption*]

**Sen. Mark:** What is the size?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** The plots are two acres each.

The Government needed to be assured that the sites on which these agricultural plots could be allocated should satisfy all the existing technical criteria for the development of agricultural lands. The Government considered that Caroni (1975) Limited's lands were categorized within the framework of the

Trinidad and Tobago Land Capability Survey Protocol (1974). In other words, Class I representing lands and Class VII characterizing lands best suited to forestry and environmental protection. There are no Class I lands and Class II lands are negligible, less than 1 per cent. Class III amounts to 32.69 per cent; Class IV, 36 per cent; and Classes V, VI and VII, 31 per cent.

The Government, utilized the methodology for determining the suitability of lands available for agricultural use and has proposed a number of different agricultural activities considered suitable for these lands. These activities include: vegetables and food crops, rice, dairy, livestock, cocoa and buffalypso.

I now turn to the profile of land. For proposed heavy, light and commercial, 1,402 acres; residential lands to be allocated to Caroni (1975) Limited's workers, 1,022 acres; residential lands to be allocated to NHA, LSA and SILWC, 1,318 acres; existing built development, 4,262 acres; and available for agriculture and other uses, 68,604 acres or 89.6 per cent. Approximately 7,105 former employees are eligible for agricultural plots. There are 17 sites throughout Caroni (1975) Limited's landholdings, which have been identified for agriculture. Again, this has been detailed and outlined in Appendix 7 of the Development Plan. These include areas such as: Caroni, Orange Grove, Jerningham, Todd's Road, Edinburgh, et cetera.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the EMBD would develop for the former workers, on a phased basis, the agricultural plots. This amounts to approximately 14,200 acres out of a total proposed agricultural acreage of 34,451 acres on the 17 agricultural sites identified.

The first phase would involve the development of four sites at Caroni, Waterloo, Exchange and Reform. Again, we have a two-phased process. The first phase involves the preliminary allocation to eligible former employees of these agricultural estates by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and should be completed by April 30, 2005.

The second stage involves the final allocation. The former employee is assigned a specific site which will be completed by July 31, 2005. We must note that albeit the agricultural leases would commence preparation at that time, the former employees would be allowed to begin agriculture on these lands at this time. This is a significant statement because it means that there would be approximately 14,000 acres of land available for agriculture at the end of July 2005 while these leases are being finalized.

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This Government has identified suitable locations for light and heavy industrial estates as well as the establishment of commercial complexes, which will in no small measure provide a number of employment opportunities for former employees, particularly those who have availed themselves of training opportunities provided under the enhanced VSEP.

In respect of heavy industrial estates, Government has requested the National Energy Corporation to include a site at Point Lisas east and south in its portfolio for future development, while the Evolving Technologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited (e-TecK) would be leased lands situated at Tarouba, Pointe-a-Pierre, Dow Village, Reform, Factory Road, Endeavour, north of the Divali Nagar Site and Preysal for the establishment of light industrial sites. Moreover, the old Caroni Racing Complex will be developed into a light industrial complex by e-TecK.

The Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited (EMBD) has been requested, through appropriate and transparent methods, to encourage members of the private sector to engage in the development of two sites at Endeavour and Balmain, earmarked for the establishment of commercial complexes. Moreover, the EMBD in collaboration with suitable private sector partners will undertake development of middle-income housing developments in Beaucarro and Caroni Savannah Road.

I now turn to the disposal of assets and the road map to liquidation of Caroni (1975) Limited. Caroni (1975) Limited owned a significant number of real estate holdings as well as other physical assets. Accordingly, Caroni (1975) Limited has now put in place a number of arrangements to allow for the disposal of its assets in a transparent and credible manner, which would allow for its timely winding up and liquidation.

With respect to the transfer of assets to ministries and state agencies, the Government has agreed to the transfer of a number of these assets to certain ministries and state agencies which will now assume responsibility for their general maintenance and upkeep. While steps are presently being taken to execute the legal transfer of those assets, the Government has taken due note that in many cases, the legal transfer and conveyancing of such assets could involve an extended period of time. Accordingly, we have agreed to the establishment of various memoranda of understanding to allow the immediate assumption of responsibilities of those assets, pending their eventual legal transfer. This means



that the responsibility for these assets will fall under these ministries immediately, as we sign the memoranda of understanding.

On that basis, the following five groups of assets would be transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources by the end of this month: the dairy operations at Mon Jaloux; livestock operations at Mon Jaloux and Mora Valley; livestock operations at La Gloria, Windsor Park and Picton; the rice project; the citrus groves at Todd's Road and La Gloria, which groves will be leased on a commercial basis in 50-acre parcels to members of the national community who satisfy criteria established by that Ministry.

Caroni (1975) Limited has also put in place sustainable arrangements for the transfer of the following six sporting facilities to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs: Ste. Madeleine Staff Club and Golf Course; Sevilla Staff Club, Golf Course, Tennis Court and Swimming Pool; Gilbert Park Sports Club and Wanderers' Cricket Ground; Woodford Lodge Sports Club; Ste. Madeleine Sports Club and Dubisson Park.

The Government has taken due note of the need to establish appropriate arrangements for the maintenance of the numerous roads, bridges, drains and other watercourses situated throughout lands owned by Caroni (1975) Limited in order to avoid untoward environmental consequences. To that end, steps have been taken to transfer these to the Ministry of Local Government to assume the responsibility for these roads, drains and watercourses. Again, these will also be concluded by the end of this month.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources will also be responsible for the establishment of the headquarters of the permanent exhibition site for the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago. As a matter of fact, these were Cabinet decisions taken a while ago. This therefore, means that they will continue this process. The Ministry of Education will be responsible for the Sevilla Primary School and the reconstruction of the Mt. Pleasant Government Primary School. The Ministry of Science Technology and Tertiary Education will be responsible for the transfer of the buildings housing the former Transport and Field Engineering Departments at Brechin Castle and Usine Ste. Madeleine as well as the former Agricultural Services Department at Waterloo. The Ministry of National Security would be allocated land for the construction of the Couva Fire Station.

On the issue of the disposal of the other assets which is part of the liquidation of Caroni (1975) Limited, we have made arrangements for the disposal of several

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other assets. This includes the Aquaculture Project, Brechin Castle factory; the four closed sugar factories at Forres Park, Orange Grove, Reform and Woodford Lodge; and the rolling stocks.

With respect to the Aquaculture Project, the Government has decided that Caroni (1975) Limited, through an appropriate consultant, would take steps to identify a suitable investor for this aquaculture project.

The Government has agreed to the engagement of a consultant, on a competitive basis, to assist in the disposal of the Brechin Castle factory. To that end and on the basis of a public tender, Caroni (1975) Limited has engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers. The disposal is expected to be completed by the end of August 2005.

The four closed sugar factories at Forres Park, Orange Grove, Reform and Woodford Lodge would be sold as scrap on the basis of public tender. To that end, Caroni (1975) Limited has already taken steps to engage an independent valuator, Lee Young & Partners to assist in that regard. Again, this is expected to be concluded by the end of May 2005.

**2.30 p.m.**

Madam President, Caroni (1975) Limited has in its possession a number of immobile units of rolling stock, which were used in the operation of its various business units. I wish to place on record that following an audit exercise conducted by Caroni (1975) Limited by auditors Ernst & Young, all items of rolling stock have been accounted for except for two items: one of which was reported to the police and the other item, they have really absolutely no account for it at this time.

In establishing a framework for the disposal of its rolling stock, Caroni (1975) Limited sought to ensure that former daily-paid employees receive priority access in the purchase of rolling stock, and that as far as possible, certain strategic pieces of equipment would be kept for agricultural use. To that end, Caroni (1975) Limited has established the following framework for the disposal of its rolling stock.

Firstly, Caroni (1975) Limited will take steps to auction all in-house items of mobile and immobile units to former daily-paid employees. In this regard, Caroni (1975) Limited has already engaged an auctioneer, Edward Soon & Company, to oversee and manage this process. The auction day is carded for April 21, 2005.  
[Desk thumping]

Secondly, Caroni (1975) Limited would then auction on April 28, 2005, the remaining rolling stock to those cane and rice farmer groups which are interested in acquiring such strategic equipment. Those farming groups include: the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association; the Cane Farmers Association of Trinidad and Tobago; the Cane Producers Association of Trinidad and Tobago; the Cooperative Association of Direct Delivery Farmers; the Caribbean Rice Association of Trinidad and Tobago and the River Farms Limited.

Thirdly, Caroni (1975) Limited would auction on March 05—sorry, I think that date is wrong—it should really be June 05, 2005, any residual rolling stock to the general public.

Caroni (1975) Limited took steps to allow certain cane and rice farming groups temporary use of approximately 400 items of rolling stock, as part of the transitional arrangements. Accordingly, these items of rolling stock are expected to be returned at the end of the harvesting season, which is the end of June, 2005, at which time, Caroni (1975) Limited would take similar steps to dispose of these assets. Accordingly, Caroni (1975) Limited expects to complete the disposal of all items of rolling stock by the end of August, 2005.

**Sen. R. Montano:** Sen. Satish, you can clap now.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** Madam President, our initial focus with respect to the development of Caroni (1975) Limited lands was aimed at satisfying the commitments the Government made to the former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited. The Estate Management and Business Development Company (EMBD) has a responsible and proactive role to play in the achievement of this objective. Notwithstanding this, the Government is mindful of the need to develop on a sustainable basis, the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited and at Orange Grove for the benefit of the national community.

The Bill before this honourable House seeks to define clear roles for the Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited (EMBD) and the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited (SMCL) in the management of the substantial commercial assets and real estate undertakings owned by Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove.

As a first step, clause 4(1) of the Bill provides for the title to the real estate undertakings of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove to be transferred to the State. This means that the State would have the principal responsibility for ensuring that these undertakings are developed and utilized within a framework, which is consistent with the broad national objective. However, the transfer of

ownership would not prejudice pre-existing obligations and commitments properly given in respect of those real estate undertakings.

Clauses 4 and 5 of the Bill provide that the State would honour all such commitments and obligations, for example, contracts entered into by Caroni (1975) Limited or Orange Grove, prior to the effective date of the Bill, would be honoured.

In recognition of the fact that in dealing with these substantial landholdings, it may be necessary to incur significant expenditure to go back to a number of historic land records in order to provide a proper root of title, clause 6 of the Bill provides that this legislation would be a good root of title, thereby minimizing the cost of title searches. In other words, the Bill would provide authority as to the ownership of the real estate undertakings mentioned therein, as regards future transactions.

Furthermore, while the Bill in its present form seeks to deal with all the real estate holdings of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove; and attempts to list such holdings in the First Schedule, clause 7 makes provision for the Minister to make amendments to the First Schedule from time to time.

Once again, the Bill recognizes that in dealing with substantial land acreages, there is likelihood, though minimal, that certain parcels may have been excluded or certain parcels may have been included through inadvertence.

Clause 8 of the Bill provides the basis for SMCL to become fully operational in its business of sugar manufacturing and refining. This clause would enable the Minister responsible for EMBD—currently, the Minister of Finance—to transfer or vest in SMCL the operational assets of Caroni (1975) Limited necessary for SMCL to undertake the business of sugar cane processing and refining, conducted previously by Caroni (1975) Limited. The vesting would have to be effected by an Order published in the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette* and, may be on such terms and conditions as the Minister determines.

It must also be noted here that it is not the Government's intention that SMCL be treated as a successor company of Caroni (1975) Limited. As such, clause 15 of the Bill seeks to exempt the relevant provisions of the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01 from applying to SMCL.

It would be appreciated that if the Government were to apply the Stamp Duty Act, Chap. 76:01, to land and asset transfers of this magnitude, the resulting duties would be prohibitive and, in any event, would have been in relation to transactions between the State and entities fully owned by the State.

Clause 9 of the Bill would, therefore, exempt these transactions from the application of stamp duty legislation, so long as the State remains the owner of these entities.

Clause 10 of the Bill provides for the powers and responsibilities of EMBD as regards real estate undertakings. Where real estate undertakings are prescribed for management by EMBD under clause 10(5), EMBD would be empowered to exercise certain rights of ownership provided in clauses 10(1) and 10(2), such as the right to manage, rent, assign, exchange or evict from or otherwise deal with the real estate undertakings; and prepare and execute in the name of the President, such grants, deeds, transfers, leases, assignments, agreements or other assurances as may be necessary for EMBD to discharge its mandate.

**Madam President:** Madam Minister, you have five more minutes.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Sahadeo:** Sure. Furthermore, the requirement for real estate undertakings to be prescribed under clause 10(5) of the Bill means that EMBD must have the prior sanction of Cabinet before managing any real estate undertakings.

I also wish to emphasize that clause 10(3) prohibits EMBD from executing any legal instruments without the knowledge and approval of Cabinet.

Furthermore, clause 10(4) precludes EMBD from executing any instrument to which the public seal of Trinidad and Tobago is required to be affixed.

It must also be noted that EMBD would not be exempted from the application of legislation, regulations and policies which are applicable to the use and development of lands in Trinidad and Tobago.

Clause 10(6) of the Bill requires EMBD to collaborate with the various institutions involved in the process of land use and development, to ensure compliance with the issues of land use and capability, environmental protection, compliance and economic use.

Additionally, notwithstanding the powers and obligations that the Bill seeks to grant to EMBD, clause 10(8) contains a caveat to the extent that these powers may only be exercised where the State has controlling interest in EMBD.

In reviewing the land records of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove, it became evident that the real estate undertakings were used for various purposes, including residential. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of having to manage such substantial real estate undertakings was that in some areas illegal structures were constructed and, in a few instances, communities have been created.

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In August 1991, Caroni (1975) Limited established a spontaneous settlement programme. A principal feature of this programme was approximately 1,600 persons who were recognized as residential squatters on Caroni (1975) Limited lands. Therefore, this means, they become eligible for regularization in accordance with the policy, through a programme of land purchase. On an ongoing basis, these persons will complete their payments to Caroni (1975) Limited and they would be entitled to receive a Deed of Conveyance.

In order to fulfil its obligation to the 1,600 persons who are still making their payments, residential tenants and other persons who are entitled to purchase residential land from Caroni (1975) Limited, the Bill provides in clause 11 for the sale to continue under the authority of Parliament. The Parliament would be informed on an annual basis as to the land transactions undertaken by the manager.

Under clause 12 of the Bill, the manager would be required to report to the Minister on all transactions within three months. At the end of each year and, thereafter, the Minister would lay that report in Parliament within three months from the date of receipt of that report.

Clause 14 operates together with clauses 4 and 5 of the Bill, in securing and preserving for the avoidance of all doubts, those rights and privileges which may have been properly acquired prior to the passage of this Bill, particularly under the Agricultural Small Holdings Tenure Act, Chap. 59:53; the Land Tenants (Security of Tenure) Act, Chap. 59:54 and the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act, No. 25 of 1998.

Through the restructuring of the domestic sugar industry and, in particular, the retraining of the former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited and the establishment of both commercial and industrial activities, this Government is well on its way to effectively transforming decades of economic decline experienced by those communities previously dependent on the sugar industry into hubs of sustainable economic growth which would serve to consolidate and strengthen the wider economic growth and development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question proposed.*

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Madam President, thank you very much. Madam President, after listening to the hon. Minister for an hour, it is clear to us on this side that the PNM regime has no vision, no plan, no policy and no programme for

the transformation of the lands and undertakings by Caroni (1975) Limited. [*Desk thumping*] It is clear that bankruptcy—intellectually speaking—pervades the PNM. I want to demonstrate that today is a very sad day for Trinidad and Tobago and the working class of this land.

Madam President, we have just been through Easter, and Easter represents the crucifixion and the resurrection, and what we are experiencing today, as it relates to Caroni (1975) Limited, is the crucifixion which started when the PNM was installed in office in December 2001. They have continued a campaign which is designed to destroy an industry that all our ancestors and forefathers have contributed toward in terms of the development of Trinidad and Tobago—whether it was the Africans during the slave trade or whether it was our Indian brothers and sisters through indentured labour or indentureship—they all provided a collective input, though under very difficult circumstances, to the development of this nation, Trinidad and Tobago.

We now have a regime that is totally intoxicated with power. They are just concerned with power. The flowery language dripping from the lips of the junior Minister in the Ministry of Finance, would never wipe away the rivers of tears that the people of this country, particularly the people of central and south Trinidad, who have had to be released as a result of a flawed and deficient policy of this regime.

Madam President, the junior Minister in the Ministry of Finance is an accountant by profession, and she and the PNM regime have taken an accounting approach. This is a balance sheet approach. All we are hearing from them is fire sale and garage sale; and they are going to auction this next week and next month. There is no plan for Caroni (1975) Limited. What we do know is that the PNM has an objective; they have a goal. I would demonstrate in my contribution this afternoon what this particular objective of the PNM is. They cannot fool the Opposition; they cannot fool the people of this country. They have a plan; they have a goal; and they have an objective.

What we have witnessed today is a Bill which represents a gigantic conspiracy in mass deception by a dangerous vicious and Mugabe-type administration, seeking to impose on this country, a new form of colonialism—this is aimed at, in a very undemocratic way, by appropriating and virtually seizing and grabbing large acreages of lands of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove National Estate.

I want to warn this regime that wars have been fought; revolutions have taken place; and blood has been spilled in many jurisdictions over land. [*Desk thumping*] I want them to note that. You cannot take the heritage of this society and this nation and put it under the Cabinet of the PNM, and a corrupt company called the EMBD—I will deal with that company in a short while—to administrate and manage the land distribution programme on behalf of the PNM.

Madam President, in the document that we have been provided with, and the Minister also made reference to this document which is: *Post Caroni (1975) Limited: A Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan*, I know that my colleague from Tobago, the hon. Minister of Local Government, is a person who understands planning. He understands what a development plan is. What we have here is an excuse. This is an administrative framework. Madam President, it is a sad day for this country when a Minister could come to this Parliament and table a report and tell this Parliament that this is a development plan with no financing mechanism and no implementation mechanism. There are only tables. In this report, the Government speaks to, what? The seven issues or 11 issues that they committed themselves to, in at least honouring insofar as the Caroni (1975) Limited workers are concerned, and this is a plan! This is a development plan!

Madam President, this regime has one objective. They want to perpetuate themselves in power; they want to use 80,000 acres of Trinidad and Tobago's lands in order to share them among their friends, families and close associates. So, here it is we have a heritage called Caroni (1975) Limited, in which 80,000 acres of land, including that of Orange Grove that should be allocated in a very comprehensive and organized way, via a development plan involving all the stakeholders—including the Opposition—to find a common consensus to transform Caroni (1975) Limited, and make the lands that belong to this company, into a kind of arrangement that the country can generally benefit from.

Madam President, we cannot depend on oil and gas and, therefore, this particular development offered a great opportunity for all of us to integrate, and to find consensus in developing a framework for the transformation of the lands belonging to Caroni (1975) Limited, which is lands belonging to the people of this nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, therefore, we cannot trust this Government. We saw in the last debate—Madam President, you were not here—where the Prime Minister appointed his own Commissioner of State Lands. There is a situation now where they have appointed a state enterprise that would be responsible for the management of these lands.



**Hon. Senator:** Which land?

**Sen. W. Mark:** We are talking about the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited; and all the undertakings of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove. This particular company that has to do so is headed by an alien, a foreigner, who has no respect for Trinidadians and Tobagonians.

**Sen. R. Montano:** Rao.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, I am calling on the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago, to conduct a forensic audit into the accounts of that company called the EMBD. There are too many reports of irregularities that have come to my attention involving that particular company. The gentleman who is in charge of that company seems to have a close link—because I understand he goes about the place boasting that he and Patrick are very close. He does not even refer to the “Prime Minister” as the Prime Minister. He refers to him as “Patrick”, and that he could do anything and nobody could touch him.

Madam President, I came from a trade union, and today that trade union is representing a worker at the Industrial Court of this country for sexual harassment by this particular individual. There are about five other cases that have been brought to our union’s attention. The Minister who is in charge of that company has been written to. She has correspondence from workers talking about the abuses that they have been subjected to by this alien from India—this foreigner who comes to this country and has no respect for Trinidadians and Tobagonians, particularly the women of this country. Nine secretaries have been changed in less than one year by this man. Nine secretaries! Madam President, do you know why? Every one that comes in, he wants sexual favours.

**Sen. Jeremie:** Madam President, the gentleman is not here with us and this is entirely out of order.

**Sen. W. Mark:** What is out of order? I want you to investigate it man! I am asking you to investigate it! Investigate it!

**Sen. R. Montano:** You could make accusation, but when we start making accusation we have to shut up.

**Madam President:** If the matter is before the court, which I think you started by saying—

**Sen. W. Mark:** I said that it is before the Industrial Court, and I was bringing to your attention a matter—

**Madam President:** Okay. If it is before the court—

**Sen. W. Mark:** Not the High Court; the Industrial Court.

**Madam President:** Okay, fair enough. I know that a member from the public cannot defend himself or herself in the Parliament. If you have an accusation that is made against a person that person cannot come back and defend himself. Senator, you have to be very careful of what you are saying.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am very careful and mindful of what I am saying.

**Sen. Jeremie:** On another point of order.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Listen, you should resign! You should resign boy!

**Madam President:** Senator!

**Sen. W. Mark:** You are involved in a conspiracy to remove the Chief Justice of this country. This Attorney General—

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark—

**Sen. W. Mark:** He should go! Resign!

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, if you continue like that, and when I am standing you continue to stand, I would be forced to take action.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Yes, Madam, that is your right. Were you on a point of order?

**Sen. Jeremie:** Yes, Madam. The Industrial Court is also a superior court of record, and it ought to be granted the same privileges—

**Sen. W. Mark:** “You come here with that foolishness again boy.” Madam President, we disposed of that.

**Madam President:** I made my ruling already, Sen. Mark. Would you continue?

**Sen. W. Mark:** Yes. Thank you. Madam President, the reason I am passionate about this thing is that I defend workers. I take strong objection to any worker being aggressed, and, particularly, women of this country, by a stranger. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, do you know what is important about this whole matter? This matter has been brought to the attention of Minister Christine Sahadeo.

**Sen. R. Montano:** That is true.

**Sen. W. Mark:** And Minister Christine Sahadeo has done nothing about it.

**Sen. R. Montano:** That is true. I know that too.

**Sen. W. Mark:** The Minister has done nothing about it.

**Sen. R. Montano:** That is true.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, I am asking the question: Is the Minister defending sexual harassment against women in this country? We want to know. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. D. Montano:** Madam President, on a point of order. Sen. Mark is quite right. None of us here would sanction that kind of behaviour, but you have already indicated that the matter is sub judice. He is really completely out of order. It has no place in this debate. If he wishes to bring a Motion to discuss that issue that is another story. This has nothing to do with this debate. I call upon you to insist on your ruling.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, get back to the matter under discussion.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, I am calling for a forensic audit by the Auditor General's Department into the operations of this company. How can we support legislation—we cannot—in which we are going to put into the hands of a stranger—Imagine, this land belongs to you and me. We have laboured, we have toiled and we have struggled on these lands, and they are putting 80,000 acres of land into the hands of a foreigner who is abusing our women.

Madam President, one of the functions that this man would have is to manage, to rent, to assign, to exchange and to lease lands. I want to ask you and my colleagues here that if he has a tendency and a “weakness for sweetness”, and he intends to harass people in the way that we have been told, Madam President, it is quite possible that we may have our lands being exchanged for sexual favours in the not-too-distant future. That is why we call for the resignation and removal of this Indian expatriate—some fellow called Rao. We want him out of the country!

Madam President, we do not believe that this man is capable of administering the affairs of Caroni (1975) Limited via this company, and we call for his removal. I call on the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to take action against this person. The Fraud Squad should be called in as it relates to this company as well. There are too many irregularities which we have learnt about with respect to this company, under the watch of this stranger. I am not going to allow “no” stranger into my house to rule me. I am an independent individual.

Madam President, through you, I want to ask: Where is the transparency? Where are the checks and balances? Where is the system of accountability to

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ensure that our lands are not given to friends, families and close associates of the PNM? This is a very dangerous piece of legislation that we have before us. We must act to protect the national interests as a Parliament. We cannot give the PNM that has demonstrated a capacity to abuse power, this kind of power to determine who will get land.

The junior Minister in the Ministry of Finance has indicated to us—and it is in this report as well, how the lands are going to be distributed. They have already determined that without our involvement as a Parliament. We represent the people of Trinidad and Tobago! How can you bring a fait accompli to us here in the Parliament, and tell us how much land you are going to distribute and to allocate to things like housing? The Minister of Housing and the National Housing Authority (NHA) has more power than this Parliament. The Land Settlement Agency seems to have more power than us in this Parliament.

We have been informed—and I would like the junior Minister of Finance, who was once interested in fighting Caroni Central, but now realizes that Caroni Central is not an easy place to fight, she has now travelled to Fyzabad—that my good friend, Conrad Enill, gone to Oropouche. “I do not know what the hell he is doing in Oropouche.” *[Laughter]* He said that he is going to fight in Oropouche.

**Madam President:** Senator—

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, I am sorry. I withdraw the word “hell”. That was a slip of the lip and the tongue. Madam President, that is what I heard. He is going to fight Oropouche. Well, Howard is the best one. Nothing for him; nothing for Howard. *[Laughter]* Madam President, this is a very serious matter that we are dealing with here. I honestly feel that unless there are fundamental changes to this legislation, including the regulations—regulations to be made by the Minister must be subject to an affirmative resolution of this Parliament. Any Order to amend the schedule must be subject to an affirmative resolution of this Parliament. Any matter that has to do with land distribution, you have to establish a bipartisan committee to deal with that question because of the sensitivity of that question. We cannot leave that in the hands of the PNM. We cannot! We do not trust the PNM. The PNM cannot be trusted. They have demonstrated a capacity to abuse power; to misuse power; and to attack some of the most independent institutions under our Constitution, including the Chief Justice of this country. *[Desk thumping]*

Madam President, I hear there is a radio station, which is now a political party—

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Is it 94.1?

**Sen. W. Mark:** The big owner of that station is a fellow called Mr. Louis Lee Sing. They have a campaign on, and this Attorney General who comes in this Parliament, whenever we raise an issue, is quick to jump on his legs and tell you, Madam President, the sub judice rule; we cannot talk. Madam President, you know, this particular radio station has been carrying a campaign for the last four weeks calling on the Chief Justice to resign and step down.

**Sen. R. Montano:** That is true.

**Sen. W. Mark:** They have a foreign voice on the air saying: “Why don’t you resign?”

**Sen. D. Montano:** How is that relevant to the debate?

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am saying that this is a situation in which we cannot trust you Danny. We cannot trust you with this land. I am showing you what has been happening over the last few years. I am saying that in the same way the Attorney General and your good self like to jump up on sub judice rule, I would like the Attorney General to tell i95.5 that this is a matter before a tribunal, and they should not be calling on the Chief Justice to resign. [*Desk thumping*] They should not be doing that.

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** Exactly.

**Sen. W. Mark:** He should not be doing that. There is a Grenadian fellow who is in charge of a programme on i95.5. I hear he escaped to fame. He murdered some little youth in 1990, but he is in charge of that programme.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, what does all of that have to do with this Bill before us? I would prefer if you did not bring the matter of the Chief Justice into any discussions.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, we are dealing with the question of trust, and we are saying that we cannot trust this regime, because it is capable of abusing power. It has demonstrated that capacity and, therefore, we cannot and will not support a Bill that will put into the hands of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, the power to determine whether on our 80,000 acres of lands they will put an aluminium smelter plant; whether they will give the lands to their friends to establish light and heavy manufacturing industries; whether they will put on Caroni (1975) Limited land commercial institutions and enterprises; and whether they will put houses on the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited that are owned by the people.

Madam President, we understand, and I would like the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to tell us, whether she is aware that some 1,500 acres of prime agricultural lands in Felicity have been allocated to the NHA for housing construction. I am talking about prime agricultural lands. So, whilst we are debating a Bill, action has already begun, in terms of land distribution. We are getting reports every day that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is allocating very hard terrain; difficult terrain in places like Montserrat—not in the island, right here in Central. They are offering Caroni (1975) Limited workers a maximum of two acres of land. Madam President, how can that be real farming? The minimum amount of land you need to farm should be at least five acres. Why are we distributing to Caroni (1975) Limited former workers only two acres of land? That is not viable. This tells us that the Government is not interested in agriculture.

In this particular document that has been made available to us, I must tell you that there are some contradictions in this document. The Minister told us in her presentation that we were only able to produce 42,838.25 tonnes of sugar. The reason for that had to do with bad weather conditions, labour unrest and poor sucrose content. On page 3 of the report, at paragraph 10, we are being told:

“...the transitional arrangements to a new mode of operations were considered to be less than adequate and SMCL in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources (MALMR) and Caroni engaged a number of private contractors to harvest sugarcane from Caroni’s land.”

So, on one hand, we are being told by the junior Minister in the Ministry of Finance, that weather conditions, labour unrest and sucrose content were partly responsible for the 42,838.25 tonnes, and in this so-called *Post Caroni (1975) Limited A Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan*, we are being told that the transitional arrangement to a new mode of operations was considered to be less than adequate. Who is right? Who is wrong? The right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. What is happening here? Madam President, I draw this to your attention and to the Minister’s attention so that she could understand some of the contradictions, at least, that one that I have pointed out to you.

**Madam President:** Would you give way?

**Sen. W. Mark:** Yes.

**Sen. Sahadeo:** Madam President, in this document it stated very clearly that what we did in order to assist was to engage a number of private contractors to harvest the sugar cane. So, it is in that regard that we talked about the transitional

arrangements. That is why arrangements were made where we allowed the farmers to also have access to the different equipment. It was in that light that comment was made. I think the hon. Senator seems to exclude that which is mentioned on page 3 at paragraph 10.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, may I continue? I would like to indicate very clearly that the Government is using the provision of this Bill—they have dismantled Caroni (1975) Limited to get at the Opposition, the United National Congress. This was a political decision on the part of the PNM. I will demonstrate to you that in many countries, and countries that have progressive governments—not vicious dictatorial types of governments; not governments that have a Mugabe kind of orientation. Mugabe has just removed a chief justice in that country as well. What I am saying is that the Government’s policy is one of greed. The Government’s only objective is to voter pad and to house pad. You cannot fool the UNC; you cannot fool the masses; and you cannot fool the sugar workers. “Nana is all over the place mamaguying sugar workers.”

Madam President, we heard about training. There was \$20 million put aside for training by this so-called caring Government for 10,000 workers. That boils down to \$2,000 or a little more, per worker, in terms of training. These are persons who have spent their entire life in the sugar industry, and who did not have an opportunity to get a proper secondary education. Would it not have been better for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to have a five-year transition?

**3.15 p.m.**

Why did you want to close the industry overnight? Why did the Prime Minister during the 18/18 scenario go to Woodford Square—and it is reported in the newspapers—tell the sugar workers that if the UNC does not help him elect a Speaker, he would close down Caroni (1975) Limited? That is what he said, it is in black and white in the newspapers. He said he would do for the Caroni workers, and so said so done. He did for the Caroni workers.

**Sen. D. Montano:** Madam President, the Prime Minister never made any kind of connection like that at all. He never said that at all.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am sorry I do not have the article with me.

**Sen. D. Montano:** That is just totally misleading and he must withdraw that statement. He must withdraw that statement.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am not withdrawing that. The Prime Minister went to Woodford Square and said that.

**Madam President:** Senator.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am not withdrawing that, no. I would go for it in the *Hansard*. You want me to do it now?

**Madam President:** Yes, I would like you to get the *Hansard*, because you cannot—

**Sen. W. Mark:** Would you allow me to go now?

**Madam President:** Sit a moment please. You cannot make accusations against the Prime Minister in this House, unless you have proof of what you are saying.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am telling you—

**Madam President:** In the meantime, I would suggest that you withdraw it until you have the proof.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Why must I withdraw it when I could bring it?

**Madam President:** I am asking you to withdraw it until you come with the proof.

**Sen. W. Mark:** So you want me to temporarily pause? Is that what you are saying? Temporarily pause until I get the proof?

**Madam President:** No. If you want to stop the contribution, let somebody else go on and then you continue afterwards with your proof, we can do that.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Would you give me the opportunity to speak when I get the proof?

**Madam President:** No, you would not have the time to speak.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Then why do you want to gag me? Madam President, I will abide by your ruling for the time being.

**Madam President:** Thank you very much.

**Sen. W. Mark:** But you will give me the privilege and opportunity of presenting to this Parliament the particular information, would you?

**Madam President:** [*Inaudible*]

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, it does not escape from the fact that the objective of the PNM is to house pad and to voter pad, that is what this whole thing is about. They are using the lands of the people in order to commit that act



of treachery against the people of this country. The PNM has no interest in agriculture. The poor, weak and challenged Minister, my friend, I know she means well, but she is just weak in this whole situation. In her heart she knows that this plan that she has tabled here and this Bill that is before Parliament will not provide the former sugar workers with any degree of salvation. She knows in her heart that the Bill she has presented here has no plan, no vision, no policy, insofar as the transformation of agriculture in this country is concerned.

The history of the PNM is clear, wherever we had prime agricultural lands, the PNM has put houses in those places. We only have to look at the Trincity housing estate, built on fertile arable lands, owned by Orange Grove National Company. The Diamond Vale housing development was also built on prime, arable, agricultural land. You would have read in the newspapers on Sunday, where the PNM is seeking, as they prepare the seat for Mrs. Manning, I understand it is quite in Arouca North.

Madam President, on page 10 of the *Sunday Guardian*, the headline reads:

"Bon Air farmers cry: Government grabbing our lands"

Wherever poor farmers are engaged in agricultural effort and endeavours, the Government is seeking to remove these farmers, in order to make way for housing. It happened in Ramgoolie Trace in Curepe, and they want to go after the farmers in Bon Air, people who have been living and working the lands for the last 40 years.

Madam President, I do not know if you are aware, there is a young farmer about 40 years, his name is Vishnu Soo. He has been working the land for the last 20 years, 100 acres of land, producing cabbage, tomatoes, paw paw and pineapples. You know what, the Estate Management Development Business Company went to this young man and told him, he can only obtain five acres to do his agricultural farming on. You could have given the chap a lease. If the man is farming and he is doing an excellent job to provide food on our tables, why would the Government want to excise 95 acres of land from him, and give it to whom?

We import today some \$2.3 billion worth of food. As Prof. Ken Julien said recently, we can no longer depend on energy and the energy sector, we have to diversify our economy, and I thought that this particular exercise involving the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited—which we never supported; we supported the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited, not the closure. The Sugar Manufacturing

Company—which I want to come to, which has replaced Caroni (1975) Limited, more or less—is engaged in a form of slavery, under the watchful eye of the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of this country.

The Bill before us, as you would see, in clause 15, the Minister seeks to exempt provisions of the Industrial Relations Act (IRA), sections 47 and 48. They said it shall not apply to the Sugar Manufacturing Company. Why, Madam President? Why they do not want these provisions of the Act to be applicable to this particular industry? You know why? The PNM has been engaged in contract labour. They are viciously exploiting the workers at the CEPEP level. If you see these women today, their skin colour has changed, three different skin colours on one human body, and the reason for that is the blazing heat between the hours of 10.30 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. These people have no protection, no safety and no first aid equipment, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the ILO. They are supposed to be upholding peoples' labour rights, the workers' rights and they are viciously exploiting our women in the way that they are doing.

The reason they are doing that is because they do not want these workers to have trade unions, and this is why in sections 47 and 48 of the IRA, these sections deal with terms and conditions of a collective agreement, and they do not want the workers—who are now employed via independent contractors—to actually be involved in trade union organization. We are having a grave difficulty with the approach that the regime has taken on this particular matter. We believe that the Government is going to use this Bill, without our support. We shall not be giving support to any legislation that will give this Government the kind of power to determine how our national heritage shall be, at least, administered. We want a bi-partisan team established to oversee the development, the distribution and the transformation of the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited.

We want maximum transparency and accountability. We want checks and balances, which we have not seen in this particular piece of legislation. The Minister under clause 7 may, by Order, amend the First Schedule. What is the First Schedule, Madam President? Let us go to the First Schedule of this Bill. The Minister has the power to alter this schedule, all the right, title, claim or interest of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove National in all their real estate holdings whatsoever and wheresoever situated. This is too much power in the hands of one Minister. He or she is not accountable to this Parliament.

Madam President, we are talking about 80,000 acres of land that belong to the people. The PNM does not have a mandate to distribute that land in the way that

they want to distribute it. Two hundred and eighty-five thousand people voted for the United National Congress, about 300,000 voted for the PNM. You do not have a mandate to do this kind of thing. We are saying that in the interest of democracy, to avoid bloodshed in this land, we want to propose that under clause 7 of this Bill that an amendment be made. The Minister may, by Order, subject to an affirmative resolution of Parliament, amend the Schedule.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Madam President, I thank the Senator for giving way. I just want to be clear on what the Senator is saying; that if we do not accept the amendment, there would be bloodshed in this country? Is that what you are saying? I just want to be clear.

**Sen. W. Mark:** No, no, no, no. I am saying that the rate you are going in this country, the attacks that you are waging against the people, they can only take so much, Sen. Dr. Saith. At the end of the day if you do not accede to our request and the people request for justice, equality and fair play, there would come a time when people would take action.

**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. S. Baksh*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. W. Mark:** I find that was a slow, slow—stretch, is it you?

**Hon. Senator:** [*Inaudible*]

**Sen. W. Mark:** No, no, you are my friend, you could do me anything, I could understand you. I would like the hon. Minister to let us know what is the status of the pension plan, she did mention some aspects of it. Madam President, I want to bring to your attention, even though the Government offered the workers an enhancement package, do you know what is the average take home severance that workers got? With all the fanfare they brought legislation to up the retrenchment severance maximum from \$100,000 to \$300,000 without tax, I was told by the union representing these workers that the average was between \$36,800 and \$60,000, that is for the daily-rated workers.

Madam President, you know what workers are now in receipt of, in terms of pension? Some are getting as much as \$11.54 a month, the highest is about \$934 even though the Government has made a commitment through the Hospedales

Committee, which recommended to the Cabinet and the Minister of Finance, that they go up to \$1,000 for these daily-rated workers. We understand from reliable sources, that a note was taken to the Cabinet and the Minister of Finance proposed instead of \$1,000, \$650 per worker, that is what we have been told. Maybe the Minister in the Ministry of Finance could tell me I am wrong.

**Hon. Senators:** "Yuh wrong."

**Sen. W. Mark:** Well, could the hon. Minister of Finance indicate what is the maximum amount agreed to by the Cabinet in terms of pension for daily-rated workers in the sugar industry? Would he want to tell us that? No, he would not want to tell us that, but he could say I am wrong, it is easy to say I am wrong.

**Hon. Senator:** "If yuh wrong, yuh wrong."

**Sen. W. Mark:** No, I am right on this one, which is why you are silent. *[Interruption]* No, I am saying that, that is a proposal before you. How can we put the management aspect of our lands into the hands of a company that has no expertise in land use? They do not understand land use policies, they do not understand land development, they do not engage in land planning, they do not know, but we are going to—through the Cabinet—put into the hands of some Estate Management Business Development Company the administration of some 80,000 acres of land. How can we do that? If they do not have the expertise, how would they know how to zone, how would they know what to allocate to agriculture, to industrial and commercial development? I am suggesting that the bulk of the Caroni land must be reserved for agricultural development. *[Interruption]* That is not a plan, that is just numbers, Lenny, and I mean to say, you are an old engineer man; "oh gawd" man.

**Madam President:** Please.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Oh, sorry ma'am. He is telling me that is a plan, he knows that is not a plan, it is an excuse for a plan. I am saying that the Minister in the Ministry of Finance has failed this Parliament today. She has failed to provide us with a visionary policy of the PNM for the transformation of these 80,000 acres of land, particularly in the area of agricultural development for Trinidad and Tobago. All we have is just numbers and auction sale.

I want to remind the hon. Minister, the property of Caroni (1975) Limited belongs to the people of this country, you just cannot be going about the place selling out our estates. They are just giving away our estates. We find that is alarming, we cannot support that. Then there is an elite security service that is

under the control of this company called the EMBDC and they go about all over the island where Caroni has land, viciously destroying people's property.

The people are planting stretch cabbage and tomatoes. They are planting food for the country and this man who is a stranger to this country, who is in charge of that particular company, issues instructions to a security firm called the Elite Security Services and they go all over cutting down people's trees. I saw people in tears, this is a stranger and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance encourages that.

**Sen. Sahadeo:** Madam President, I would like to make a point in this Parliament. When that was done in December, albeit several notices were presented to the farmers, I, myself had a meeting with the Chairman of the Board, when we kindly asked them that they should have desisted given the time of year, et cetera, and we asked them again, that before such acts occurred, to at least allow the farmers to reap their produce. But again they indicated, that they have given written notices on several occasions. And that is why I thought when I made the comment that at the end of July, the former employees would have their agricultural land, we would not have this problem. As a matter of fact, we have to ensure that people comply with rules. Again, let me say that it was not condoned by this Minister, albeit that they did not comply, certainly the board has been advised that in future—

**Sen. R. Montano:** Did you sanction that report or did you condone it?

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, that is the point I am making. I am saying that the Minister never took action to condemn the activity of that vicious stranger, who is in charge of our company.

**Sen. R. Montano:** That is the point. Rao has you around his little finger, you are afraid of him.

**Sen. Sahadeo:** [*Inaudible*]

**Sen. R. Montano:** You ought to be afraid of me.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, I want to tell you and this honourable Senate that the United National Congress—it is a matter of time. We are going to review every policy decision taken by this administration, as it relates to the destruction of Caroni (1975) Limited. We want to let you know, Madam President, that the policy position that they have pursued is wrong. The UNC's intention at all times was to keep Caroni (1975) Limited, but in a restructured form. Many detractors on that side peddled the view that the UNC wanted to close

down Caroni (1975) Limited. They cannot produce—as Sen. Danny Montano was indicating a short while ago—one shred of evidence. No Cabinet note they can bring before you or before this honourable Chamber showing where the UNC government took a decision to close down Caroni (1975) Limited, yet still, this particular piece of misinformation is being peddled all the time by the PNM.

We had a plan, our plan involved growth and not contraction. We recognized that the sugar industry faced a lot of challenges. We were prepared to subsidize the sugar industry and over a 5-year period we were going to establish subsidiary companies, one for citrus production; one for beef and dairy production; and one for rum production. We were going to establish about seven to eight subsidiaries under a holding company called Caroni (1975) Limited. We invited the private sector to participate in this process, and when Colonial Life Financial decided to get involved in the rum distillery business, the PNM went on a campaign to tell the country that rum stock at the rum distillery was worth over \$1 billion.

I would like the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to tell this Parliament what is the value of the rum stock, because the Leader of the Opposition then, said along with Raffique Shah and Lawrence Maharaj, that the value of the rum stock was over \$1 billion. All that was part of a campaign of misinformation to mislead the country. Now they are in charge, but not for long, they are in charge temporarily. No dictator lasts forever, they always collapse, they always fall.

Madam President, I wanted to let you know, because I do not want you or anyone to go away with the feeling that the United National Congress had no plan for Caroni (1975) Limited. We had a plan to transform Caroni (1975) Limited. We had a plan to grow Caroni (1975) Limited. We had a plan to develop companies at the subsidiary level and giving each subsidiary a particular area of responsibility, but we did not get the opportunity. We thought that the PNM would have taken this bright idea and run with it, but you know what, they had no intentions of doing so. Like Napoleon, you are going to meet your Waterloo. You feel that you are all powerful like the Attorney General today, who is always in a book looking to say who is wrong and who is right, that is all he does here, go through the Standing Orders all the time. Whenever I am speaking, he reads through the Standing Orders to see where he could stop me. I want this man to return to the university. *[Interruption]* I afraid who? I have no fear for him, nothing. *[Interruption]* Book? No, I “ain't” care about book. The only lady I have some concerns about, is my friend, the President, whom I respect as well.

**Madam President:** I see you withdrew the word "respect"? [*Laughter*]

**Sen. W. Mark:** Respect ma'am, you know you are my great friend and you know I respect you. You know sometimes we have exchanges, but I respect you at the end of the day.

Madam President, I want to tell the hon. junior Minister, that she is going to be the fall guy in this whole scenario. Not Lenny, not the Attorney General, because he has a work back at the faculty of law, where he came from, he is going right back there shortly.

Madam President, as I started I would like to end. I do not believe that the Bill presented this afternoon offers this country and this Parliament any hope of transformation. It is almost like a disconnected arrangement, it is a Government operating on the basis of "vaps". They have no vision, no direction, no purpose, no interest in the transformation of Trinidad and Tobago. All this Government is interested in, is like Botha in South Africa, the only difference this time, is that they want to use African people to oppress Indian people in this country, that is what they are about. They are about oppression of the Indian population.

**Sen. D. Montano:** Madam President, that is just so ridiculous, that he must withdraw it.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, you should not end your contribution by saying something like that.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I feel strongly about it, I see it every day. I am ashamed of the PNM.

**Madam President:** I really think you should withdraw that statement.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Withdraw what, ma'am?

**Madam President:** About using Africans to suppress Indians.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am of the view and it is an opinion. I have an opinion and a right to express an opinion. It is an opinion I feel strongly about, that the PNM regime—

**Sen. D. Montano:** Madam President—

**Sen. W. Mark:** I would not repeat it.

**Sen. D. Montano:** Madam President, on a point of order, that is totally improper, totally improper, completely out of order.

**Sen. W. Mark:** If for instance the Minister feels strongly about it, he has a chance to reply. However, it is my view, I feel a certain way.

**Madam President:** All right, your time is up. [*Interruption*] Please, please. As the Senator has said, he has expressed an opinion, it is not what we agreed to, but it is very difficult to rule him as being—[*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. D. Montano:** Regardless of his views, he should not say that.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, I would like to thank you very much for allowing me to speak and to speak frankly and fearlessly, and that is where I will always be. Once you are President and I am here, I give you one guarantee, no Attorney General, no PNM—

**Madam President:** All right Senator, your time is up.

**Sen. W. Mark:** No Attorney General, no PNM will intimidate me in terms of making my contribution.

Thank you very much.

**3.45 p.m.**

**Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, we live in very depressing times, and I cannot help but feel that many of the evils and many of the oppressive things in our society have to do with a breakdown of our ways of living, and feeling, and thinking, and being with one another; have to do with our relationship to the land. And that is why this particular debate is of such national importance.

Madam President, young people—I have to call them young people—in their 40s, keep ringing me up and saying: “You are sitting in the Parliament every week, tell me why I should not leave this country”. Ten years ago, I would have said to them: “You belong to the land and the land belongs to you, and even though people may trouble you, place does not trouble you, do not let anyone drive you out of here”.

Madam President, I cannot tell that to strangers, and I cannot tell it to my children. I would love to see them come back here; I want my grandchildren around me too, but I cannot advise young people who have jobs overseas to stay here. One of the reasons I cannot advise them to stay here, is that, there is a breakdown in our relationship to our place and I want to relate that breakdown in our relationship in our place to a breakdown in our respect for agriculture.



There are lots of other things that arise from the breakdown in agriculture but, I just want to get that perspective in place and I hope to get it off my chest and try to proceed in a patient and undistressed manner. According to the Minister, the Bill represents a key aspect of Government's strategy for the effective management and use of the nation's land in keeping with the principles of sustainable development. It sounds very good, Madam President, "effective management and use of the nation's land in keeping with the principles of sustainable development". So, I agree with this, and I want it, but I have not seen anything in the actions of the Government or in the Minister's presentation, to show that this is what they are really doing.

We are told about an Inter-Agency Land Use Planning Team—I call them the "sucrose worriers"—who were appointed in January, 2004 and reported in 2004. Their report and recommendations were accepted by the Cabinet. I have not seen the report. I saw no account of it in the newspapers, but there is this "ghost" team going to Germany and other places, I suppose, the Inter-Agency Land Use Planning Team, who were appointed in January, 2004. What are their qualifications? What qualifications and experience do they have, that they can in a few months, present a report whose recommendations are fully accepted for the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited and the use of Caroni (1975) Limited lands? In nine months they can produce such a report? I would like to know these people. The Inter-Agency Land Use Planning Team, I would like to know them.

Later on, the Minister said that the development of Caroni (1975) Limited lands should be determined by the Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning and Development, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act, Chap. 35:01, which came into effect in 1969, about 36 years ago.

So, Madam President, we have a strategy for the effective management and use of the nation's land in keeping with the principles of sustainable development, based upon an Act of 1969, and fired by brilliant work completed in a short time by the Inter-Agency Land Use Planning Team. If they want to convince anybody that they are serious about the development of land in this country, they should bring to the Parliament the Planning and Development of Land Bill [*Desk thumping*] which is, and ought to be the blueprint for the development of the whole country. Do not isolate Caroni (1975) Limited and say this is our plan for Caroni (1975) Limited, and do not come with a putrid little plan like this anyway.

In this very Parliament I reported on a plan for the Orange Grove Estate, a very detailed plan which could have served as a model for the development of

agricultural land in Trinidad and Tobago. The newspapers did not mention it; the radio did not mention it; no one over there heard it; I do not know if they were sleeping. I wish the television had been here, so that I could have said that, so that the people of Trinidad and Tobago could know that there are individuals in Parliament who care about where this country is going but, whose voices are not being heard. So the people do not know that there are other points of views; the people are not encouraged to think in the way I know they are thinking. They say well, yes, if no one in Parliament said that, well, I suppose that is the right thing.

Madam President, where is the Planning and Development of Land Bill? That is one of the strands in what one would require. We need—any plan for Caroni (1975) Limited; any plan for Orange Grove; any plan for Chatham has to be seen in relation to an overall blueprint for the whole country. I am quite fanatical about an overall plan for the whole country, not only to do with land. I have said it, and I suppose people think it is crankish, that this country which is suffering from crime; suffering from bad transportation; suffering from a lack of local government; suffering from a lack of a sense of belonging to communities; this country is a small country, and it is easy to govern, if you divided it up into 10 regions or 12 regions or whatever; and place in each region the appropriate institutions, schools, major hospitals, fire brigade; shape up an internal system of internal transport with links to get outside of the region, zoning, so that you would know that cars that come out of region A, would have A on their number plates; region B, would have B; it is a whole plan for the regional development in the country.

In the Cedros area, there is coconut and fishing and those are the industries that we wish to encourage down there; we would invest our money there. We will cut out a lot of the commuting; people do not have to leave there and come to town to work and go back home late in the night. People will be living in their communities, they will get to know one another better, Madam President. The Planning and Development of Land Bill, would have to be accompanied by a plan for the regional development of the whole country and, equally, the appropriate development for the regions.

I am very disturbed when we get little piecemeal items: we are doing this down in Chatham; we are doing that down in Caroni. When you protest in Chatham, they say people are not so important. Do we really need money from an aluminium smelter? We boast about the amount of gas and oil. Are we so desperate that we have to go down to Chatham and displace 3,000 persons and destroy 2,000 acres of land for an aluminium smelter; for what; for whom? In

addition, Madam President, to the need for an overall development plan for the whole country, we need an overall development plan for agriculture.

Madam President, I have a sound colonial education and I am proud of it. I did Latin, I did Greek texts in translation, I did French, I did Geography and so on, and I did a lot of Literature. I had teachers who used to speak properly. Every now and then when I am disturbed about things, I go back—well I cannot manage it in the Latin anymore—I go back to the translations and I read Vergil, I go back and I read Caesar, I go back and I read the Latin poets and so on, and you would be amazed, Madam President, by the amount of stuff about agriculture that the Latin poets produced. I mentioned Vergil. He wrote the *Eclogues*. He was like many of us, he was displaced; he lost land; his father lost land, and he wrote a set of poems called the *Eclogues*, in which a fellow got back his land. So, he was celebrating, fantasizing about getting back his land.

Then he went and wrote the *Georgics*, a virtual handbook for agriculture and bee keeping, et cetera. Beautiful poetry, and very practical. I think that all civilizations that are worthy of the name civilization, have recognized the connection between agriculture and culture and between the evolution of a civilization and agriculture. After the last ice age and up to around 6000 BC, it was agriculture which provided the basis for what we call civilization, by slowly selecting hybrid strains of grain-bearing grasses, which in turn made possible increased populations with specialized functions, made possible the division of labour and large, stored food supplies. In this direction, lies the origin of wealth, leisure, the keeping of records. Having control over plant and animal food supplies, man enters into a new phase of social development, in which he can even begin to forget the premises of the developments in which he is involved. Having control over plant and animal food supplies, is the basis for the development of a society and the evolution of a civilization, Madam President.

And off the Internet, just playing around, I tagged on to “Food Supply” and I came across:

“Food and its supply is still one of the great matters of concern to the world today. The shortage of agricultural products is still the weak link in most of the world, and it is so easy to forget, in America where war machinery, electronic gadgetry, the new computer technology, and locomotion, are considered our passport to civilization, that the food producing areas of Florida, California and the great farming Midwest still provide and by export, supply much of the world with products having the greatest dollar value of any economic venture.”

So, even that big massive artificial civilization can go and perpetrate all its deeds all over the world because they can feed themselves, and they can sell food to the rest of the world. They have agriculture.

You want to conquer the world. You want to capture Venezuela? Develop agriculture. You want to take Grenada? Develop agriculture. It is the basis, Madam President. So an overall plan for agriculture seems to me to be a proper background and a necessity. Before we can look microscopically at Caroni (1975) Limited or Orange Grove, I want the large plan; I want the broad vision; I want the context in which these things are to operate. Those are the two elements of my preface, Madam President. I now want to go to the Bill itself, and I think there are four main features in it.

The first is to transfer the lands held by Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove to the State—I am in favour of that. I do not think there is much to be debated there. It is quite unexceptionable—and to allow the State to determine its use for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago. The question is: How will that be done? How is the State readying itself? How is the State prepared to determine land use for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago? Will the State—who or what is the State, Madam President? By what process of consultation is the State going to arrive at its decisions about how to develop land? So, although I have no problems with transferring the lands to the State, I have questions, which will come up later. By what process will the State determine the way things should develop?

The second element in the Bill is to enable the Estate Management and Business Development Company (EMBD) to manage the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove National Company Limited. So, it is a management company, but it is an Estate Management and Business Development Company. Although this company is referred to in the Bill as the “Manager” let us not forget that this is a business development company also, and that worries me. To “stimulate and facilitate economic activity in certain areas, through the establishment of light manufacturing estates, agricultural estates, housing projects, and commercial complexes”. The EMBD is going to stimulate and facilitate economic activities in certain areas, and it is going to concentrate on light manufacturing estates, agricultural estates, housing projects, and commercial complexes.

Agriculture is one of four, and we have to wonder how decisions will be arrived at with respect to the balance among the four. I will come to that as we go along, Madam President.

The third element, I notice, is the vesting of certain operational assets of Caroni (1975) Limited in the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited; a company that is formed to undertake processing and refining activities. The Sugar Manufacturing Company is going to get cane—to buy it from farmers—and it will then process the cane to produce raw sugar and then refine the sugar. It is going to turn cane into sugar and then refine the sugar; that is all it is going to do. I do not know if the farmers do not like the price, what is going to happen? Will they suffer like the coconut growers, when the CGA does not buy the copra? Are they going to suffer like the citrus growers when the citrus cooperatives do not buy the copra?

**Hon. Senators:** Citrus.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Citrus yes. You think they might send some donkey cart by *The Cat* to import raw cane from Guyana, if the farmers are not growing it? The cane farmers are going to be at the mercy of this company and one could have the apprehension—which may not become as cynical as a suspicion—that somewhere down the road something will break down and the farmers are going to say we are not growing cane anymore and that is the end. The refining company will then have to import all its raw sugar for refining.

Now a curious thing is, that before this, we had the establishment of Rum Distributors of Trinidad and Tobago. The factory, or the refining process, or the downstream process is now split in two. We have one company refining the sugar, and the other one dealing with the rum. I do not know how that is going to work. For years, I have been a defender of the sugar industry. I have pointed out in this House, that the sweet drink manufacturers and the makers of cakes, get the sugar at a reasonable price and Caroni (1975) Limited is responsible for keeping sweet drinks and cakes in operation; it is responsible for a lot of employment out there. Caroni (1975) Limited is producing the molasses.

I have said in this House and I will say it again, that Caroni (1975) Limited Rum Distillery Operations were deliberately underdeveloped; they were sabotaged to allow other people to make money off rum. So, when you come and say Caroni (1975) Limited is going bust, it is because you are taking away the best part of Caroni (1975) Limited. They have to sell the sugar at a subsidised rate to manufacturers of soft drinks and cakes, etc, who are benefiting from it. Okay, this is helping to provide employment in those areas; so remember that we owe Caroni (1975) Limited that. And the rum side, well you know, it is rum till I die in this place.

Madam President, we are not stupid people; we have people with a lot of intelligence and a lot of skill in this country. Every time I want a bottle of rum I have to buy El Dorado 15 year old, I wonder why. Why is there no Trinidad rum I could drink, instead of El Dorado rum, when my posh friends are coming home?

**Sen. Dr. McKenzie:** What happen to Royal Oak?

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Royal Oak is a joke; El Dorado 15 is the best rum in the world. Why can we not produce rum of that quality? Madam President, I think that we have underdeveloped our rum production. I think the Government did it for spite, and we do not pay sufficient tribute to Caroni (1975) Limited for the way in which it has assisted other industries to make profits and provide employment.

When people are making calculations about Caroni (1975) Limited, apart from the fact that there are people living on the land; people having a relationship with the land and so on, apart from that, when we calculate we do not calculate the economic benefits of Caroni (1975) Limited fairly. So when we say Caroni (1975) Limited produces sugar at 1.4 per cent more than other Caribbean islands, what is .4 per cent? What does that mean? If we produce at 1.4 per cent more than St. Kitts; think of our standard of living. Think of the quality of life here; the little bit more it cost us to produce it; it is not changing the price of rice. I do not feel that because it is 1.4 per cent more than the rest of the Caribbean that is a good reason to knock our sugar producing facilities.

Madam President, I have great misgivings about the dismantling of the sugar industry and its fragmentation into parts that could eventually lead to the final death of sugar cane growing in this country.

**Sen. D. Montano:** Madam President, just on a point of correction. What I heard the Minister say was that it did not cost 1.4 per cent more than St. Kitts it is 1.4 times the cost of St. Kitts, which is 40 per cent more, not 1.4 per cent.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Sorry. I beg your pardon. I stand corrected, 1.4 times more. That is fine. Thank you. I do not think it changes my argument [*Laughter*] because, 1.4 per cent as I mistakenly said, would be much less, so I would have been contradicting myself.

So, Madam President, as I said, I do have misgivings and a bias with respect to the growing of sugar cane and the retention of agricultural lands. I am very distressed when I see people being displaced, and traditions being dissipated, and the crime pool being enlarged; all being done in pursuit of profits. It is a purely

economistic argument that determines that we should stop this thing. And you cannot—this is an old debate—make those decisions in a purely economistic way.

I want to have a little fun referring to a Latin poet called Cato who was the son of a farmer. Cato wrote a book about agriculture called *De Re Rustica*. He was an odd man; he opposed all forms of luxury and wealth which were then invading Italy; constantly admonishing Romans to return to the simple rural mode of life, which had characterized the great days of the Republic.

Sometimes when I start to make noises about the American invasion, I say what boy, Cato, you anticipated me. Cato was worried that Italy was being invaded by the foreign culture and its materialistic values. His constant warnings against Carthage epitomized in the phrase that “Carthage is being destroyed” may have been spurred by his professional knowledge of some of the advanced techniques in agriculture which that city was promoting. Cato said look, you see all those combine harvesters you all are bringing, they are going to destroy agriculture. Let us keep up with our intermediate technology; let us make a connection between the hand and the work; let us respect work and labour. The place is being destroyed, you are killing the work ethic and you are killing the organic relationship between people and place.

Again, he is my boy; throughout life he opposed the introduction of the Greek language to Rome, fearing it would debilitate their moral fibre. I do not like our children learning “Americanese”.

#### **4.15 p.m.**

Cato’s book called *De Re Rustica* has about 80 pages and describes everything that would be of importance to a person owning or managing a farm in Italy: the location of the farm, meadows, woodlots, water supply, selection of foreman and workers to do the manual chores, farm machinery, wagons, draft animals and olive presses. Since for Cato, the main aim of running a farm was to produce a profit, he gave suggestions about getting rid of workers who were old or weak and hiring free men for hard jobs, since free men work harder than slaves. The commentator on the Internet said:

“Nothing escapes the mean eye of Cato...”

Who reminds me very much of the Government.

“a Roman Scrooge with a strong predilection for effective minor-league Capitalism, whatever the human cost.”

I think that is what is happening in Chatham; that is what is going to happen in Caroni and this is what is happening throughout this country: we are killing agriculture, because we are minor league capitalists who want to make a profit whatever the human cost. If we forget people, if we forget patterns of settlement, if we forget community, if we forget social capital and operate on purely economic grounds, we will get the kind of planning for agriculture, I am sorry to say, that successive governments have displayed.

Apart from the human argument, I wonder if we have really looked at the sugarcane industry with our own eyes. What the plans have shown is that they do not have any quarrel with the refining process or the making of rum, the problem lies in the field operations, the actual planting and reaping of cane. That is what they want to cut down. That is a technical problem. In a country like this, one would call all soils potentially class one soil: anything can grow anywhere. If you have good agricultural scientists, anything can grow anywhere. Of course, we do not want to grow things on the beach; we do not want to make it hard for ourselves, so it is good to know that it would be harder here, easier there and so on. The whole business of classification—this is class one, this is class two—I am coming to more of that in a moment—I am not too happy with it.

Given that people know we have a short, intense growing season for the cane, because our dry season has a bit of rain and our rainy season is so wet, we then have to protect against the drought and the excessive rain. You know you have to do that, otherwise the quality of the cane you produce is not going to be very high, so that is where you direct your attention, to those field operations, where you anticipate drought and prepare for it and you anticipate floods and prepare for that. To me it is simple; maybe it is because I am not a farmer that it seems simple to me, and also because I am not the Government. It seems to me that our practices, like most of the practices in this country: in education, culture and everywhere, are based upon the wrong inherited models and practices. We are still doing deep tillage for sugar cane. Cuba abandoned that in the 1930s. Deep tillage is making the soil poorer. We are insisting on full mechanization when there are machines that cannot go where cane can grow.

Year after year, since 1996, I have come here and talked about small being beautiful, and about intermediate technology: a way in which you combine technology with manual labour in small countries. Sometimes when I am cutting grass with my whacker I get vexed, throw it down, take a cutlass and do a little by hand. The machine cannot do everything, but we seem to think that we have to totally mechanize.



There is a beautiful passage in a novel by Samuel Selvon which tells about a combined harvester being brought and parked up on a sugar estate. This particular man, every time he passed by it, brooded. By about the fifth day, a Friday, he went to a rum shop and charged up and when everyone was asleep he went to the combined harvester with his “gilpin” and said, “You have come to take away work; you have come to destroy the village; you have come to change our lives; you have come to spoil everything; do you want to fight?”. The man fought that combined harvester for the whole night. The cutlass turned into pieces of wire in his hands, so there were blisters and so on. He was so good with the cutlass that he smoked while he was fighting, like Zorro or the three musketeers; exhausted, he fell asleep. When he awoke in the morning, the harvester had burned to the ground. The cigarette had fallen out of his hand and burned the harvester, so he won the battle. The passion people feel about agriculture is going. I feel we have to go back to that and recognize the threat of the machine.

There are certain economic remedies to the deficiencies in the field operations which we have not tried. We have not tried them, because we remain stuck with inherited models and practices and we are not looking around us and seeing what kind of soil we have, what kind of land we have, what kind of people we have and what kind of capabilities we have. You cannot tell me that we cannot grow sugar cane successfully in this country at a reasonable price; I refuse to believe it. Madam President, mark my words, one day we are going to be importing all our sugar and we would start to lament: “I am sorry about what we did to the sugar industry”. Maybe the soil would have remained fallow for long enough and when I become Prime Minister, I would order sugar cane to be grown again.

Madam President, I have two more items to look at. One of them has to do with clause 10, the powers of the manager. Let me put it crudely and I hope you will not ask me to withdraw it: I am worried that the Estate Management and Business Development Company (EMBD) would be just like UDeCOTT. *[Interruption]* What is that?

**Sen. Mark:** An uncontrollable animal; that is what it is! *[Laughter]*

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** We are now doing for the rural side, through EMBD—*[Interruption]*—“Dont talk so man; you will give me the kiss of death. They wont listen to me if you agree with me.” *[Laughter]*

I have my criticisms of the way in which UDeCOTT is developing the urban landscape. I think the whole dockside is going to be a piece of Toronto that we are building and a lot of the derivative planning of our city has nothing to do with any

knowledge or our geography, prevailing winds and temperature. I will leave that for another time. I am just worried that the EMBD will be a law unto itself.

**Sen. Mark:** It is already a law unto itself.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** The Minister went to great lengths in her presentation to assure us that it would not be a law unto itself. She said that first of all it would not be exempt from the application of legislation, regulation and policies which are applicable to the use and development of lands in Trinidad and Tobago. The question is: Where are the legislation, regulation and policies? We do not have them anywhere. They might be in about 20 different places. This takes me back to our planning and development of land. So while it is good to say that the EMBD will not be exempt from that, we have not put that in place.

The Minister also said that clause 10(6) requires EMBD to collaborate with the various institutions involved in the process of land use and development to ensure compliance with policies regarding land use and capability, environmental protection and enhancement, infrastructure and maintenance, and economic use. That means the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Town and Country Planning, the EMA, everybody—the EMBD is to collaborate with the various institutions involved. Frankly, I do not believe that would happen. I do not believe that we are organized enough for that to happen; that is not the practice in this country; it does not happen.

The requirement for real estate undertakings to be prescribed under clause 10(5) of the Bill means that the EMBD must have the prior sanction of the Cabinet before managing any real estate undertaking. Prior sanction—well, they have already been told, “You do this,” that is prior sanction. So what does prior sanction mean? At what stage is prior? Does prior mean that I tell the multinational, “You can come here and grow aniseed for a peppercorn rate in perpetuity and set up your own little colony and later on you could start importing wines and do whatever you like inside there behind those tall trees.” When EMBD makes a contract like that with a foreign company or investor, is that the point at which it would go to the Cabinet and ask, “Could you approve of this?” “I need your sanction.” [*Interruption*]

**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. Dr. E. McKenzie*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam President:** Hon. Senator, you have 15 minutes more which you will take when we return from tea. This Senate is now suspended; we will return at 5.00 p.m.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Madam President, before the break I was looking at the ways in which the hon. Minister suggested that the EMBD would not be a law unto itself; I would like to continue with that. She spoke about the EMBD collaborating with the various institutions. My suggestion is that we do not have the kind of organizations that would make for such collaboration. She also said that it must have prior sanction of the Cabinet. I wanted to know at what point the “prior” takes place. If a deal has been cut with a foreign investor, would Cabinet, at that stage, be willing to block it or is it likely to block it? The Minister also said that clause 10(3) prohibits EMBD from executing any legal instruments without the necessary approval of Cabinet and it is the same point. Is Cabinet likely to disapprove at that late stage?

This other point is really not the Minister's fault; it happens with lots of other bills, but to me it has always been an absurdity: she said that Parliament will be informed on an annual basis of the land transactions undertaken by the manager. In the first instance, the manager is required to report to the Minister on all transactions within three months after the end of each year and, thereafter, the Minister would lay that report in Parliament within three months of the date of receipt of the report of the manager. What can Parliament do after nine months? It is true that Parliament would be informed on an annual basis, but it would be nine months after the event. I am not satisfied that the EMBD can be prevented from being a law unto itself and I have to be cynical, I am afraid that the EMBD may be so intent upon business development and so focused upon profits, that it would go for enterprises that have little connection with agriculture and it may impinge upon more and more agricultural land in their business projects. Worst of all, they are going to land themselves with contracts with foreign investors on leases that are so long that all of us would be dead and we would feel that those people have freehold. *[Interruption]* Do not laugh; Tobago is going the same way.

**Hon. Senator:** Not a bit; no way.

**Sen. Dumas:** Madness to the highest extreme!

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** I would insist that any leases to foreign investors for any agricultural project or any project on Caroni lands should have a limited time span: 10 years. We would look at it again after 10 years; but a maximum of 10 years.

You would think I have a thing against the French people who are growing aniseed; I do. Week after week I keep referring to it and neither side takes me on. There is so much conspiracy going on in this place. [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*] Why are people not taking me on about the lease that is given to Pernod Ricard? [*Laughter*] I want to know the truth behind it.

**Sen. Dumas:** Give us the information and let us look at it.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** We want to know who bought the Non Pareil Estate for \$2.2 million. [*Interruption*]

**Sen. King:** Maybe we can ask the Minister.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources knows; he said it in the Lower House.

Madam President, I really have misgivings about the functions and functioning of the EMBD. [*Interruption*]

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** I heard you ask the question and I thought that I should tell you that if you want to find out ask Sen. Mark about the Non Pareil Estate.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Did I call the right price?

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** I think you called the right price; you could ask him who he sold it to. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** One thing with me, when I ask a question I do not know the answer. [*Laughter*] I know it is a rule that you must know the answer before you ask.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** It is better that you ask it, rather than Sen. Mark. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Madam President, all that is injury time. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. Dumas:** You asked the question and you want time for the answer. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** I saw a very startling thing. I have read or heard that it is the Government's position that 32,000 acres of Caroni land, that is 42 per

cent, are suitable for built development; 100 per cent is suitable for built development. What you should be looking at is how much of it is suitable for agriculture; that is the question. The question should not be how much is suitable for built development, but we are told here that 32,000 acres or 42 per cent of Caroni lands are suitable for built development.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Can you tell me what document you are quoting from?

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** I am quoting from *Post-Caroni (1975) Limited: A Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan*. It is very neatly produced and has some good thoughts. My quotation is from page 8, section 35.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Can I direct your attention to page 13, where the allocation has been made, where it says that 8,000 acres has been allocated for built development, which is 10.5 per cent and 68,599 acres remains for agriculture, which is 89.5 per cent.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** So is there a contradiction?

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** No, that says what could be used; page 13 tells you what is going to be used.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Of course, this could change? Since it is already established that 42 per cent is suitable for built development sometime in the future, that could be called upon?

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Senator, there is a land use and planning aspect, which says that this land, so much of it you can build on, any government at any time. This Government has said that we will allocate 8,000 acres of that land to built development and 89.5 per cent of the land will remain in agriculture. As Sen. Mark always says, another government may come and decide to change it. We can only give you the assurance of what this Government is committed to.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** We can say that this is locked in for the life of this Government?

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** [*Inaudible*]

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** It has not yet been locked it, but it could be?

**Madam President:** Senator, you have five minutes more.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** Madam President, 10 minutes.

**Madam President:** Five minutes.

**Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:** What trouble is this!

Madam President, the Government's classification is based on the Land Capability Survey Protocol of 1974. That protocol was based on an American model which uses criteria more appropriate for the land mass of the United States. Criteria such as:

“Class one lands are flat, mechanizable and anything can grow any time.”

And it goes on to classes two, three, four, five, six and seven. That classification is wrong for us. We need to classify our land according to terrain and soil and the principle we should be classifying under is: This piece of land in the Central Range where tractors cannot go is first class land for cocoa. If you use the American model, you will give that a five, but if you say, “I am looking for land that is good for the best cocoa in the world,” this land in the Central Range is class one land. I believe that before any plan like this can go into effect, the Government has to sit and think again about how to classify our land for the different purposes. The principle ought to be: Suitable for this kind of crop or that kind of crop. [*Desk thumping*]

Because I am running out of time, I will not labour the point. This was going to be my big flourish in the end, so I will leave it there to say that I have spoken about the lack of the Planning and Development of Land Bill; the lack of an overall agricultural plan. I have spoken of the importance of agriculture as a basis for social and human development. I have talked about the connection between agriculture and culture. I have tried to give the human and economic arguments against fragmenting the sugar industry into dispensable components. I have expressed my fear of the EMBD's functions and functioning and my fear of the alienation of agricultural lands. I have expressed my dissatisfaction with the method of soil classification.

I end by quoting three paragraphs from an article by former Senator, Prof. Julian Kenny, in the *Daily Express* of Tuesday, April 05, 2005. it was a toss up. [*Laughter*] I am quoting this because all the issues I have raised have come up in these paragraphs:

“Clearing 2,000 acres of land at Cap-De-Ville, Chatham, will have profound effects on the existing ecosystems that consists of mixed human settlements, infrastructure, varied agricultural enterprises and forests and wetlands of different kinds in what could qualify under our laws as a sensitive area. Ecology tells us that there is a relationship between size of area and biological diversity and that when size of any ecosystem is reduced, there is the

inevitable reduction of diversity. Clearing the Cap-De-Ville, Chatham area for the smelter, would result in irreplaceable loss and reduction of diversity that we are treaty-bound to conserve. Let the Chatham children of the next generation do the sum. Three square miles of a total 1,864 is 0.2 per cent of the land or, possibly, about 10 per cent of the peninsula. For what? The profitability of Alcoa and dividends for shareholders.”

Madam President, this is a dangerous and disruptive Bill. I hope the Government would put it to a select committee or put it on hold until a Planning and Development of Land Bill is passed in this Parliament. I do not beg to move.

**The Minister of State in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Sen. The Hon. Satish Ramroop):** Madam President, I rise to also speak on this Bill. I want to speak more on what I have observed today in this proceeding. My colleague Sen. Mark started off the debate. Many times we sit in this Senate and listen to debates. Senators would get up and make accusations and many times I want to stand and just make a correction or comment on what was said. Today I felt a little hurt when Sen. Mark went off on the Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Rao. More so, I want to place on the record that I am not supporting the misdoings, or whatever it was, between Mr. Rao and his work—*[Interruption]*—the alleged doings, as stated by the hon. Senator.

Sen. Mark “went to town” in belabouring the Indian aspect of Mr. Rao: where he came from, asking, “Why he doh go back to India?” It bothered me, because we are talking about Caroni and, on the other side, they are representing—

**Sen. R. Montano:** He said foreign; he never said Indian.

**Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop:** They claim to represent Indians and the sugar cane industry, but they forget where the founders came from; they also came from India; they came from foreign. They claim to represent and they do not have the facts to understand who they are really representing. In one breath he is saying one thing, he does not want the foreigner, but in the closing statement, they claim to represent the Indian aspect of it. It is very unfair.

My grandfather—not any great grandfather, somebody I know, somebody I represent—and my grandmother, came from India. We went through the sugar cane industry. I understand what the industry is all about, but we have elevated ourselves; we have gone forward. When we look at the sugar cane industry and what has happened to it, who brought it to the state it is in? It was the people by their own efforts and work ethic who brought it to the state it was in. Governments came and went, but the sugar cane workers remained to do what

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they wanted, because the politicians of the day, especially Mr. B. Panday, wanted them to remain in a low class standard, not thinking for themselves, so they could be played like a political football.

Some of us evolved and got out of that; some stayed there and remained dead. We might feel it is sad that Caroni (1975) Limited has shut down and we claim that the workers feel sad about it and that the workers have lost everything, but they are not saying that. I am from Central Trinidad and I live in the heart of Central. The pulse they are getting from the people, I am not getting it; maybe I am living in a different part of Central. They come here day after day and talk about the Central people suffering, businesses shutting done and all the negatives taking place as a result of the shutting done of Caroni (1975) Limited, but many of these workers are now entrepreneurs. They are not going back into the fields.

I am happy to be in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. We offered some training programmes for them and partnered with the ministry and they are trained. We were at the graduation exercises; they all came from cutting cane. A lot of persons now have factories, some are manufacturing furniture; some go into the agricultural sector; some are also building computers; some are computer technicians; some have even enrolled in the University of Trinidad and Tobago, at this point in time. So from cutting cane, they have evolved. They are happy and are moving on.

I remember one individual who came to me; he has six certificates and he is proud. From cutting cane, he has six certificates of participation in a recognized craft. He can go to any one of the institutes or any businessman and get a job now; before he could not do that; so things are happening. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. R. Montano:** Did he get the job?

**Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop:** While they are looking at the negative aspects of it; there are a lot of positives coming out of it. Maybe on the other side the politicians are not seeing it that way, but there are opportunities. If we sit by and listen to some of the politicians who are saying, "Do not participate in the training programme," what will happen?

Madam President, some people complain that they are not getting this and that, but they sit on their laurels and listen to people who empower them and they remain in a low-key standing and are not benefiting, while others are accepting the training programmes, some others are applying and some others are going forward and seeking opportunities provided by this Government and are moving



on. So if the layman wants to stay back there and not access what the Government has to offer, the Government cannot be blamed for that. It was the PNM that bought Caroni (1975) Limited; it was not a sugar cane industry, it was a farm. We could have said in the early days when Caroni (1975) Limited was set up, to take that money and do something else with the land. What would have happened today? It all started then as a farm and what happened? Today, a transformation is taking place and they are objecting to what is happening.

They had an opportunity for six years to make it viable, to do something with it, and they did nothing. We also saw in the Tripartite Agreement where all the unions signed on to it; they all agreed to it. Now something has happened and they have changed it. I am happy to be part of this Government that made a decision not to let the company just drop down, and we are moving forward.

Madam President, again I must say that I am of East Indian origin. I am also among the East Indian community in Central; I operate out of Central. Many people come to the office in Central Trinidad. I am, really, not feeling the pulse that my colleagues on the other side are feeling; apparently we are in a different place. There are more advantages and opportunities for the people who come and they are also moving on. They compliment us for the work we are doing and they tell us how they are moving on in life and the betterment they have from cutting cane. Their families have been improved; their lives have been improved; they have a lot of things. Right now they are just waiting for the end of this Bill, to acquire land to go into farming. We have not stopped anything; things are happening.

Just recently I was tuned in to one of the radio station talk shows and I heard the former Minister, Reeza Mohammed; we all know him. He said that the plan to shut down Caroni (1975) Limited was theirs before and they were not going to do it like we are now; he said it openly; they were selling out to an individual. He was not supportive of that. The records would show that he was on the talk show; the whole nation heard it. He said that as a result of that, it caused the falling out between him and the then leader.

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** Anybody who had a falling out could say that.

**Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop:** You hear that, Madam President, because he fell out he would say that, but he had the facts when he was on the station. *[Interruption]* Everybody upset because they do not want to hear the truth; they do not want to face the truth. All the lands were being sold out; they were being given out to their friends and families. As an East Indian speaking, I am thankful

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that the PNM came to the rescue, rather than allow all the lands to go all over the place. [*Desk thumping*]

Who stole all the equipment in Caroni (1975) Limited? Who is stealing it? It is the same people? We are being chastised for it. How much can we look after? You entrust them, they are doing it and are destroying it themselves and then we must be responsible. If we want to look at the value system in the East Indian culture, we cannot do that.

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** You want us to go and find it for you? Are we still in charge?

**Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop:** It is not within the capacity of the value of the East Indian community. When we sit here and represent the East Indian community, what do we do? Because somebody did it, we must just join in and say that two wrongs would make a right? Definitely not. It hurts me sometimes when I sit here and they say that they represent the East Indian community, they talk about Central Trinidad, but none of them are from there. My colleague Sen. R. Montano even chastised me for selling my mother by joining the PNM. [*Crosstalk*] Today, the hon. Minister was doing her job and was being called several names, because we are doing our jobs. [*Interruption*] If we do not do it, we would be chastised; when we do it, we are chastised, and then they bring the race talk. I am Indian and I am proud to be Indian and I am also proud to be with the PNM; I have no shame about that. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

I just heard Sen. Prof. Ramchand mention about the killing of the agricultural sector, that all the lands would be given out and so on. I read the training plan document and we saw where 18.5 per cent would be used for new agriculture activity driven by the former employees, but then we see 71 per cent would be available for agricultural activity. So where are we killing the agricultural system? The document went on to talk about pasture, 1,470 acres; citrus, wine making, rice and other crops, tree crops, aqua culture and private cane farming. So we have 71 per cent together with the 18.5 per cent. Where is the PNM killing agriculture? When you say something more than one time, people outside listen to what is happening and believe and they do not have the facts. So if I get up today and say something, whether it is right or wrong, do you know what happens? The perception out there is like that. The Opposition is painting a negative picture of what is happening; that is all the straw they are holding on to, the race structure.

I know that later on my other colleagues would get up and because I am Indian and standing to support this Bill and to support what is happening, I would

be chastised. Again, I am not ashamed to stand and support this Bill, because I see betterment for the people of this country. We want to put people first, rather than party. [*Desk thumping*] It is also betterment for all the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. I am in Central; they know that. I am chastised and “licked up”. Every day some article comes out on Satish, because the people of Central are coming closer and benefiting from the PNM Government and that is a problem. Why must they benefit? We are trying to let them know the other things. We were not there before.

Sen. Mark talked about Sen. Manning in some constituency. He talked about Sen. Enill in a different constituency. Yes, they are in constituencies; they are giving representation. Where the sitting Members have failed, we are delivering. [*Desk thumping*] Before we used to just sit by and allow it to happen and the UNC, at that time, would paint a picture. I came from Central. They would paint a picture that the PNM is this and that, and all the negatives you could think about was the PNM. I was there and I understand. In our faith it says that we are fortunate. I would have liked to quote. [*Hindi spoken*] It is with great fortune that we have assumed this human form and the difference between us and the animals is that we have an intellect to know right from wrong and truth from untruth.

I had the opportunity, as a senior person, to choose and I chose. I chose the PNM party and I am happy. I look at the policies and what they are doing. If one or two people do something wrong, you cannot blame the PNM party or the institution for one man; that is his doing. If, per se, individuals would have done their wrong, let the individuals pay. In the Hindu faith, they talk about karma, you have to pay for your doing; judgment day will come, but you cannot bring down an entire institution for one man. I am proud to be part of this institution. I am proud to be standing here talking about this Bill and in support of what is happening. So wherefore they are talking about killing off agriculture, but I am not seeing it before me. I am not talking as a politician to fool anybody; it is what is placed before me I am speaking about.

I want to talk about the training aspect. Some of the Senators asked about the training, accreditation and what they are doing. I went to those graduations and for some of the Caroni workers it might have been the first time they ever graduated. I was moved. They might have never had an opportunity to graduate in secondary or even primary school; they came well dressed, well decked; you could have sworn that it was a wedding and they were going to get married; husband, wife. Their families came out in their numbers to graduate and when they walked on the stage, you had to be there to witness it. When persons came to

collect certificates, sometimes there were tears, because they could not believe that at whatever age they were cutting cane, they could have graduated with a certificate. Madam President, 100 marks for this Government for that. [*Desk thumping*] Those who graduated worked hard. They could now come out of the sugar industry and graduate with something.

We may not understand it, because we are not part of the system; we are just seeing the negatives. In anything they do, we see the negatives and the wrong doings. If only we could look at the positive side. Again, I must touch on the religious aspect in the scriptural teachings. You would know, Madam President, when the incarnation of Probishedam walked into the forest and was banished, he did not look at the negatives; he did not realize that he was lost in the kingdom; he did not realize that he was losing everything and going into the forest for nothing; he saw an opportunity in it. If people could look at the opportunities and challenges ahead, with this scenario and plan in place, surely something would happen.

If you always put hurdles in front of something, what would happen? Immediately something happens, we look at the negatives in it. We cannot go forward; we have already put hurdles. So where are we going? Let us put the positives forward. These persons graduated. Some of them got accredited by the National Training Agency (NTA). My colleagues on the other side would know the NTA; it was set up by their administration. They are accredited to the Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualification. With that certificate, with the seamless system, they could now get back into the system; they could now go to John Donaldson or San Fernando Technical. They could even reach as far as the University of Trinidad and Tobago. There is a stepping stone. They left the fields cutting cane, with just hope that they would get a crop year after year. Today, they do not have to hope, they could plan. They could decide how many children they want; what kind of house they want, as a result of this plan. [*Desk thumping*]

We have to look at the opportunities; let us look at the wider picture: not just hope that rain would come; the crop would be good, we cut it and our family will be good; then when our children are grown, we stop them from primary school and send them back to the cane. You have to come from it to understand it. Because somebody looks in a particular way, we come here in the Senate, talk about it and say that we represent them. The training opportunities are there. I went to the Waterloo centre where one of the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers has set up that aquaculture institute. In fact, they are now working together with us in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education

and they want to keep it going. We are now setting up a retraining programme to retool some of the workers who are still interested in aquaculture. Training programmes are going on and they have been certified by NTA and other institutes. We are now partnering to see what we can do.

As you know, Madam President, we are now trying to link the Institute of Marine Affairs with aquaculture to get them better qualified and not just issue certificates of participation. We are doing our part, but if you sit by and not participate and not retool and equip yourself, we cannot be blamed for that; you have to blame yourself. As it says in the scriptural teachings, let a man lift himself by himself, not let him degrade himself; for he, himself, is his friend and enemy. By the actions we do, we could bring down ourselves. If I sit by and not decide to do anything to uplift and retool myself, no one could be blamed for that, except me. The opportunity is there; the Government of the day is giving the opportunities. We have put together a plan. We can look at the positive things and whatever changes there might be. We might need little ideas and whatever, but do not just knock it down. Do not bring the race factor and say, “You all do not care; it is discrimination.” How long have we been hearing about discrimination; it is getting out of hand.

Only yesterday I heard on a radio station that an Indian organization said, “Now we have to get together; this is how we are going to fight it; the East Indians getting together now.” They want to put together a kidnapping group, because they have come to the conclusion that the Africans are doing the kidnapping, so they have to get an Indian group to kidnap people. That is the stage it has reached. Whatever is being transferred from here, the race is developing, it is going out to the society and nurturing it. Where are we going? Why can we not have an objective debate on the issues before us? We are talking about the land; we are talking about a Bill to provide for the vesting of lands, but yet we are talking about race and all other things. Why can we not stick to the point and debate objectively? [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** Who talked about race? [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. Dumas:** You were sleeping when Wade was talking. [*Interruption*]

**Madam President:** Everybody will have the opportunity to speak. A Member has a right to reply to anything said by a previous speaker.

**Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop:** Thank you, Madam President. We call ourselves “hon. Senators” and “hon. Members”, but when a Tuesday comes it boils me a little to come to this Senate, because I do not feel honourable walking in

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[SEN. THE HON. S. RAMROOP]

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sometimes. In early times, when I came here, I felt, “Oh, wow.” A lot of people outside might feel nice to walk in and sit here, sometimes on a Tuesday, when I come here, I do not feel honourable again, and I am being honest. *[Interruption]* I feel honourable; I am honourable; all my colleagues on this side are honourable. *[Desk thumping]* *[Crosstalk]* But the Senate, itself, because of the behaviour of some of the Senators here, you feel that this is not an honourable Senate anymore. I really wish that this debate could be more objective, so we could learn and benefit something from the debate.

We want to hear the other side also. We want to hear it objectively. I sit and listen to Sen. Seetahal; I learn so much from her. She is very objective. If she has something to say, she says it and that is it. Sometimes she, herself, is chastised for being partisan. At one time, everyone felt that she was UNC; now that she is being objective on some of the Bills, they feel that she is PNM. *[Crosstalk]* *[Laughter]* Sometimes I feel that some Senators want to shift sides.

**Sen. R. Montano:** She became objective when she started supporting you?

**Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop:** I never said that, Senator. I wish everyone would be objective in what they say. It is important that we are objective, because we can learn. Some people just get up and talk because they want to kill time and they waste time. Let us see what the issues are in the Bill; see what the Bill is against and what it is for. Let us raise the issues, debate them, talk about them, so that it would be for the better, not for me, not for the ones on the other side, but for the country; this is why we are here. If we do that, success would come. If it starts from here, it might trickle down. It is said that things always start rotting from the top. If we behave like honourable persons, surely it will trickle down to the bottom.

Madam President, I was disappointed in the way they referred to my colleague when she presented this Bill, the ridiculous way.

**Sen. R. Montano:** You stand there to sing for your supper. *[Laughter]*

**Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop:** The comments they made towards her, because we are of Indian origin. They keep pounding, “The junior Minister,” as if she is nobody. *[Crosstalk]* As if it makes something different, because she is the junior Minister of this and that. *[Crosstalk]*

**Sen. R. Montano:** Yoo hoo! You have the brain of a four-year-old. *[Crosstalk]*

**Madam President:** Silence, please!

**Sen. The Hon. S. Ramroop:** I guess they like the junior Minister, that is why they keep saying, “The junior Minister”, but it does not matter, she is doing a fine job. [*Desk thumping*] I am sure the Government is pleased with her work as the junior Minister, as they call her. [*Desk thumping*] I know that there are many more persons who want to talk, but I thank you for giving me the opportunity. I wish that whatever is said is taken in good light and we could return to being honourable individuals and return the dignity of this Senate. I thank you.

**Sen. R. Montano:** Go into Caroni and tell the people what he said.

**Sen. Sadiq Baksh:** Madam President, I join this debate at an opportune time. My distinguished colleague, the last speaker, Sen. The Hon. Ramroop, reminded us that as human beings we have the right to choose between right and wrong. I am surprised that he chose to close down Caroni (1975) Limited and expected it to be right. [*Desk thumping*] The PNM could never be right; no one could ever be right to close down Caroni (1975) Limited. We must realize that no matter what happens in Trinidad and Tobago, the PNM will always be remembered for closing down Caroni (1975) Limited; that is their legacy. It does not matter how or when it comes about.

I have no reason to doubt that the Minister now responsible for Caroni will do everything possible to make that closure as painless as possible. I have no doubt that the Government will try to provide training, retraining and retooling, but because of its track record, we do not trust them. The people of Trinidad and Tobago do not trust this Government. [*Desk thumping*] I will tell you why, Madam President.

I quote from a statement presented to the honourable House of Representatives by Hon. Dr. Rowley, the then Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, on Friday, April 03, 1992:

“Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to apprise Parliament and, through it, the national community of recent initiatives taken by Government aimed at setting an agenda for resolving the long outstanding issues related to Caroni (1975) Limited. The mechanisms I am about to outline attest to the integrity of the Government in terms of our adopting a consultative approach to addressing issues of national importance. And this is fully consistent with our view that Caroni (1975) Limited and the issues related to it are national in scope and not merely sectoral or sectarian. Madam Speaker, it will be recalled that, insofar as agriculture is concerned, the manifesto of the Government clearly articulated that the state would be responsible *inter alia*:

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‘...for creating an environment in which agriculture can succeed. This will require an appropriate combination of incentives, protection and infrastructure in support of agriculture...’”

Indeed, given its expertise and other resources, Caroni was deemed...”  
[*Interruption*]

**Sen. D. Montano:** Madam President, on a point of order. I do beg your pardon, but I do not think a Member is allowed to read here from a debate in the other place on a matter that has already been resolved. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. Mark:** You are wrong about that! [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. D. Montano:** I seek your guidance.

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** You are wrong; it has been allowed before and you have done it.

**Sen. Mark:** I was a Vice-President; I know that. I ruled on that on many occasions. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. Yuille-Williams:** It is not true; you cannot do it. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam President:** Continue Senator, I will look for it.

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, I know about these things.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** I continue to quote:

“to be of strategic importance and therefore it will be in a position to play a major role in the execution of national agricultural policy...”

That was on April 03, 1992. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. Mark:** That was 1992, boy; this is 2005. “Wha wrong with yuh?” Nothing is wrong with that; I can tell you.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** It is because of statements like that and the PNM’s crying and telling the country, when it suits them, that Caroni is of strategic national importance, and the way they show it is by shutting it down, that is why we do not have trust in the PNM. That is why the population of Trinidad and Tobago cannot trust this administration to do anything right.

**Sen. Mark:** A bunch of hypocrites! Satish, you support that?

**Sen. S. Baksh:** I quote now from the PNM Manifesto of 2000, page 23. Hear choice, Madam President, chose between right and wrong. Chose on what they say and choose on what they do.



“Caroni (1975) Limited is still plagued by technical, structural and economic inefficiencies...

Therefore the PNM will intervene to arrest the decline and position this sector to provide for the needs of people as well as to increase opportunities for successful export.”

You hear untruth, Madam President? That is untruth! [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. Mark:** Everything changed after 18/18.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** The 1992 manifesto? [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. S. Baksh:** No, the 2000 Manifesto, *A New Age, A Bold Vision, A Brighter Future*, that is future. It continues:

“Over the years one of our major continuing challenges has been the failure to provide on an on-going basis, sufficient food to satisfy the nutritional needs of our population. Our food import bill has, as a consequence, always been a cause for concern, even as our University has developed a reputation for proficiency in tropical agriculture and large tracts of fertile land remain under-utilised or abandoned...”

#### **5.45 p.m.**

“This weakness has persisted primarily because of the fact that the investment focus in this regard has been on the utilization of available arable land for the purpose of producing traditional crops for export such as sugar, coffee and cocoa. Export earnings from these have been declining for some time with the removal of preferential access or tariffs and now the establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Trends in food imports could be exacerbated in this period of globalization as the information explosion, free trade and easy cross border travel function to reinforce the tendency towards growing sophistication of the tastes and preferences of our citizens.

Therefore, the PNM will:

- Focus on the production of crops aimed at the satisfaction of domestic requirements.
- Encourage the development and effective maintenance of a vibrant food processing industry, which will include a significant role at the input level for small farmers.

- Ensure that agricultural research, extension services and education, are organized to reinforce the new emphasis and to facilitate innovation in the areas of production, processing and marketing of agricultural goods.
- Encourage the mechanization of operations whenever possible.
- Ensure the execution of rationalized, updated policies for land-use and sustainable development, including reforestation and protection of our watersheds, wet-lands, flora and fauna.”

“Yuh hear talk, Madam President?” That is talk.

- “Devise and ensure the effective implementation of new policies for the development and sustainability of our fisheries resources both offshore and on land.”

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** All that is taking place.

**Sen. S. Baksh:**

- “Re-energize and ensure the proper organization of our livestock industry.
- Encourage funding to the sector through appropriate credit policies and the provision of crop insurance.”

“Yuh hear talk, Madam President?” That is talk.

- “Promote the use of integrated pest management and biological control of pests and disease in crops and livestock as a means of safeguarding the citizens and the environment.”

**Hon. Senator:** [*Inaudible*]

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, I will allow that any time, because they can write, but they cannot convert words to deeds. That is the problem with the PNM. They cannot convert words to deeds. It is “ol’ talk” and no action.

**Sen. Mark:** Yes.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** So they would present some of the best plans. Madam President, I have read the budget presentations of this administration from 1956 to today. They have some of the best plans ever outlined, and if that administration had implemented 10 per cent of all the plans and proposals, Trinidad would not be a paradise; it would be a paradise within paradise. [*Desk thumping*]

There is no dispute about it, when it comes to writing well-documented plans and policies, and manifestos that could fire up the imagination, but that is for people who do not know. That is the real problem. It is for people who do not know, or those who believe that a leopard can change its spots. That is the situation.

**Sen. Mark:** Never, never, never.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, this is really good you know and I must continue. [*Crosstalk*]

- “Develop and implement an aggressive praedial larceny prevention programme.”

“Yuh hear talk?” That is talk.

- “Work with the Tobago House of Assembly to revitalize—”

[*Crosstalk*] Madam President, this is one time they cannot put me off track you know, because I am on track with this. I know how to choose between right and wrong and I know it is wrong to close Caroni (1975) Limited.

**Sen. Mark:** It is wrong to close Caroni (1975) Limited. “Yes, dey wrong, dey wrong. No matter what, it is wrong, Satish.”

**Sen. S. Baksh:** The message from today that the worst decision that administration ever took was to close Caroni (1975) Limited because you will pay for it. Do you know why? Not just for closing it, but you will allow all the lands to go into ruin; you will allow the rolling stock to be pilfered; you will allow the human resources of Caroni (1975) Limited to be stymied; you will provide training that is irrelevant; you will make sure that they never get a job; and I want to tell this administration that the longest rope has an end. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Mark:** The longest rope has an end.

**Sen. S. Baksh:**

- “Work with the Tobago House of Assembly to revitalize and to re-organize the agricultural livestock and fisheries sectors in Tobago.”

**Sen. Mark:** They made a mistake.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Has that happened yet? There is nothing.

**Sen. Mark:** The second mistake is the Chief Justice.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** We will come to that after. I have plenty to say on agriculture because agriculture should be the lifeblood of this economy. Agriculture is the greatest opportunity of this administration and any future generation because food security is national security. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Mark:** “Yuh hear that?” Food security is national security.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, again it says:

- “Ensure that domestic production is protected from dumping or other illegitimate practices by foreign producers.
- Ensure that estate management practices are responsive and transparent through a proper system of administration of agricultural state lands.”

Madam President, I have not seen in this document the plans that will provide efficiency and proper land use. I have not reached to transparency yet, but the way the lands are distributed at this time, I do not see signs of proper distribution.

It brings me to a point which the Minister of Public Administration and Information made when he said that 10 per cent of the lands were available for other activities and 89 per cent will remain in or available for agricultural purposes. But the fine points below, after citrus, wine making, et cetera, and I quote from the document *Post Caroni (1975) Limited: A Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan* on page 13 it says:

“...the residual 31,872 acres which is presently under sugarcane previously cultivated by Caroni, could be available for future agricultural or other uses.”

Madam President, I want you to understand that what the Minister said was quite factual but, within that 86 per cent there is an optional use for 31,872 acres of lands that are presently cultivated by Caroni (1975) Limited for future agricultural or other uses. Therefore, it is discretionary; it is not reserved strictly for agriculture. So whereas the Minister said it was 86 per cent, I want to dispute that immediately, that that is not so.

Madam President, I continue.

- “Ensure equity and fair play in the regularization and relocation of squatters on agricultural state lands.”

Madam President, you will recall that we took care of all squatters on other state lands, we had this assigned to Caroni (1975) Limited, and, while they said that they will ensure equity and fair play in the regularization and relocation of

squatters on agricultural state lands, the Minister in making her presentation and in fact, raising a point about the people whose crops were destroyed said they got many notices.

No amount of notices will satisfy any person who planted on state lands for decades. She went well up to that point, and I thought that she made an excellent presentation, but when she said that, I realized that somewhere she would have been well advised not to make that point because it made it appear to be a callous statement calculated not to recognize the legitimate aspirations of the people who utilized those lands. What made it worse is that it went contrary to the contractual obligation between the PNM and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I quote again. The PNM promised in its manifesto to:

- “Ensure equity and fair play in the regularization and relocation of squatters on agricultural state lands.”

Let any one of them dispute this contract between the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the PNM and this statement. That is not possible. It is just not possible; you are fooling people. You are not converting words to deeds and what is worse, you are telling people untruths, or you are not realizing and recognizing what you said because what you say and what you do people will know.

You cannot say one thing and do something else. You cannot tell me that Caroni (1975) Limited is the best thing and you close it down. That is not possible. You cannot tell me that you love the people of Caroni and then you decide not to treat them fair and equitable. If that is your way of treating people fair and equitable, then we are in trouble. We cannot trust you if that is the position, and therein lies the problem.

The problem is not with the new company that will be responsible for Caroni (1975) Limited and its resources, the problem is that this administration will tell that company that they could do this, they must treat people just, fair, and equitable and then they turn their backs and say: “Lick up their crops.” Show them you care! Root out some pea trees here; root out some sorrel there; lick down everything you see in Dow Village; create a big dump on every ribbon road in Caroni. They love that.

They do not love the people who take care of the environment. They are not paying them to clean the lands and keep them cultivated, and they are not on your back and every time they bring a pound of peas to the Couva or Chaguanas Market, the peas generally go lower in price because of demand and supply. “So

how yuh care?” “Yuh want de prices to go further up?” Even if they ate what they planted, it would be a contribution on the reduction of the food bill about which you just spoke.

Madam President, it is just not possible, and I want to warn this Government that if it should touch any other person cultivating land previously on Caroni (1975) Limited lands, that the people have a legitimate expectation— [*Desk thumping*] and I know the Attorney General will not raise a point of order on that because as the adviser of Cabinet, he will tell them that they do have a legitimate right of expectation. I know he is a fair and just man, so he is not participating in that at all.

**Sen. Jeremie:** I tell the truth all the time.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** I have no doubt about that, Madam President. I have no doubt. In all my dealings with the hon. Attorney General, I have always found him to speak the truth so I know that he will ensure that nobody on that side will be able to flout the rules and let the people know that they have legitimate expectations.

Madam President, I want him to convey that message to the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and let her know that the people have legitimate expectations and she should inform the board—[*Interruption*] not to have a heart. There is no question about heart here. It is a question that they have a legitimate expectation and under the law they are protected. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** True.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** You cannot be an unlawful Government. If you destroy the crops of people with a legitimate expectation, then you are acting lawlessly and you are an unlawful Government.

**Sen. Mark:** But they are a reckless Government, they are not only lawless.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, the manifesto went on further to say:

“Whilst export of traditional agriculture has been on the wane, opportunities are available in aquaculture and horticulture. The PNM will provide support to explore and stimulate growth in the export of these and other products.

The PNM will:

- Establish appropriate export infrastructure to facilitate the export thrust.
- Facilitate the sustainable development of the inshore/offshore fishery resources.”

Madam President, they went on to Caroni (1975) Limited and this is what they had to say.

“CARONI

The PNM will address the technical, economic and organizational inefficiencies of Caroni, with a view to make the sugar industry efficient and economically viable.

At a time when barriers to world trade are coming down...”

This is not 10 years later, Madam President, this is the 2000 Manifesto. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. Joseph:** Are you sure?

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Sure, sure. I will pass a copy to you. I tell you, it is good writing, good reading, and good policies. There is no problem with that, very good policies.

**Sen. Mark:** That was 2000 and we are now in 2005.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, it continues:

“The PNM objective is an industry that is technology driven.

Accordingly, the PNM will:” [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam President:** Senators!

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, I am all right.

**Madam President:** Your contribution is so interesting that I would like to hear what you are saying and I cannot above the noise.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, I am really focused on this matter, so they can say anything, I am not hearing. [*Laughter*] I really feel convinced that the Senators on the other side would have loved to get the closure or the improvement of Caroni (1975) Limited right. I am sure about that. I do not have any doubt that any Government would like to see the industry that caused us to be here—I am here because of sugar. That is the only reason I am here and I do not believe that anybody on that side would have wanted it to end the way it has. I really honestly do not believe that, but the politics made it right to do it.

Before speaking on this matter, I toured the sugar industry, I drove through the lands where sugar cane was cultivated by Caroni (1975) Limited and when I passed through Phoenix Park you could see thousands of acres from the road that

now leads to the sand quarry. So the members of the Estate Management Company who are here will know that it is not “ol’ talk”.

I drove through because I wanted to see what was taking place and you could see stalks of cane in-between where fire burnt and they did not care to cut them because it was uneconomical to the people who were assigned that block to reap those canes although they were allowed to reap them for free and just to get to the factory. Weeks and months later, it is all standing there and those lands will become a big dump.

In fact, there is a reduction in dumping activities at Forres Park at this time and I say so without doubt, because as I drove through Phoenix Park, I saw all the white waste litter on the roads. I then went to Dow Village extension and through the ITT Campus, now UTT just by name, two words, just a little change.

**Sen. Seepersad-Bachan:** Two letters.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Same thing, no problem. Then I went to the Montserrat Hills and into Claxton Bay and all the areas where this 31,872 acres—only the canes that are being harvested mechanically by harvesters are really cut by the people who are allowed to do so. So there is a situation where employment is not being created for the cane cutters. In any event, if that cane is cut manually, it will take days to get a tonne of cane because of the sparse nature of it.

Madam President, so what you are seeing here is a complete demise of sugar disguised in a manner to make one feel that it will become more viable. It is not possible. It is not designed in this plan to do so. This plan is inefficient, and it does not address the real issues.

To just stray a bit, the Minister said that all the houses occupied by existing employees—

**Sen. Mark:** Monthly rated.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** —monthly rated employees will be sold and I have no problem with that. Then you have the Sugar Manufacturing Company with new management. So there is a new manager who might rent one of the same buildings it has just sold at a discounted price for the new management at the Sugar Manufacturing Company. “Yuh hear efficiency? That is efficiency—because the managers and the management of the new Sugar Manufacturing Company must live somewhere.

So, whereas there is a commitment to sell those houses and if you live in your own house, then you are paid a housing allowance—



**Sen. Dr. Saith:** A housing allowance is cheaper.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** I have no doubt about that, but the point I am making to you is that you have this existing rolling stock that can be utilized in the Sugar Manufacturing Company to add to the efficiency and if you are looking for an accounting solution and a good bottom line, then you are looking to save everything. You want to make it efficient.

Madam President, so this one is hard, it is real hard. It cannot be right to close Caroni (1975) Limited. You cannot win on it. No matter what happens with your best efforts, you are going to get blows for it because people will remember. Even if they are given money, when the money is finished they will remember you closed it. You cannot hide from the fact that you closed Caroni (1975) Limited, it does not matter how much good money you throw at a bad project, it cannot make it good. That is what you need to learn.

Madam President, it continues:

“The PNM objective is an industry that is technology driven.

Accordingly, the PNM will:

- Train and educate farmers and workers in the new techniques and realities of commercially-viable production.
- Maximize the utilization of all available...”

Hear this promise, Madam President.

- “Maximize the utilization of all available land for the production of crops and livestock to satisfy the needs of the local market and revitalize production for export.”

Madam President, I compliment the PNM on that. That was the plan, to leave all the lands in agriculture and I say yes. Leave them to agriculture. “Maximize the utilization of all available land for the production of crops and livestock to satisfy the needs of the local market and revitalize production for export.”

Madam President, this is the contract that the PNM went with to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and now they are talking about other uses. I am still saying that the best way to salvage the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited at this point, is to say that all the lands will be used for agriculture and agricultural production. [*Desk thumping*] That is the closest suggestion. Use it for agriculture and do what you say here.

**Sen. Mark:** Use the land for agriculture.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** You said you will “train and educate farmers and workers in the new techniques and realities of commercially-viable production.”

Madam President, that is the solution and I have no doubt that the writers of this manifesto had a plan to implement it. I do not think they would just write it. I am not sure how the plan will work, but I am sure that you will write it and do not plan to do it. I anticipate that what they had in mind is not dissimilar to what the UNC started to do.

The UNC clearly would never have closed Caroni (1975) Limited. [*Desk thumping*] It was not part of the policy. I remember the same team headed by Mr. Hospedales from the divestment secretariat and I was clear on the study with all the different recommendations they made and it was our right to refuse or reject them.

Madam President, we are a labour-based organization, sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the poor. [*Desk thumping*] And because the people who worked at Caroni (1975) Limited represent possibly, not the least trainable, but the hardest working citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, that we recognized we were facing a very challenging time with sugar and its production based on the techniques that we were using.

We said that we would start off by diversifying or get private sector participation with 49 per cent and, in fact, advertisements were in the newspapers for private sector participation for the rum distillery first, because it was the most profitable and it was obvious that it would attract the private sector.

It is now history that the PNM said that the rum stock was valued at \$1 billion and it got support from all quarters that it was valued at \$1 billion. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President, they cannot get me to say what I do not want to say. It is not possible. There are too many ways to say the same thing. I want to hear what the present value of the rum stocks is. I saw in the documentation that it was transferred for \$1.00. I understand the need for doing that, but I now question whether the real value was \$1.00. When I looked at the transfer documents vesting the rum distillery for \$1.00, I thought it was \$1 billion. [*Laughter*] Then I saw the waiver for stamp duty as part of the bill so I said okay, they do not have to pay stamp duty on it so they carried up the price from \$950 million to \$1 billion. I had no problem with that.

“Leh meh tell you something.” “I have more sense than all ah dem yuh know.” “Dem fellas ha’ book sense, but dey ain’t have no common sense.” “From de time dey say they joining de PNM I say not me, what foolishness yuh telling me.” I say on the UNC’s worst day, we will make a decision better than the PNM on their best day. [*Desk thumping*] “So dem cyar fool me with that at all.” “When dem fellas come to me and tell me dey going and talk with de PNM, I ask them about what.” “Dey say ‘bout rum stock. I say, rum stock, besides that, I doh drink so when yuh talk ‘bout rum, I not in dat.” But on the PNM best day, they cannot be as good as the UNC on its worst day.

Madam President, we were not perfect you know, we were just better than the PNM. [*Laughter*] We were not perfect. I will never stand here and say we were perfect, we were just better than the PNM any time, any day. And when you talk about implementation, it is then you are talking about the UNC because today in Trinidad and Tobago after almost \$100 billion, they have nothing to show for it.

You could say what you want about the airport, it is built already, it is finished and when you go to attract the FTAA headquarters in Trinidad and Tobago, the first thing you have to tell them is that you have a structure that will give them a first and lasting experience when they come to Trinidad and Tobago—the new PNM airport at Piarco. Yes the PNM airport. I have no problem with that, it is your airport now, you are in charge.

“Yuh see, all yuh doh understand when all yuh in charge yuh know.” “The problem, Madam President, is the PNM doh understand when dey in charge.” My distinguished colleague raised the matter about the pilferage of the rolling stock and he still believes it is the UNC to stop that. He still believes that the UNC is in office. They do not know anything about it. The rolling stock is disappearing and he is saying that the UNC is in charge. You heard the Minister of National Security saying: “I not in charge of crime, I ain’t no criminal.” I know that, I know he is not a criminal, but he is in charge. The buck stops with him. [*Laughter*]

The PNM does not understand that it is the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and it is there to govern for all the people whether they like it or not. Whether you like it or not, you are in charge and anything that is going wrong in the country, you are responsible. So if murders are increasing, you are in charge. If kidnappings are increasing, you are in charge, and if you lick up Caroni (1975) Limited, you are in charge.

Madam President, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have a lot of common sense and I want to tell you that while you are in office, you tend to believe that

everything you are doing—because you rationalize on your own that you are doing it for efficiency and good governance—is for efficiency and good governance, then you will recognize that the people outside do not see it like that.

They feel the harsh realities of not having a wage to collect at Caroni (1975) Limited and you will find all the shops and parlours and small businesses around the scales are now feeling the pinch because the “fellas” who are now transporting the canes are on a small salary. They are working for a smaller salary, so they are not spending it in the community anymore, there is now contract labour where there is no more overtime. All those things are finished with and as those inefficiencies have been removed, the company is still not efficient, but the economy is suffering throughout the country. So you have a depressed situation in No. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 where we were Monday night—same thing.

#### **6.15 p.m.**

So the important issue is that this administration needs to salvage the position and I want to recommend to this administration how to salvage this position. Madam President, we have passed the stage for training before you close down; you have already closed down so I am not going to cry about spilt milk. You have the field engineering department at Brechin Castle and Usine Ste. Madeleine. You need to get back all the people who were severed from those departments because they are skilled workers that are in demand. There is a shortage of machine shop capabilities at Point Lisas and other areas. Train them and put some equity into it; form a company or a cooperative and get them to be part of an organization.

**Sen. Sahadeo:** Madam President, just to elucidate for the Senator, all these employees have, in fact, got jobs. Actually, at a recent graduation, one of them indicated from getting a salary of just about \$300 a week, he now is in the double digits. So, really, I would say 100 per cent of these employees have not just found jobs, but they have been trained and equipped and they are doing very well.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** I will take the appropriate action; I will put a question to the hon. Minister as to how many people were trained, where they are employed now and all those things. So I will utilize the system to get those answers and make sense out of it. But the point I am making is that now I cannot tell you what to do when you have already closed it down, but I am saying that all the equipment there, what you are really talking about is holding a jumble sale, you know. There is no auction taking place, you know, and I will tell you why. Every milling machine in the machine shop is not working; the sump pump is clogged.

**Sen. Sahadeo:** How you know all of that?

**Sen. S. Baksh:** I am telling you. As a businessman and a person involved in equipment I could tell you if they were not mothballed properly—the beds of the lathe, the milling machine, the shaper, all those things—you are in trouble. What happens, after two years of non-functioning of those pieces of equipment, you are not selling real equipment anymore; you are having a jumble sale. You are not having an auction.

What is worse, all the rolling stock, the 400 pieces of mechanical equipment, including harvesters' trucks and other equipment, went out to contractors for use in the harvesting and preparation of other land. Madam President, do you think you would let anybody drive your car? They are not driving your car, period. They would not take care of it. So if you know that you have a piece of equipment that needs an oil change for every 6,000 kilometres but it is not yours and you have to change it, would you change it? That is not efficient for you to change because it is affecting your bottom line. So he starts to act like the Government now; he starts to look at the bottom line. So there is no oil change; no oil filter change and no greasing.

I want to tell you that some of the best skilled tradesmen came from Caroni, their predecessor companies and Caroni (1975) Limited: electricians, welders, fabricators, everybody—unbelievable skills with also the will to survive. That is why if we had to do that—and we did not plan to do it—we would have done a manpower analysis; know who are our employees; what they are trained in; know those that excelled; form cooperatives with some; retrain and retool some in the skills that they had; not to take a fellow who was a cane cutter—generally, if you have a cane cutter with a level of education and he wants to become a computer programmer, I have no problem with that, but I am saying that it must be done after a study and a proper analysis to know the base level upon which you need to build.

#### PROCEDURAL MOTION

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate continues sitting until 7.00 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### CARONI (1975) LIMITED AND ORANGE GROVE NATIONAL COMPANY LIMITED (DIVESTMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT) (NO. 2) BILL

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, the utilization of the existing skills in national development would have been an important imperative and it would have

made a big difference because you would have had an organized stream of trade personnel to go into strategic plants, whether at ALNG, Point Lisas or in the private sector.

It is worse in terms of what the administration allowed to take place with the existing agricultural lands that they had in place. You would recall that we had a bountiful citrus crop in Trinidad and Tobago during the year 2004. During that period, because of the inefficiencies in Caroni (1975) Limited and the people responsible for the transition, all the oranges, although they entered into contractual reaping arrangement with contractors, I would suggest that over 50 per cent of the crop reached the market and it caused a reduction in price, because the fruits at Caroni normally would have ended up at the juicing plant, and because it would have gone to Citrus Growers it would have allowed other citrus farmers to benefit from the type of prices that they were accustomed to.

**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. W. Mark*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. S. Baksh:** Madam President, I really never thought I would need an extension in this House, but it is an issue that I feel we need to get right and I honestly feel that the Government would love to—

**Madam President:** Before you start, I just wanted to give a ruling on the point of order. In fact, he was in order because the matter was not in the current session and it was in a public document.

**Sen. Mark:** You see, I told you that, Danny. I was in the Chair before, man.

**Sen. S. Baksh:** On the citrus crop, what happened was that because the fruit reached the market last year, it caused a general reduction because the people got that fruit free. Whether they helped themselves, however they did it, I know it reached the market in a manner that it was not intended to reach. I am not sure whether the contractors were able to recoup the money they bid for reaping the crop. But what was worse, after they reaped the crop, they left it unattended until the last two weeks, and within the last two weeks, as if they knew this Vesting Bill would be coming here, they went and brush-cut the entire field. I viewed the estate so that when I came here I would have spoken from firsthand knowledge. You know, they were supposed to have a pine crushing plant at the Simplex

Complex. Around there they have it well cleaned now. But we would get to that after. They had no crop this year—zero. Not one fruit was sold this year by whoever was responsible for citrus. In 2005 they are experiencing not as bountiful a crop as 2004, which was a leap year and those of us in agriculture would know the difference in the crop. But, basically, it is now unattended.

If you plan to give out those blocks in 50-acre plots—and I believe that 50 acres is a viable plot to be mechanized and it is a reasonable size, but the trees are now in a bad state, so you would have to give agricultural subsidies. For every acre you give somebody, you have an incentive plan in the Ministry of Agriculture so each person would get \$4,000 to rehabilitate the field, because those fields need rehabilitating. They were not pruned; they have dry stalks; they have pine; “Jack Spañias”, ants, all sorts of things. They are infested, so you cannot go and harvest. You need to rehabilitate those fields.

In addition to that, anybody you make 50 acres available to, will get \$4,000 per acre to rehabilitate because that is part of the agricultural incentive programme from the Government and even that would not be satisfactory to rehabilitate those fields. The point I am making is that the administration allowed the agricultural sector to come into further disrepute and to be run down further than it was during the time they wrote their manifesto in 2002. So we are in a worse state today.

I am not sure and I do not want to say what happened to all the livestock. It is regional knowledge, in fact, the talk on the ground—that is not my idea, I am not sure about it—is that the whole buffalypso herd was barbequed. I do not know by whom; I do not know where or when, but if you ask anybody—*[Interruption]* Yes, barbequed. After the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, if you ask anybody in Rio Claro, New Grant, Poole, La Gloria, Frederick, Caliste, Matiste, any one of those roads, they would tell you that all they know is that two weeks ago the entire pasture was burnt. It had money bush and teak leaves and a roadway passing through. So what do you expect? Any cigarette butt would cause the destruction of the entire pasture. So you no longer have a pasture. It is ground knowledge and ground information—and I would consider it a rumour—that all the livestock was barbequed. But I know one thing, the entire pasture was roasted because I saw that also. The entire La Gloria Estate, from the Naparima/Mayaro Road to Frederick Road, was burnt completely. I am sure the Minister would be able to ask the administrators of the estate whether that is true. I know it is true because I saw it. I did not hear about it; I saw it.

So the same administration that says it wants to help agriculture, “lick up” citrus production in Trinidad and Tobago and, in fact, the juicing plant at the Cooperative Citrus Growers Association would have possibly recorded the worst year in its history, because they came to depend for most of the grapefruit production from Caroni (1975) Limited of about 3,000-plus acres, and a lot of its oranges for fresh juice from the local production. So that is finished. You say you want to improve it, but you “lick it up”—gone; close down. You have to choose between right and wrong and it was wrong to “lick up” the citrus production in Caroni (1975) Limited. [*Desk thumping*]

We are talking about the buffalypso herd numbering about 1,200, barbequed, according to local informants. The dairy herd, 120 milking cows—and I heard of about 300; I am not sure about its location—I did not hear about barbequing for that one. The aquaculture project—uncertain. The experimental station at Pooka Road continues to do an excellent job. They were able, notwithstanding all the challenges of the industry, to keep above ground. They continued to hold it, and based on my visits there, they have improved. They continue to provide red and blue tilapia to the local industry. All the services that they provided in the past, they continue to provide it at that same level of efficiency, if not better. I think that they are what we should aim for in all the other sectors in Caroni (1975) Limited. They are a model. What you acquired at the livestock centre should really be imparted and should have been done in all the other sectors.

You see, there are capabilities within the industry and that is being demonstrated at this time by that section, and I have no doubt that given half a chance, the rice, whether it was rain-fed or irrigated, whether it was the livestock or the buffalypso here, whether it was the citrus, had they allowed the same employees that you intended to give two acres to—and I will come to two acres, because two acres is just not viable as a backyard garden, because you have to mechanize. If you are talking about agriculture, where you no longer have a full family participating in agricultural production, you have to change to the realities of the time. You have to mechanize and if you mechanize, two acres does not allow you to buy even the smallest tractor to equip yourself.

I believe for a single family, five acres could be a minimum, but, really, a good size for a family—and that is why I have no problem with the citrus in which you are looking to use 50 acres. It is a good size so that you will move a farmer from subsistence farming to be profitable and to take his rightful place in the society as someone you could look up to.



**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Eight thousand farmers at 50 acres—[*Inaudible*]

**Sen. S. Baksh:** I recognize that not every single person will be able to become mechanized. I am certain that if you had done the manpower analysis you would have known those with that capability and those with the capability for two and five acres. I am sure the Minister would do that now, based on the plans for the future, because I want to recommend that you do an analysis of the people who will be able to take agriculture forward in the right direction, whether it is five, 10 or 20 acres.

The most important thing is that I do not believe that the security of tenure in the agricultural leases for 10 years in the first instance is a viable option, because you cannot raise a loan from the Agricultural Development Bank with a 10-year lease. So I would like the Minister to look at that situation because 10 years just cannot cut it. Thirty years is the minimum. I do not think anybody on this side or in their right sense—I am certain that nobody on that side will support 10 years for agricultural leases because 10 years for an agricultural lease is a no-no for raising capital.

I saw in the document that it is for a 10-year period in the first instance and then going to 20 years on renewal. I am saying that the minimum should be 30 years in the first instance with an option for a further 30, so that your sweat equity will be assured. We are moving away now from legitimate expectations to the people who went there uninvited to the people who were invited. So imagine the people who were uninvited have a legitimate expectation to be there forever and the person with a lease would be getting it for 10 years. It is not practical; it is not possible. That is a recipe for chaos.

I am recommending to the administration to look at that particular aspect. In fact, what I believe is that this Bill at this time should be referred to a select committee of Parliament so that we would be able to look at all these things. I believe that the Government wants to get it right. I believe it is in the interest of all of us to get it right [*Desk thumping*] because the future of Trinidad and Tobago depends not on oil and gas, but the way we would be able to take care of ourselves in the agricultural sector. It is the only sector which, if we handle it properly, would be sustainable; it would be long-term; it would be here for generations and our children and grandchildren would be assured of a great future not only in Trinidad and Tobago but in the world of nations.

I thank you very much, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie:** Madam President, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this Bill. Forgive me for doing a little background on the Tobagonian and land. There was a time when Tobago used to be the breadbasket of Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, Tobago fed the nation, and land ownership, whatever relationship you have with the land, as Sen. Prof. Ramchand said, is a very important aspect of the culture of the Tobagonian. There is a saying in Tobago, that once you are in Tobago you cannot starve; you must eat because there is so much to share. Whether you plant, fish, hunt for crabs or whatever, you cannot starve. Because all of this is attached to the land, the Tobagonian is very sensitive when it comes to issues surrounding the land.

My experience in the Senate with issues dealing with the land goes back to probably 1995 when we had people who really took land and agriculture seriously, in particular, Sen. Prof. John Spence, Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny, to a lesser extent Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand, who made agriculture and the discussion of agriculture, tying it up with the land ownership and access to land, et cetera, very serious business.

At this point I would like to say that one of the recommendations I have, personally, is to ask that the Planning and Development of Land Bill that was passed and had lapsed before it went to the Lower House, be reintroduced and let that be the precedent. [*Desk thumping*]

I know that former Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny worked months on that Bill. In fact, it was a sacrifice, and we were extremely pleased when we came here and debated it—I remember Sen. King—and we had such passionate contributions on the Planning and Development of Land Bill. I am saying this because it is only by passing that Bill that I would feel comfortable in supporting clause 10 of this Bill. I am very uncomfortable with clause 10 of the Bill and I am saying that to a large extent this is what I would like to see.

I want to look at this land capability classification; how much land and how you assess what land is to be used for what, and what have you. I am saying that it is in a select committee where the committee could call experts from all areas dealing with land and agriculture to give their input, that we can really say that this land is suitable for this purpose. I am saying this because I have had experience in Tobago. We had a Goldsborough project where they gave out lands and houses. Sen. Sadiq Baksh might bear me out on this. They actually had houses, just as we are proposing to do with these Caroni lands. In no time, people stopped farming.

You talk about title, deeds, land, and so on, and you talk about giving this management manpower to “manage, rent, assign, exchange, lease.” From my experience, this is madness. You would not even know when the lands are exchanged. I want to give this House an experience that we had in Tobago. I brought it up previously when there was another Attorney General. This was where people were actually going to lawyers, asking that deeds, et cetera, be prepared and they never knew when their lands changed from their hands to other people's hands. The only way those people knew was to come back to the Red House when they had the registry downstairs, because there was no law—and I hope the hon. Attorney General and the hon. Minister of Legal Affairs are listening to this—that stated that after these lands changed hands and you register the deed, that you had to go to the inland revenue warden's office in Tobago and have that changed in the land registry.

A man actually went to a lawyer and said: “I have these lands.” When he went down to the registry in Tobago, the lands were there in his name and he felt good, but when it came to the sub-registry in Trinidad, the lands had changed hands and he never knew. So I am saying that I am very wary of all this talk about exchange, lease, assign, rent and manage lands without a Planning and Development of Land Bill and without the proper procedures in place to have a step-by-step process. [*Desk thumping*] This is why I am saying that people who are experts in different areas of land ownership, transfers, titles, deeds and land use, could come to this select committee and give their ideas and opinions and prevent us from making some drastic mistakes.

I want to say that there is more to the decline of agriculture than land. You have attitudes, flooding, praedial larceny, drought, access roads. You name it, we have it. Therefore, I do not think that we should add access to good agricultural lands to the already existing problems. You must have the land to farm. Whether you are farming fish, crops, animals, whatever, you must have land and therefore I am saying that since this is the basic ingredient, why do we want to put more problems on agriculture by making accessibility to land a problem? So I say, let us not add to it.

We also have to think in terms of the divisions that we are talking about, these two-acre and five-acre plots, and I will come to that in a while—about the culture of a people. Let me give you my experience in Tobago when the Government constructed Milford Court, Coral Gardens and those places. Tobagonians were very reluctant to buy them. They said, “Those houses are close to one another. I cannot plant my kitchen garden; I cannot have my flower garden.” The culture of

the people played a very important part and they were very reluctant. It was like a nightmare to get the people to accept it. So we have to be careful that in all these divisions that we think of the culture of the people, their religious habits as well as their own way of life.

I agree with Sen. Sadiq Baksh about this one-track thing of five acres. Some people may need 10 and some people may need two. Some people may need one acre. They may just say, "Okay, all I want to do is grow lettuce. One acre is enough for me. I am going to be a lettuce farmer." So why are you giving the same acreage to every farmer? I am saying some may need 10 acres; some may want three, because of their particular interest. They may say, "I want to do just one vegetable crop." Some may want to do just their fish farming; some may just want to do animals: sheep, goats, rabbits; some may have more family help than others; some may be older than others. At this age of my life I do not want any 10 or five acres; I just want two acres, because it would keep me active and alert and it would bring in an income and make me feel good. Again, I think that putting everybody into the same slot may not be the right thing to do. I ask the question: Did the farmers have an input in this? I do not know. Probably they had.

I want to go to some direct things about the Bill. I am saying I am happy that the Government is investing the lands in the State. I think with the state ownership of the land we could not go wrong. What we have to remember is that the Government is holding the land for the citizens of this country and, therefore, if that is the case, then you cannot do what you like with it. It is everybody's land. So we have to be very careful when we act on behalf of the people that we act in their own interest.

Some months ago I heard in an after-Cabinet meeting, our very junior Minister speaking of the formation of a company to assist in speeding up projects attached to education. I have not seen any bill coming to the House about that. Why are we having a bill for this now? It seems as though some things are so important and some things are not so important. I hope that we are going to also have the bill for these companies that we are going to set up.

Another problem we have in Tobago if you have lands inherited—I have known of families who had lands passed on to them; they had to subdivide the land to make sure every sibling got his or her portion and the Town and Country Planning Division objected. They said: "You want to break up this land into plots that your brothers and sisters are going to put houses on and as far as we have classified, these lands are agricultural lands", and they give you no permission to

do this. I am asking: Would this apply to the lands at Caroni and Orange Grove? Would they have this? I am saying also, to acquire private lands for public use, as we know here, we need parliamentary approval. How is it they do not need parliamentary approval to “manage, rent, assign, exchange and lease” for this Bill? I want to be educated on why not.

I also want to say that the use of land—the classification—there is a tendency to classify the land just according to plants, whether it is vegetables, fruits, whatever have you. But we also have to remember that the land may not be suited to planting crops but for growing just rough grass, and so on, to feed the buffalypso, the goats and sheep. It may be good enough that we could sink some ponds and put in some fish. So this is one of the points I wanted to make.

If we approve the Planning and Development of Land Bill, then any change in the land use would have to be approved. We have seen in instances, as I have said before in the case of Goldsborough, where we had people changing from what the lands were given to them to do and doing other things and nobody could have done them anything, because there was no specific rule to tie them down to doing that, and if you had to change, then you had to get approval to do it.

This is why I am saying, one, the Planning and Development of Land Bill and, two, the select committee. We need that select committee. [*Desk thumping*] It does not have to be for a long period. They could give a timetable and say: “By such and such time the committee must report.” But at the same time we could call for people who have had the experience of how things happened in the past and the matters that we need to avoid.

So I am hoping that we would take this; I am hoping that the hon. Minister would not feel that she is so pressed for time that she has to do everything now and things get bad, because we really want to support this Bill but not in this form. I speak for myself. [*Desk thumping*] You see, I have been won over by the fact that the lands are going to be vested in the State and, as I said—I made no bones about it—the Tobagonian has an attachment to the land that is indescribable. That is why we are fighting tooth and nail for Pigeon Point. That is why we were so upset when the Aliens (Landholding) Act was repealed and you know the hullabaloo we had, of foreigners coming into Tobago and young people selling the lands they inherited.

I want to tell the Attorney General, through you, Madam President, the people of Tobago are waiting to see what would be done about Pigeon Point. Every day on the radio they talk about it. I am not in government, I do not know, and many

times we have to say we do not know. But there is no cost attached to getting and keeping land that belongs to us. I want to give you my own experience with my father. He had an estate in Tobago, of 100 acres—hill and gully. You cannot even climb up the place. He said in his will: “All my lands there and elsewhere are to be given” and he named us. It stays in the family from generation to generation, from the first down to the last, their children and children’s children. He said: “If everyone dies”—because you could have a tsunami—“it goes to the church.” He said you could not even part it up. I cannot even say: “This part is mine and I have a deed”, or “that part is mine and I have a deed”. Nobody can sell it. We could do what we want. He said we could let people live on it, pay the taxes, but we cannot sell it. That is how it is.

That is how the Tobagonian feels about land. [*Desk thumping*] And that is how we feel about Pigeon Point. We do not care if you have to sell Trinidad to buy Pigeon Point, we want Pigeon Point! [*Desk thumping*] This is the extent to which we go because we feel that the land is power; we feel if we own the land we can rise from the ashes if we have to fall. But when we do not have anything, what are we going to do?

Madam President, I say again, I like the fact that the Government is putting the land in the hands of the State, but I am saying that we must be very careful as to what is done with the land; we must be very careful that the land—according to our old parents—must “mind” us; we must live off what the land can produce. Therefore, if that is the case, the only way the land could “mind” us is if we ensure that agriculture is done to its best and by the people who know best how to do it.

I am happy for the vesting of the land in the State because it tells me that moving from Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove to the State—whereas those people worked and toiled on the land, as we have heard here, they did not own it; they got nothing from it, and now with the State offering them so much, if managed properly, I am happy for those people. I am saying that we are going in the right direction but we need to ensure; we need to be very certain that there is no abuse of the power that would be invested in this management company that will take over from Caroni (1975) Limited and those people from Orange Grove.

We have spoken on clause 10 where my fears are and on clause 12 where the manager of the Estate Management Business Development Company shall submit in writing, “what, what, what”; the Minister will lay the report, and so on, and may make regulations, et cetera. I am saying that that select committee would help us to thrash this thing out. But I have a little concern with clause 10(6), which states:

“...the Manager shall collaborate with the institutions of government responsible for establishing these policies...”

Collaborate? I do not understand that word at all in the context of this. It could be so ambiguous. Just collaborate? To do what, a phone call? Or should you get approval that the relevant ministries would say in preparing these leases, “yes, this is what should happen here; no, that is not what should happen there”? I am saying that we need to look at clause 10(6) on page 11. That clause 10 on the whole has given us some trouble, and also clause 12, and I am saying that we could solve this by having our select committee and bringing the Planning and Development of Land Bill.

Let me say that all is not bad with the Bill. In fact, of the 15 clauses, those are the two clauses that gave me some concern—clauses 10 and 12. I would like to stress the Planning and Development of Land Bill and the appointment of a select committee to look at these experiences of others who would have tried to go this way before and would have had bad experiences.

Finally, I would like to impress upon this Senate that to us and to me, in particular, land is life. To the Tobagonian, the land is life. I know you would have read of the murder in Tobago of the 74-year-old man. It is because of land, you know. You see, this is why I am saying that you need to have the kind of trust where people could feel that they are fairly treated. Because the court said, “Okay, this is the situation” and this young man said, “I living here for so long and I cannot get it and this old man who is dying”—this is the situation. People will go to every extent to ensure that they keep the land. That is why the Attorney General, the Minister of Legal Affairs and the Cabinet must take note of the passion of the Tobagonian for land, and whenever you have to deal with us, be it Pigeon Point, Speyside Estate, Roxborough Estate, whatever, do not study cost; do not study big business, just do what is right for the people and ensure that the lands are vested in the State. As far as Tobago is concerned, make sure that the lands are vested in the State through the Tobago House of Assembly.

Let me thank you for this opportunity and let me say to the hon. Minister, we have noted good things in the Bill; we have noted the good intentions of the Government to have the land vested in the State in trust for the generations of Trinidadians and Tobagonians; we have noted all the good points, but all I am saying, two clauses have given us concern and I am appealing to her not to rush. You could last long; “look how young and nice you look”. [*Desk thumping*] A few weeks would not do you any harm. Set up a select committee; look at the

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[SEN. DR. MCKENZIE]

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Planning and Development of Land Bill. Even if we do not pass it before this, you could show the intention of bringing it back and listing it on the Order Paper. That would give us hope and I am sure that nobody would be annoyed.

Sen. Baksh has given you some—you know, that is why I like Sen. Baksh's contributions many of the times. He does not only criticize, he gives recommendations; he gives ideas and suggestions. So I want to say that we have time. If people think that you are doing this in their own interest and you want to get it so right, that just with a little more time nothing bad would happen, I am sure that they are going to agree with you.

I want to agree with Sen. Prof. Ramchand who first asked for the select committee and I am sure the hon. Minister would recognize that she would have had so much coming from people who have gone this path before and who have studied this in detail, that she would be very pleased that she waited a few weeks more.

**Sen. Joseph:** Just before the Senator finishes, I would like to ask one question, if I may. I listened to the Senator and she just said that the murder of the 74-year-old was a result of land, and we are trying our best in terms of law enforcement to prevent things. How could law enforcement have possibly prevented that murder?

**Sen. Dr. E. McKenzie:** No, no, no. I do not think law enforcement could have prevented it, from the details we got. I am saying from the details we have had—because you have information but you do not have evidence. You probably cannot even solve it. That is the reason they had to release the young man. Because it is people we know. Tobago is a small society and we know. People would hear and see.

What really happened—this is not pertaining to the Bill as such—the same day there was a court case with this dispute over property, land and house and who should leave and who should come back, and the matter was settled in favour of the old man, and the relative could not understand how, having lived there for so long, he had to move from the land. I have said this in this Senate, the culture of people, and I have said it already with the same domestic violence thing; I have said it in my contributions: “Man buy land, build his house; find lady from wherever she come from; put her in house as wife; dispute follow; you throw the man outta he house and he passing and seeing another man washing car in the yard and magistrate tell he, he cannot live there.” That is the point and we cannot divorce it from the culture of a people. Rather than take the lady and “she”



children and say, “lef de man in he house”, and find somewhere else, you tell the man; he buy the land; build the house, never know “she” from Adam—forgive me for my dialect, but that is exactly how it comes over—and the court is saying: “You will have to leave the property.” Domestic restraining order: “Way lay, way lay, walla, walla. Man passing next day, look over, see man washing he car in the yard that he buy the land for, how you expect him not to fly in there with the wheel spanner and lick up de man and kill him?”

So culture of a people and the attachment to land is important. The Tobagonian always says you get land; you build house, then you look for wife. God bless you.

Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie):** Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate be now adjourned to Tuesday, April 12, 2005 at 1.30 p.m., at which time the Government proposes that we should complete the debate on this Bill. Might I just indicate that the Government proposes to meet on Wednesday of next week to debate Bills Nos. 5 and 7 on the Order Paper.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 7.04 p.m.*