

SENATE*Tuesday, April 12, 2005*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Madam President, the answers to questions Nos. 55 and 58, like on the last occasion are currently not available. I have been advised that every effort is being made to have them available at the next sitting. As I explained to Sen. Mark, it is one of those situations where staff intervention has created some difficulty and we are working feverishly to bring this matter to a conclusion. That is the information I am reporting.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, reluctantly, I have accepted this particular submission. I would like the Minister to do what he has to do to ensure that at the next sitting of the Senate those answers are ready for presentation.

Before I go to question No. 60, may I remind you that the hon. Minister did indicate that—I do not know if you want to go through these questions firstly.

Madam President: Go through the questions.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Wade Mark:

**Government Employed Advertising Agencies
(Details of)**

- 55.** A. Could the hon Minister of Finance 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 hon. 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. A. Could the Minister of Finance 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?

Questions, by leave, deferred.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan): Madam President, I regret to advise that we have not completed question No. 60. I am able to answer questions Nos. 61 and 62. I seek the indulgence of this honourable Senate for a two week deferral.

Sen. Mark: I think a week is enough.

Madam President: If the Minister says two weeks it is because he feels that he cannot bring the answer in a week. We will ask him to try for a week but if he cannot we will have to accept the two weeks.

Hon. F. Khan: We will try our best for one week.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Wade Mark:

***MV Sonia*
(Details of Contract and Payments of Acquisition)**

60. A. Could the hon. Minister of Works and Transport provide the Senate with a detailed breakdown of the terms and conditions of the contract entered into between the owners of the *MV Sonia* and the brokers International Shipping Partners?

- B. Could the Minister further provide the Senate with all the details concerning the actual payments made to date towards the actual acquisition of the *MV Sonia*?

Question, by leave, deferred.

MV Sonia
(Cost of Fuel and Crew Members' Accommodation)

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

Could the Minister provide the Senate with:

- (i) the total cost of all fuel supplied to the *MV Sonia* from the date of its arrival to January 25, 2005; and
- (ii) the total cost incurred for hotel accommodation for the seven crew members who operate the *MV Sonia*?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan): Madam President, the total cost of fuel used by the *MV Sonia* from its arrival to January 25, 2005 was TT\$1,002,570.

Payment for accommodation of the crew of the *MV Sonia* is not the responsibility of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

MV Sonia and The CAT
(Finder Fees)

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

- A. Could the Minister inform the Senate whether any finder fees were involved or paid to any individual(s) or firm(s) in respect of the acquisition of:
 - (i) the *MV Sonia*;
 - (ii) *The CAT* (by Ferries of Canada)?
- B. If the answer to (A) is in the affirmative, could the Minister indicate to the Senate:
 - (i) the amount of finder fees paid in each transaction; and
 - (ii) the name(s) of the individual(s) or firm(s) that was (were) paid finder fees?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan): Madam President, no finder fees were paid by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago or any Government agency to any individual or individuals or firm or firms in respect of the acquisition of the *MV Sonia* or *The CAT*.

As such, part (B) of this question requires no response.

**Terms and Conditions of Contract Entered
into with National Shipping Partners**

Madam President: Are you ready to ask the supplementals for last week?

59. Sen. Mark: In terms of the contract that was provided, I ask the hon. Minister who are the true owners of the *MV Sonia*? Is it the firm outlined in the agreement here? If so, could the Minister provide us with some more details?

Hon. F. Khan: The owner of the *MV Sonia* is Achievers Shipping Limited. We chartered the vessel from International Shipping Partners (ISP). I am not clear about what additional information Sen. Mark wants.

Sen. Mark: Is the Minister aware that the real owners of this vessel are the Thomasos brothers? Are you aware that the Achiever Shipping Limited is not even registered with the Shipping Association of Florida and not in their directory, even though they have given their address in Florida?

Hon. F. Khan: I am not aware of some of those details. The Port Authority went out for international tender for a vessel for a 12-month charter party arrangement. My understanding is that in the shipping fraternity, in more cases than not, shipowners do not bid for charter party. They will come through brokers or other agents. It is not unusual to find a broker tendering a ship that is owned by another party. That is how the business operates. We can only evaluate proposals that were received. The tender committee evaluated about eight or nine proposals. It went to the board's tenders committee. It was ratified by the board and the Cabinet and that is the nature of the agreement.

Sen. Mark: I am asking whether the Minister is aware that Achiever Shipping Limited although based in Florida, is not registered with the Shipping Association of Florida?

Hon. F. Khan: I am not aware of it.

Madam President: Wait. Sen. Mark, I have not recognized you. I have recognized Sen. R. Montano.

Sen. R. Montano: Owing to the Minister's second to last answer, could the Minister please clarify what he said? Is he saying that they did not do a background check on these matters? If the answer is yes, is this not a normal thing you are supposed to do?

Hon. F. Khan: I am not sure what a background check is. If you are evaluating a tender, the party has proposed a vessel, you will check credibility with the firm in question. You will check Lloyd's of London to see where the ship is registered. There is nothing untoward about the situation. [*Interruption*]

Madam President: Members, you asked a question and the Minister is trying to answer but you are not giving him an opportunity.

Sen. Mark: Is the Minister aware that International Shipping Partners and Achievers Shipping Limited are located at 4770 Biscain Boulevard, Miami, Florida, 33137? Is the Minister aware that they are located at the same address in Florida? If so, is it not a bit strange that the owners and the brokers of this vessel are located in the same building in Florida?

Hon. F. Khan: It is difficult to respond to questions like those. I see no basis to insinuate any motive that is not clear in terms of transparency of the tender procedure, or the award of the contract and the intricacies of where people register their offices. Sometimes they are registered at lawyers' offices. The whole shipping fraternity is a very complex business arrangement. It is not a straightforward matter.

As Minister of Works and Transport with responsibility for the Port and the Port Authority, I have no evidence to the contrary that the Port Authority did not go through a very transparent and above board process to acquire the *MV Sonia*.

Sen. R. Montano: I did not fully understand the Minister's answer to my question. Is the Minister saying that we did not do a background check on the owners of this vessel?

Madam President: No. He did not say that.

Sen. R. Montano: If that is the case, did they do a background check? Without obfuscation—

Madam President: Senator, you made your point.

Hon. F. Khan: The evaluation team would have done all the necessary checks that I think were appropriate to the evaluation of the tender.

Madam President: One last question.

Hon. Senator: They did it with integrity.

Sen. Joseph: And not political morality.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, this reeks of corruption. Is the Minister aware that the true owners of the *MV Sonia* is Thomasos Transport and Tourism which is TTLines, a subsidiary of the Greek shipping company Thomasos Brothers Incorporated? If they are the real owners of the vessel, will the Minister not agree with me that it is a bit contradictory and because of the sensitivity involved, this matter warrants some kind of investigation by the Ministry of Works and Transport to determine if ISP is pulling wool over our eyes?

Is the Minister aware that the Thomasos Brothers are getting US \$11,000 per month for that vessel?

Madam President: That is more than one question at a time and you are making a speech.

Hon. F. Khan: I have no further response. I think that I have handled the matter.

Sen. Mark: You have no further response. This is corruption! We will expose you.

Hon. F. Khan: I will check it. At this point in time to respond yea or nay—

Madam President: Sen. Wade Mark, will you give me a chance? The Minister has said that he will check it and if there is anything untoward he would let you know. That is all we can expect from the Minister.

Sen. Mark: I want him to submit a report.

Sen. R. Montano: This involves TT \$160,000 a day. The response is unsatisfactory.

Madam President: We have had enough supplementals on that. Can we move on please?

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

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [April 05, 2005].

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Madam President: The last speaker on Tuesday last was Sen. Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie.

Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan: Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to contribute on the Bill before us. I will begin my contribution with a quote from an eminent agriculturist, a farmer and a patriot in this society, the President of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago, Miss Wendy Lee Yuen. This comes from the *Daily Express*, dated Friday April 01, 2005.

“Alarm bells should be ringing loudly in the Senate: if we do not safeguard these lands now and preserve their capacity to produce food and perhaps even renewable energy for future generations who may not have any oil left, then we are condemning our descendants to certain food insecurity and insufficiency. If we turn these lands over to a company to manage..., we will simply be creating a Caroni real estate cash cow and when the dust settles after the land grab what will we be left with?”

Fellow citizens, members of the Senate, let us proceed cautiously on this important topic, the future of our country is not only in these lands, it is also in your hands. I do not envy you the responsibility. Your decision can enable us to chart a new path forward, or doom us to further hardship and starvation.”

I would like to assure the President of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago here this afternoon, that we on this side have every reason to be highly alarmed and yes, the alarm bells are ringing. We also have every reason to feel insulted by the Bill before us and the policy statement, *Post Caroni (1975) Limited: A Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan* presented by the Minister. This policy statement presented by the Minister is the basis for the Bill. Out of the policy statement this Bill was drafted to support the policies. When we look at the policy statement which is couched in language that is very arrogant, high-handed and reeking of illegality based on arguments that are fallacious, we are indeed alarmed.

The basis on which this Bill was brought to this Senate is referred to in the document the Minister presented. In the first paragraph she mentioned that three reports were considered. After consideration of three reports and liaising with the major stakeholders, the representative unions and the farmers’ groups Government determined the policy parameters with respect to the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited.

I thought that in presenting this Bill the Minister would have answered some questions like: What reports did you consult? What farmers' groups did you consult? What recommendations did these farmers and stakeholders make with respect to the restructuring of the sugar industry? What recommendations were taken on board and which were rejected? Give the Parliament something to go on in terms of supporting this Bill based on this policy statement. You bring an empty document like this with no supporting documentation and apparently, no reference to anything other than the inter agency team which was hand-picked by Government and you expect us to deal with this Bill in a comprehensive manner.

This is not the future of a village parlour that we are discussing today. We are discussing the future of thousands of citizens in this country and the path that we take this afternoon will affect all the citizens, 1.2 million citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The possible negative impact of the use of Caroni's land will impact on the food and national security of this country. This is a very serious matter. In the supporting document the Minister outlined certain objectives such as the creation of employment; reversing the economic decay of communities, putting the life of former Caroni employees on a secure and sustainable basis and getting the workers of Caroni involved in the expanding manufacturing, and energy sectors. This also raises many questions and no answers were forthcoming from the Minister in her presentation.

In order to discuss this Bill on a rational basis with information, I thought that the Minister would have told us about the industries she was talking about. Are there existing industries in which she was seeing employment for the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited? Are they new industries? She did not identify any industry. What skills are needed for these industries? Are the ex-workers of Caroni being trained in the skills for the industry she has in mind? We do not know what she has in mind because she did not identify them. Where is the funding and the economic basis for these new industries? We cannot support Government policy when it is presented in this iffy, wishy-washy manner. This document is couched in language that is very vague, "should and would". While we are doing that, the small capital that the ex-workers of Caroni received in VSEP is being depleted. People's lives are going ahead. Your life does not stop because the Minister decides to throw you out of a job. Not one Caroni worker has received a parcel of land after nearly three years. I can assure the President of the Agricultural Society that not only are we alarmed and insulted, but we are also resolved to resist with every ounce of our energy, the imposition of this Bill on the people of Trinidad.

The purported aim of this Government in the policy statement, as supported by the Bill, was to restructure the sugar industry. In the policy statement and the Minister's presentation it was purportedly to be restructured because it is deemed "non-strategic". This raises a number of issues which the Minister did not address in her presentation. What is the strategy of this Government for development? If you are going to deem the sugar industry and the whole of Caroni (1975) Limited by extension non-strategic, you will have to explain your strategy for development. If the Government's strategy for development is based on extracting oil and gas from the earth in Trinidad and Tobago as fast as they possibly can and sending it to Spain and North America; setting up aluminium smelters which will bring tremendous pollution problems in this country in the future; energy and energy industries which employ only a few hundred at best then, perhaps, the sugar industry and Caroni (1975) Limited as an agro processing enclave in the agricultural sector could be considered "non-strategic".

If your strategy for development will encompass diversification of this economy; increased production and productivity of all the agricultural sectors and subsectors including sugar; if you envision industrial clusters based on downstream industries from sugar and agro processing in a major way; envision the development of agricultural processing enterprises, by no means, can you deem the sugar industry and Caroni (1975) Limited non-strategic. It was not just sugar. The Minister made the statement in this document after quoting the change in the international situation whereby our sugar is highly priced and we are no longer afforded preferential rates.

I believe as Sen. Prof. Ramchand said in his contribution that we do not look at these issues with our eyes. We look at these issues with the eyes of others. If you were looking at the issue with your eyes, you would never have come to the conclusion that this subsector is non-strategic. The processing subsectors are the major sources of employment. Thousands of people are involved in agriculture as opposed to the hundreds in the energy sector. I do not know where they got the idea that it is non-strategic. It is non-strategic for the PNM, but it is very strategic for the people of this country.

According to Sen. Montano, assuming but not accepting that they are serious about restructuring the sugar industry, other countries have had to face the same challenge. We are not alone. Later on, I will bring some examples of how the Belize Government dealt with this situation of restructuring in their industry.

2.00 p.m.

Madam President, other people did not go ahead and mash up the whole place; to restructure does not mean to mash up. I do not know where they got the idea that restructuring means to destroy, to decimate, to eliminate, to mash up and to penalize; restructuring does not mean that!

Madam President, assuming that they were genuine about restructuring: How do you go about restructuring? The Minister did not answer that question. Do you leave 30,000 acres of cane to rot in the fields? Is that how you restructure the sugar industry? Do you leave millions of dollars worth of equipment, and so on, to be looted and carted away by vandals? The lands of Caroni (1975) Limited was turned into a graveyard, overnight! Thousands of workers were offered a mandatory sentence to take VSEP or else! They were not given any choice! People's lives just stopped overnight: no income, no way of servicing one's mortgage, no way of planning for your children's future. It was a disaster! What was that? Was that restructuring? That was a death sentence to thousands of people in this country.

Madam President, we know how things are restructured. We have seen other countries which have faced the same challenges, and they have restructured. What they have done here is criminal! They did not restructure. It was a criminal act of aggression against over 10,000 persons in Caroni (1975) Limited. [*Desk thumping*] To add insult to injury, Minister Satish Ramroop came to this Parliament with this neo-fascist ideology, which goes something like this:

As long as the perpetrator of an aggressive, oppressive, criminal act achieves some semblance of cooperation or compliance on the part of his victim, then the aggressor can legitimately claim that there was no crime committed.

That was the essence of his contribution last week. He told us that the people from Caroni (1975) Limited were happy, they came dressed to their graduation; they kissed him; he kissed them and it was nice. Madam President, he called them "Nana"; and he hugged them. So when you do that and you achieve this semblance of compliance and complicity on the part of the victim then you can come here in Parliament and say that there was no crime of aggression committed against the people of Caroni (1975) Limited.

Madam President, I think Goebbels of Nazi Germany would have wished that he had thought about that theory. If he had thought about that theory, he would have been able to say to the people of Germany that there was no extermination of

Jews. Extermination is not extermination if they went willingly, and they went willingly on the trains. They did not resist when they were herded into the ghettos. They did not resist when they were herded into the trains. They did not resist when they were put into the showers because they were told that it was showers when it was gas. So Goebbels would have had a field day, Madam President, if he had thought about this new fascist theory of the relationship between a victim and an aggressor.

Madam President, people will always make the best of a bad situation. They were not given a choice! They were told to take VESP or go! What were they expected to do? These are peaceful people; these are enterprising people; these are people who always have hope for the future. These people have their religions; they have their way of life and they made the best of it. They did the courses; they went to the graduations; they were greeted and kissed by their aggressors and they were hoping for the best.

Madam President, the Ministers in this Senate all speak in the same mode. I do not know if they teach them that when they join PNM, because these are new Members. Do they have a course, PNM politics 101? [*Laughter*] I think the name of that course might be “the fundamentals of superficial political discourse”, because they are so superficial! The new ones, the middle ones, and the old ones all speak in that same superficial tone: “PNM politics 101” and they come up with these interesting theories.

Madam President, I think Minister Ramroop would have gotten an “A” plus in PNM politics 101 because he advanced another new theory which was: “The social advancement through evolution out of agriculture”. His new theory is that you can only advance socially if you advance out of agriculture. That is what he told us last week. He told us that the people of Caroni (1975) Limited are happy to come out of agriculture; come out of the fields; come out of production and so on and this social evolution means a step forward.

I would like to instruct Minister Ramroop that agriculture in any country worth its salt—in the big countries—is big business. Some of the richest people in the advanced countries are agriculturalists! They are the ones who drive the SUVs, who have these acres of farms and who make their wealth through agribusiness and agricultural production. One does not have to evolve out of agriculture to advance oneself!

There are universities in farming areas. Persons are sent to universities. Technical schools surround these farming areas so that they advance these

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. DR. KERNAHAN]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

farmers through education and they are able to apply new technology to their businesses and to create wealth through agriculture. Madam President, this is why agriculture has been stymied under the PNM for 45 years; it never reached anywhere. Sen. Ramroop told us that the theory is that you have to evolve people out of agriculture. They want to squeeze them out of agriculture so that the big importers would be able to bring food into this country. They do not want to produce food here because you have people, the financiers and supporters of the PNM, who make tons of money bringing food into this country. This is why they never evolved agriculture and we got the answer from Minister Ramroop last week: "The theory of social advancement through evolution from agriculture". Madam President, I would like to instruct the Minister that you evolve the infrastructure: the financial base and the economic base to support agriculture; you do not evolve people out of agriculture. I think he needed to know that.

Madam President, with respect to the aggressive way in which the Patrick Manning regime dealt with the restructuring of the sugar industry perhaps we can find the answer in an article written in the *Trinidad and Tobago Review*, "Responding to the Challenge", dated April 2005 on page 3. The editorial reads:

"Repealing the gangster states"

I think I found the answer to a question which was bothering me. What is it with all this aggression against the people of this country on the part of this regime? I quote:

Madam President: From where are you quoting?

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: I am quoting from the *Trinidad and Tobago Review* on page 3:

"In this space, we've termed this the gangster state. This does not refer to the increasing use of gangs and thugs in the state and party apparatuses, to garner political support and intimidate enemies. It is quite dismaying though that such a trend should be growing, and it should be of great concern to all thinking citizens, no matter what affiliation one may have.

Rather, what the gangster state refers to is the way of proceeding in public life. It is government without politics, Parliament as a rubber stamp, sham public consultation, planning as mamaguy. Gangsterism has a long history in the West Indies, is part of our founding conditions and continues to shape society."

Madam President, this is the total ideological framework within which this Government operates and the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited have felt this within their bones and they will feel it for generations to come: the gangster state mentality.

In this Bill before us, in this Policy Statement—I spoke about the superficiality with which this Government operates, I could find no resonance in these documents before us today in this Senate, in earlier policy statements by government. We had the Tripartite Committee Report in 1992 and there is no resonance anywhere in this Policy Statement or in the Bill before us in earlier statements by the governments or committees set up by this Government. There is no resonance in the requirements and provisions by the Town and Country Planning Act; nothing is in the Policy Statement or in the Bill before us. There is no resonance in the National Physical Development Plan Trinidad and Tobago. There is no resonance in the Caricom Heads of Government mandate with respect to the establishment of a dynamic and competitive agricultural sector for the states of the region.

Madam President, if this Government were serious about adhering to that mandate by the Caricom Heads of Governments, then we would have seen an orderly, seamless, humane, efficient, transition system put in place to restructure the sugar industry and to ensure that they were serious about employment generation by the downstream industries; that they were serious about food production and security in this country and, that they want to maintain a level of foreign exchange earnings which the sugar industry and agriculture provides, but you do not get this commitment to this mandate to establish a dynamic and efficient and competitive agricultural policy. You go out there and sit in all these conferences and you make all these commitments and when you come home what you do is totally opposite to the agreements you have signed out there even in Caricom. So they are hypocrites as well.

Madam President, not only were the arguments, as I have shown, in this policy statement flawed and transparently political in its obvious objective which was to destroy what they perceive to be the political base of the UNC, this document has exposed that this Government has absolutely no commitment to preserving the arable lands of Caroni (1975) Limited mainly for the use of agricultural and food production in this country. It is in this context that we are alarmed, insulted and upset.

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. DR. KERNAHAN]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

It is not only we on this side who think this way. I have a document before me from the Association of Professional Agricultural Scientists of Trinidad and Tobago (APASTT) which wrote a letter to all Senators asking us to be very aware and to be very wary of the provisions in this Bill that would negate the question of preserving the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited for food production and food security in this country. The major voices of sanity, of reason, of decorum and of transparency in this society are calling on us in the Senate today to reject this Bill and reject the Government's policy on agriculture.

They are quite correct in their interpretation of what is happening here today. In this Policy Statement, which the Minister presented and which is the basis for the Bill before us today, there are very disturbing statements with respect to what the Government policy is, but we have to be able to pick sense from nonsense. In section 34 of this Policy Statement it says:

“Accordingly, Government endorsed the following five (5) criteria for determining lands suitable for built development:”

They went on to give a number of criteria. In section 35 it goes on to say:

“Government agreed that based on these five (5) criteria, it was considered that approximately 32,000 acres or 42.0 percent of Caroni's lands were suitable for built development.”

That is a scandalous statement, as I would show you. In section 34 of this document also it is said that:

“However, it was recognised that those lands were also well suited to particular types of agricultural crops and it would therefore become necessary to make some trade-offs as between agricultural and built development;”

The people of this country are not prepared to make trade-offs between good arable agricultural lands and built development because that is not only going to impact on the high food prices we now face, it is going to impact on the future generations of Trinidad and Tobago. The facts are, that based on the Trinidad and Tobago Land Capability Survey Protocol 1974, which the Minister herself quoted in this document, 68.73 per cent of lands at Caroni (1975) Limited are classified as Class III and Class IV; this is excellent agricultural lands and that is 68.73 per cent; lands on which we can grow food, with some input, but it is very good arable lands.

Madam President, when you add the lands presently under sugarcane cultivation, which is represented by Class V, they constitute 27.49 per cent. They are represented by Class V because of the sloping lands and so on and fertility which has decreased over the 200 years of growing sugar cane and so on. But they are growing the sugar cane and they can be rehabilitated for sugarcane and other things.

What this adds up to is that 96.3 per cent of lands at Caroni (1975) Limited are suitable for agricultural production; that is the bottom-line. When you add the Class III and Class IV to the Class V you would get 96.3 per cent. It is only Class VI and Class VII that are totally unsuitable for agricultural lands and they would be preserved for forestry and tree crops and things like that. Yet, this regime, in its wisdom has decreed that they are going to trade almost half of the arable agricultural lands for built development. That is scandalous and that is why the Agriculturalist Association of Trinidad and Tobago has taken the time to write every Senator in this Senate asking us to defend Caroni's lands and to defend our heritage.

[Cellular phone rings]

Madam President: Hon. Senators, somebody's cell is on. Can you check and ensure that everybody's cell is turned off.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Thank you, Madam President. As I was saying, that is why they have taken the unprecedented step to write every Senator begging us to defend the future of this country and this is what we are doing here this afternoon. We are defending the future of this country; the food security; the national security and our heritage. The 96 per cent arable lands of Caroni (1975) Limited is a national treasure. *[Desk thumping]* We cannot sit and allow this Patrick Manning regime to destroy our national treasure for short-term personal political gains. They have destroyed the workers, they have mashed up the crop; they have left the fields to rot; they have left all the access roads in a mess; they have thrown away all the fertilizers. Madam President, please, somebody has to stop these people! Somebody has to stop this regime! Somebody has to tell them where to get off! It is people with integrity like us who are going to do it here this afternoon! *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]*

Madam President, we are not about trade food for concrete. *[Interruption]* We know that the future generations of Trinidad and Tobago cannot eat concrete. They are not going to evolve out of agriculture and evolve into another race and eat concrete. We are telling the PNM regime today that we are not prepared to trade food for concrete. *[Desk thumping]*

Madam President, the Estate Management and Business Development Company is going to be the vulture's claw in this issue and it is going to have the responsibility for distribution and dispensation of lands at Caroni (1975) Limited and this company is accountable only to the Minister. We are very disturbed about this. We are not going to support this Bill. Let us look at clause 10 of the Bill, which says:

- (1) "Notwithstanding the State Lands Act and any other written laws to the contrary, from the appointed day, the Manager may exercise on behalf of the State, the rights of ownership detailed in subsection (2), in respect of the real estate undertakings prescribed in accordance with subsection (5) and section 11.
- (2) In furtherance of subsection (1), the Manager may:
 - (a) manage, rent, assign, exchange, lease, evict from or otherwise deal with the real estate undertakings; and"

The essence of this Bill is really supportive of the indiscriminate distribution of 77,000 acres of prime agricultural land at Caroni (1975) Limited by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. It debunks the whole question of the management of lands at Caroni (1975) Limited by the Commissioner of State Lands. The Commissioner of State Lands would have no authority over the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited. It is the Manager of the Estate Management and Business Development Company reporting directly to the Cabinet and, of course, to the Prime Minister. The question we have to ask here today is: Why must we, in effect, hand over, in one stroke of a pen, 77,000 acres of arable land to a regime that is openly committed to using 42 per cent of it for built development; a regime which is committed to cutting off its nose to spoil its face? We are certain that—by the way they have handled the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited—the message they have sent is that if weakening your political opponents means that the 1.2 million people of this country must starve then so be it. That is the political morality of the Patrick Manning regime. If it means for your own short-term gains, your entrenchment in power, your stealing of elections and so on that you would use these lands as dispensation to your friends and family—this is what is going to happen because the Commissioner of State Lands has nothing to do with it anymore.

Madam President, when I was preparing for this Bill I called some public servants and asked: "Are you aware of the provisions of this Act?" The public servants kept telling me, no; everything must come through the Commissioner of State Lands. These are state lands and as far as we know nobody else is allowed

to lease, assign or deal with lands in that particular way. They were not even aware that this Bill cuts the foot from under the Commission of State Lands. The Government has repealed the State Lands Act, in this instance, Madam President. What we have now is a small number of people sitting in an executive cabal in the—

Sen. Mark: In Whitehall.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: No, in the Red House. It will be in the Red House just now.

Sen. Mark: Oh yes, yes, the Prime Minister in moving into the Red House.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: It will be a small number of people sitting in a cabal in the Red House who will dictate who gets 100 acres; 1,000 acres; 5,000 acres. They are going to give away our patrimony; they are going to put concrete on it and they do not care if the next generation of this country starves to death.

We are not going to have oil and gas forever. Food is going to be scarce; food is going to be expensive. There are new markets opening out there which are demanding food from the United States, China and so on. They are going to send their food sources to those countries and we would be left with a lot of Genetically Modified Foods which would be dumped in this market and nobody knows the effects of these foods on the human constitution. Madam President, this is the sombre future that faces us if we allow this Bill to pass; if we allow this Patrick Manning regime to get its claws on the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited.

We were talking about the illegality and the morality of the gangster state.

The Town and Country Planning Act, Chap. 35:01, requires the Minister responsible for town and country planning to secure consistency and continuity in the framework and execution of a comprehensive policy with respect to use and development of all land in the territory of Trinidad and Tobago. This is from the National Physical Development Plan Trinidad and Tobago, Vol. 1 Survey & Analysis. This policy must be prepared in accordance with the developmental plan prepared under the provisions of Part II of the Town and Country Planning Act. This plan is required to be prepared by law and presented to Parliament for update every five years.

Madam President, what is the purpose of the National Physical Development Plan Trinidad and Tobago, which by law must be presented for approval in Parliament?

- (1) It is meant to formulate a coherent and comprehensive land use policy which would provide the criteria for execution and enforcement of development and control.
- (2) To ensure consistency and coordination by providing guidance on matters of land use to Government agencies as well as private development and investors.

Madam President, what we in this Senate would like to ask today is: Where is the National Physical Development Plan Trinidad and Tobago, which by law must be updated and presented to Parliament every five years? Such a plan should have been presented to this Parliament in 2004, but in 2005 we are still waiting. The Policy Statement mentioned in one line that the National Physical Development Plan Trinidad and Tobago is being updated, but in the meantime what the Government in its wisdom has decided to do, is to appoint this Inter-Agency Land Use Planning Team from which it is taking all its advice, illegally. This is a gangster state; a gangster government which goes against all the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] flouting the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act. They have appointed their own cabal to decide and advise them on how the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited are to be used and distributed. The Minister has come here—this illegal government with illegal plans, a gangster government—and presented this as a *fait accompli* to the Senators of Trinidad and Tobago. That is why at the beginning I said that we not only feel alarmed, we also feel insulted. Madam President, this is an illegal act; it is an alarming act.

I believe they are acting in this way because they feel that the people of Trinidad and Tobago—we are so totally demoralized, emotionally drained, scared—do not care about these issues. While they have their gangs and people running wild with guns, they are not doing anything; they are pushing responsibilities, like on a chessboard, from one to the next, the King say, no; the Knight say, no; and while they are shifting around responsibilities, Madam President, what is happening out there is chaos, people are fearful, totally cowed and totally apathetic under the situation. One radio announcer actually said it. He said: “I do not want to hear anything about water, roads or lights or anything; I just want to know that the Government could deal with this question of crime and kidnapping.” He is a strong supporter of the Government. This is a very popular radio announcer and strong supporter of Government’s policies. In fact, he asked: “Why does the Opposition not present a plan to Government?” Madam President, they are in power; they have all the resources, but they find we should present a

plan to them to save the country. If that is what they want they should put us back in power. Give them their walking ticket and put us back because that is the only way we could present any plan.

Madam President, they are hoping that the country is so demoralized and so emotionally drained that they are not looking at the big picture. The big picture is what this gangster state is doing with respect to the future of this country and the way it is going to deal with the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited, food security and national security. This is why the President of the Agricultural Society rightly said and I quote:

“After the dust settles; after the land grab, what will we be left with?”

Madam President, Prof. John Spence is another reason of sanity on this issue. He has been writing extensively on this issue. He was one of the persons who had long been calling for a vesting of the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited in the State. He was concerned that the State should be the holder of the patrimony and the heritage of the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited, but he did not envisage a gangster state. That is the mistake he made. He has had to express his concern. All the time he was saying that the land should be vested in the State, and I quote Prof. Spence in a newspaper article dated March 31, 2005, page 11. He says:

“My concern is that there will be a further loss of agricultural land, particularly as the Minister of Agriculture seems to have no role to play in the process of the management of these lands.”

2.30 p.m.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan: Madam President, in fact, Prof. Spence has said:

“I would strongly urge the Senate set up a Select Committee which can call expert witnesses and interested parties (Prof. Ahmad, Agricultural Society, the Faculty of Agriculture) to explore the Land Capability issues.

In any event any change of use of these lands from agricultural to other purposes should be subject to approval by Parliament.

If the Government will not agree to a Select Committee then the Independent Senators and the Opposition should vote against the Bill and so defeat it until it is amended to include safeguards to prevent the further alienation of agricultural land.”

In the Minister’s opening statement she said she has consulted all those stakeholders. Clearly she did not consult Prof. John Spence who is an eminent expert on agricultural matters. Clearly, she did not consult the President of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago who has very strong views about this. Whom did she consult? The Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) supervisors, the people who are adept at painting stones and cutting grass? Are those the agricultural experts she consulted? Maybe, it is some of those CEPEP supervisors she consulted when she claimed she consulted farmers’ groups. Which farmers’ groups? I am sure if I sit and ask her to name one farmer’s group she cannot tell me a name. I wish I could do so, I do not have the liberty of Sen. R. Montano to sit and wait for the answer. I would not go through all that drama, but I am certain that she does not know the name of one single farmer’s group. I challenge her to tell me that.

Madam President, Prof. John Spence, the President of the Agricultural Society, will be alarmed and very upset about the proposal to hand over 77,000 acres to this cabal which will sit in the Red House and decide on the dispensation. Because what do we have here? In the *Probe* of Sunday, April 03, 2005 there is a headline:

“\$M Cinema for Caroni Land but still no real estate for sugar workers.”

I would like to quote from this article.

“While former sugar workers are patiently waiting for former Caroni (1975) Ltd. land, a cinema complex is to be constructed on prime real estate off Chaguanas.

Work is currently in progress, and the modern facility is set to be opened in November.

Endeavour Holdings Ltd., (EHL) is listed as the firm behind the multi-million-dollar project, off the *Radio 610* transmitter site, alongside Uriah Butler Highway, Chaguanas.

A close relative of a prominent Government official is listed as a director of Endeavour Holdings Ltd.

The company is a sister firm of an organization that bears the surname of the top-flight Government official.

Weekend Probe failed in several efforts to contact the listed EHL director.

As soil preparation work was busily taking place this week, the Chaguanas Borough Corporation stated it has not received any formal plans on the matter.

‘We are going to investigate,’ said Building Inspector Kelvin Rampersad.

Chaguanas Mayor Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan said he had heard about the construction of the cinema.

Rambachan shied away from further comment.”

An example of the superficiality of the PNM. A serious issue, a million-dollar cinema going up on prime arable land.

“But the mayor said the Corporation was taking action against nearby Price Plaza with respect to an illegal wall.

Rampersad said: ‘We have not received any plans for that building and they are continuing to build.

We are going to serve them a notice on that issue.’”

This is why the President of the Agricultural Society is concerned. This is why Prof. John Spence is concerned. This is why all voices of sanity, of integrity and of reason in this country are concerned; and this is why we are concerned, that this sort of action will escalate over the next few years if the Patrick Manning regime is not stopped dead in its tracks today by the Senators in this honourable Senate.

I said at the beginning, that other countries have had to face the same realities; we are not the only country that had to face the question of restructuring its sugar industry. And I would like to present the example of Belize. This is an agricultural country and the majority of their GDP is based on agriculture. They do not have the gas and the oil so they have to be serious about their agriculture. What they have is a Ministry of Sugar Industry, Labour and Local Government.

Madam President, in order to face these challenges they have presented to their Parliament a new Sugar Industry Bill. I want to quote from an address presented by the hon. Valdemar Castillo. He is a member of the government of Belize. The document was presented in the House of Representatives.

Madam President, I quote:

“The Proposed Sugar Industry Bill, subject to final consultations and refinement, with acceptance and support from the various stakeholders, will be passed into law establishing the legal framework and setting the stage for improved management and performance of the Belize Sugar Industry at this crucial stage of its existence.”

What they have done, is to involve all the stakeholders in the country. They have sat and have consulted with them that they are establishing a new law in order to deal with the realities that they have to face.

Madam President, they are considering a proposal for the production of ethanol out of the sugar industry as a downstream industry. They are continuing to explore that. They have many other initiatives and they have given support to farmers in this critical stage of development. They have issued over 75,000 tons of additional licences to farmers, they are allowing duty-free treatment for a large part of the fuel needed to transport cane in an effort to assist with depressed incomes, and they are providing scholarships to high school children of cane farmers. This is how they are restructuring and dealing with their sugar workers. Not the massacre we experienced with Caroni (1975) Limited.

They have been working ceaselessly with the stakeholders, cane farmers, Belize Sugar Industry, politicians, government, bankers and others involved to better understand the industry and chart a way forward to ensure its strategic survival for the benefit of all including the entire country. These are some of the initiatives that they are taking. And they are dealing not only with the stakeholders in Belize, they are dealing with all the NGOs that we know about and some of the NGOs that they have in their country.

One of the interesting initiatives that they have taken here that this Government could take a page from their book is:

“A number of potential alternatives have already been identified including papayas, soyabean, mariculture, cattle, fruit crops, root crops and retirement schemes, among others.”

We already have that in train because the diversification of Caroni (1975) Limited was already in train for a number of years and the Tripartite Committee made certain recommendations to accelerate the diversification process out of sugar to ensure what sugar would be produced that it would primarily earn some foreign exchange, that we would be a refining centre here in Trinidad and Tobago for Caricom. What they are doing is not anything that we do not know about, because all these proposals were made by the last Tripartite Committee. But they have thrown all that out the window because this gangster Government and this gangster State have seen the possibilities to get the clutches on 77,000 acres of Caroni (1975) Limited land.

Madam President, they have also made a number of concessions to the sugar industry and sugar workers in terms of licences, in terms of establishing a small farmers business bank, a development finance corporation to undertake long-term loans at subsidized rates to genuine cane farmers. They agreed to duty free fuel for the 2001 crop, they agreed that the transport subcommittee of the Belize Sugar Board is going to be expanded. The essential point is that they sat down with all stakeholders, with all their cane farmers, with the banking and finance institutions and they established a comprehensive plan for the survival of the sugar industry because they recognized it was essential to the national economy.

What we have done is the opposite in Trinidad and Tobago. Because we have a little bit of oil and gas and because they are mad with power, and they do not care about this country and they do not care if 1.2 million starve at the end of the day, what they did was to consult with nobody, they have refused to even bring the National Physical Development Plan, they have not consulted with the farmers, they have not consulted with the union, it was a take it or leave it deal, it was a done deal by the time they reached to the union. They have sat in their little cabals and decreed, sent out edicts on Caroni (1975) Limited, and the result is endless pain, pressure, tears, and the future of this very country is in jeopardy.

Madam President, we have to stop them in their tracks and I am certain we are going to do so today. Thank you.

Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran: Madam President, if this Bill were mainly about economics, finance or even accounting, I believe the debate would have been less spirited than it is so far. But, from those of us who have been looking at the Caroni (1975) Limited issue, so called over the years, this debate on this Bill brings forward matters of an intensely political and cultural nature. And with those nuances which cannot be disregarded, we have to search in this Parliament

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

for the proper way out and make a resolution given the people who have depended and who will depend on the outcome of this debate. We have to spend some time and some careful thinking with reason to get the best way forward.

In terms of public policy, almost every decision a government makes has to do with choices. There is scarcely a decision that a government in power makes, given the democratic nature of the society with a plurality of interests and demands upon the resource, in which there are not difficult choices, meaning one group or the other will have to wait or be left out.

In this case, it is clear to me that no matter how we beat around the bush, no matter how we pussyfoot around the issue, given the evidence over the years, something had to be done with Caroni (1975) Limited. The questions which arose are therefore, exactly what, and secondly, having decided what, how do you go about it, which is the process factor and how do you get the people involved and to what extent?

The product of the decision, a public policy, therefore, given what I said earlier with respect to the politics and cultural aspects, we have to take into account the process we use towards resolving this issue. It is not an easy decision. If it were so the National Alliance for Reconstruction would have made it long ago. If it were that easy, the United National Congress, when it was in power would have made that decision as well. In fact, with respect, I will submit the debate is not over yet, so I would like to hear what the United National Congress, as a party, would have done or would have preferred in terms of the allocation of lands be it in a proportional sense or whatever. What would they have done with the remaining lands, what would they have done with Caroni (1975) Limited? Would they, for example, have continued to subsidize Caroni (1975) Limited even if you diversify it into rum production? These are hard decisions. This should not mean that the Government had a clear-cut choice over the years or the United National Congress, when it was in office, had a clear-cut choice. These things are filled with powerful nuances where many a brave man had feared to go except, today. We have a Minister in the Ministry of Finance, like a warrior princess, entering into the belly of the beast as it were.

People were afraid to touch the Caroni issue. What they would do was to produce a report; by Winston Dookeran, even by John Spence, who was on a committee; reports over reports. Why? Because the decision had serious political consequences and that is the point the previous speaker, Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan, was alluding to when she implied; and, of course, it is for the PNM to

respond, whether there is an attempt in this initiative to destroy the political base of the UNC. She has captured the essence of one of the nuances I am speaking about because this debate really brings to the fore, the heart and soul of the kind of politics in which we are engaged, and we are shying away from identifying the variables as they really are alive and kicking: ethnicity, culture and politics. Hence the difficulty over the years and with that difficulty, it became very expensive for the taxpayers.

In a three-year period, for example, between 1990—2001, about \$1.6 billion was given in subsidies of one kind or another to Caroni (1975) Limited and we had to do something. Even in the current attempt to take over and transform, Caroni (1975) Limited, carries a liability of about \$3.5 billion in terms of debts and other obligations. The issue is not whether to close down Caroni (1975) Limited or not, the issue is how best to close it down or how best to transform it, faced with the evidence that we have.

World prices, as this report indicates, a *Post-Caroni (1975) Limited: A Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan*, January 13, 2005 compiled by the Minister and her Ministry; very informative in its statistical and database sense, very straightforward.

Madam President, in listening to the debate, and knowing the history of this Caroni (1975) Limited issue, it is indeed a heavy responsibility for this Minister to carry through. It is heavy and one can sense the thunder in this debate because of that responsibility and the implications it carries. In fact, she has shown tremendous courage in walking through the plains of Caroni, Couva North, in trying, as one would say, to market the idea and the possibilities.

As I said, many a man dared not do that. Maybe, this is the age of women on the rise. And she is lucky to be in this particular position. She is very, very lucky to be in this position of opportunity as it were, and it depends on how one initiates the process.

Having said that, and as a brief incidental remark, I thought, given all the “Letters to the Editor” and the columnists and the letters from different associations, Madam President, as the Presiding Officer in this Senate, I am sure you would have welcomed the spectacle of having our public gallery filled for a debate of this type. Where are the people from Central Trinidad? Where are the passionate people who have such a passionate interest in the land and agriculture in this country listening to the debate on a matter of such great importance? We have more journalists than members of the public.

I think it is a commentary on matters which, I do not think now is the time to get into. But I think agriculture needs a powerful lobby in this country and what we should have had before us here, not today or yesterday, but some time before, is some preparatory documentation from some of the experts so as to inform the debate through the different representatives including the Independent Senators. I doubt whether the Government could feel it knows everything about the issue just as I doubt the Opposition should feel so and, of course, the Independent Benches, speaking for myself. We certainly need to know a bit more, which would bring me later on as to what is the way forward. What is the best alternative to choose to get this matter right, because we are debating this in a context in which the politics is not right. The politics is all wrong to deal with a matter like this, especially when you aim for the imperative of consensus and compromise. Hopefully, we can work it out, because there is much bad blood on the street when it comes to Caroni (1975) Limited workers. Some of it is perception; some of it is, as you say, fact, and in public policy one does not know what to respond to, whether to respond to perception in terms of crime or in this case, what has happened to the Caroni (1975) Limited workers, or you refer to facts as statistically produced.

It caught my attention when, in *The Trinidad Guardian* of April 08, on page 8, the Public Services Association spokesman made this comment, because the comment reflects the sentiments of many people. The PSA executive gave this release.

“We are going to be sending a strong message to Rahael and the Government to let them know this is not Caroni (1975) Limited they are dealing with.

If Rahael sent home (10,000) Caroni workers and got away with it, we want him to know that health workers are not going to take this...lying down,’ Smith said.”

I refer to this to tell you what is the talk in the street with respect to how this matter has been handled, and it is for the Government and the Minister to correct this perception. I think a lot in the report, for example, could help in that respect. There are some things that need to be cleared up for public consumption.

I need to press the case that something had to be done with Caroni (1975) Limited. To just accuse the Government and say that they closed down Caroni (1975) Limited, I do not think that is a fair conclusion. The way they did it might be questionable but the decision to do something with Caroni (1975) Limited is a legitimate and deserving one at this stage. Could one imagine that private

farmers' costs were lower than what Caroni's own output was? I mean, what was in Caroni (1975) Limited was more expensive than what the private farmers were supplying, for example. Could you continue with that? No. World prices were not competitive.

The Minister made reference to the number of times our production was more compared to other countries. There was even a shortfall in the sugar cane supply. In the face of all those adversities, we just could not carry on.

I would have liked to hear, and I am still waiting to hear it, if Caroni (1975) Limited failed, why precisely did it fail, apart from the international prices; what is the role of management? And I would like to hear a frank pronouncement on the role of political patronage and the incremental collapse of Caroni (1975) Limited, because the question of political patronage would arise when we deal with clause 10 of the Bill. There is a lot of mistrust about Government's intention. It may not be my personal belief, but you are dealing with prevailing sentiments. We have to remove that element of mistrust as I said before, by carving a way forward that will restore what we call the required social capital in making the economic decisions.

I am saying so because in public policy, we must learn from the past. We cannot repeat the mistakes, especially when these mistakes cost taxpayers so much money, in this case, billions of dollars. Whether it is a television station one closes down, one has to make a decision. Whether it is the tourist industry that one is transforming into two separate sections, one has to look at the cost; in this case, Caroni (1975) Limited. We cannot make the mistakes, with all the good intentions that were made as in the case of Wallerfield many years ago when lands were given out with great promises of buying local and feeding ourselves.

In a flourish of dispensation and generosity, people got lands, they got pigs, cows, bulls only to find out they closed down the farms and then they started to drive "bull" in the road—driving PH taxis. They mistook what bulls meant in terms of its function. They ended up "pulling bull" on the road—PH taxis. I heard in Tobago it is quite prevalent in that regard, with lands given out and the transformation of the exercise into PH taxis.

It was a fiasco with Wallerfield. The documentation was just as brilliant as this one. I can tell you. They promised pangola grass; the former minister, Kamaluddin Mohammed, became famous for pangola grass. There is a history

from which we ought to learn, and I am quite sure if some of us had more time we would delineate in detail the reasons why these things collapse. Are we going to make the same mistake again?

3.00 p.m.

We need certain guarantees such as the one we have here from the Association of Professional Agricultural Scientists of Trinidad and Tobago, which, I believe was sent to all Independent Senators and other Members of the Senate. It asks for certain guarantees of land usage. Even though the intention of land usage was stated in the Bill, there is no guarantee, and those guarantees are important for us to document. I believe, as we search for the way forward, we can find the process that, to me, accommodates such valid suggestions.

Madam President, we gave land to a group called the Black Panthers somewhere in the country. I wonder what has happened to those lands; how much citrus and what else they have planted on it, so that we can use it for best practice, if it is successful. It is true we have given the lands to the State, but the State also has a responsibility to ensure accountability for those lands. It is not the State's lands, you know; it is the people's lands. I think we make a mistake when we say that the State owns this and that the State gave out that.

Madam President, in a democratic society with representative government, it is the people's lands, for which the State is responsible and that responsibility has to be reflected in accountability. I believe it is not to obstruct the Government's intention, but to ensure that there is the required accountability for the usage of these lands, especially with the history that we have had.

This Bill is the last chance for agricultural revival in this country. This Bill and what it promises is our last train to agricultural progress in this country and if we miss it, we will never get another chance. I say it with great fervour because when we analyze the acreage involved, the infrastructure required and what we are substituting in terms of building development and so on, we are making a critical decision here and it should not be taken lightly. This is an SOS for agriculture.

Other speakers, my colleagues, have spoken about using the soil so as to save us from the vicissitudes of a harsh international environment. That is the bottom line. If we accept that with conviction, it will help to guide us into the process of removing the mistrust and giving some guarantee that they can transform Caroni

and that there is a future for agriculture as part of the transformation. If not, we will have to give agriculture a decent burial and bask like rich fools in the sunshine of energy and gas, but for a short time.

Madam President, I listened to the several concerns, especially by Opposition Senators, a lot of it quite valid. It is a pity it has to take place—I know it is inevitable—in a rather confrontational way. The last speaker, for example, Sen. Dr. Kernahan, spoke about the role of the soil and my colleague, Sen. Prof. Ramchand, did the same. Agriculture is more than economics. In the case of Caroni and the population attendant upon it, it is more than a lifestyle. It has been their very soul. So when they describe the population as being land grabbers or as just wanting land or as being greedy, that is not only a misnomer, it is a gross misunderstanding of the cultural aspects of the East Indian population living in those areas, to put it bluntly.

It is the passion for the land that led to the prosperity of sugar cane when it was king. Because international prices have changed, that does not mean that people can transform their souls, their spirits and their allegiance to the lands overnight. They have to be gentle with the transformation. They have to be understanding about what is being rooted out, and they cannot do it in any inhumane fashion, no matter what the economics.

I listened to Sen. The Hon. Ramroop and I think he is helpful in this debate, as Minister in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. He made the point—I found it very intriguing—that the people were very happy to get their certificates because they were dressed up quite well with their families and they shook hands. He made it sound as if they were glad to be released from some bondage. I do not think he meant it that way but that is the way it came over. What he really meant to say, I believe, is that they were hopeful that there is a future. Still, between his words, and to be fair to him, it revealed the clash of cultures in which we are now engaged, in this transformation process. I am hoping that the particular Minister, with some gentility and understanding, would remove some of the political fluff and get down to what is a matter beyond bread and butter. It could involve bread and butter, but it is the process that leads towards determining the economics that is now very critical.

There is a book I have read—I do not have it here—called *The Agony of Modernization*. It shows the pains that developing countries like ours endure when we are trying to become developed; the breakdown of tradition and the rejection of the very values that would help us, the traditional values that we push

aside for modernization. This is why I find that the East Indian population—to be very precise, in Central Trinidad—has received some very unfair stereotyping in terms of being called clannish, when all they were doing is trying to keep their family ties, like the extended family, by living in close-knit ways in terms of their tradition. That was described by scholars at the university and American researchers who know little about the culture, but were merely looking at the form rather than the substance of the culture and saying that they are clannish.

Similarly, they have branded the East Indian unfairly again as being land grabbers, trying to say it belongs to everybody. We know that, but it is the way they root them out and they should make the transformation fairly as well. I wish we could look at all these things and ease the pain of the people of Caroni.

We are moving into a white-collar culture. Everybody wants to wear jacket and tie quickly. If they have a job, whether it is the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) or the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), they want to finish work quickly and dress up and pose. That is one of the features of ugly modernization. We know the formula, but not the technique. Those countries which have gotten developed and which the Washington model wants to impose upon us, got developed, not only through technology, but through their own values. The difficulty with countries like ours is how to transform the modernization parameters, the template, upon a culture which is quite different from other developed countries.

When the IMF or the World Bank come to us and they make their mistakes, which they have now realized—now there is talk about putting people first, about social and psychological capital and about participatory democracy—it is because they have made that mistake in the past by trying to impose a model of development that is purely economically and financially viable, but in the end, the candle costs more than the funeral because they have to redo the process again and again, whether it is public service salaries or whatever.

I want us to save ourselves from such imminent disaster. It is not only a matter of national security in terms of crime. There are two forms of security we have to look at. National security in terms of crime and personal safety depends a lot—and if I had time I would have shown the connection more tightly—on food security, meaning the capacity we have to support and sustain ourselves because it is linked to all kinds of things—importation, high prices, middle agents and a number of things that lead to aggravating the national security issue.

We are making a plea, not only to save Caroni or to help the people of Caroni, but also we are making an appeal of national proportions. More precisely—because I think there is some misunderstanding here—the earth to the population in Caroni, mainly the East Indian population, is a sacred thing. They pray with the earth. They hold the earth up as a form of worship. It is from that that they derive the passion and commitment to the land upon which they grow food. To them it is not just a job; it is not just taking some people and putting them in agriculture overnight with a training programme. I understand the need for that now, but with that native Caroni population, it was much more than a job. I am saying that as they move into the transformation process, they have to move with a certain sensibility and sensitivity.

I want to refer to something that Sir Arthur Lewis wrote, if my words alone are not enough. In 1950, he wrote a book called *Industrialization of British West Indies*. I would read four lines—I know you do not like us to read the whole page. He made his premise about surplus labour, which is a problem we have here. Our problem is not just getting employment again and again for URP. We have a challenging problem of surplus labour and the analysis has to account for where the surplus labour is coming from, why it is coming from such place so steadily, how to cap it—and it is not just supplying employment opportunities, but that for another day.

Sir Arthur said:

“Some key is needed to open the door behind which the dynamic energies of the West Indian people are at present confined.”

—and still are.

“The key has obviously been found in Puerto Rico,”

—which was a pet subject of his, with industrialization by invitation and so on—

“where the drive and enthusiasm of the people, hitherto as lethargic as the British West Indians, warms the heart and inspires the confidence in the future. The British West Indians can solve their problems if they set to them with a will. But first they must find the secret that will put hope, initiative, direction and unconquerable will into the management of their affairs. And this is the hardest task of all.”

We call these factors of hope, initiative and direction, leadership from the Government in this particular exercise. We call that social capital factors. These are real factors and the evidence around the world suggests that the extent to

which these factors can be inserted in a process of economic transformation, to that extent will your project be successful.

I am afraid, and I say with great regret, that we do not have that optimism in the sugar belt. We do not have that will in partnership. We do not, as yet, have the hope for mutually beneficial results for the transformation. We are missing much of what is mentioned in Sir Arthur's presentation, even before the words "social capital" were used. We have just gotten a new label for things that were known long before by the economic sociologist and the development economist.

That is the point I was making. The East Indian population in Central Trinidad long had social capital in their midst. They did not call it so. They called it by different names. I wish that could be shared across the entire country more precisely.

Even Adam Smith, if I could perhaps inform the debate of some of the critical requirements in moving the transformation exercise forward. People know Adam Smith for talking about the wealth of nations and the invisible hand of the marketplace, but they always forget, it seems to me, because more often than not it does not fit their argument in trying to spread the bible of the marketplace. They seem to forget that Adam Smith spoke about moral sentiments and equity and fairness in allocating resources and/or making economic decisions. He did not only speak about economics in the raw terms in which we accept it. He inserted the necessity for what he called moral sentiments, meaning you must be gentle with people whom you are transforming; you must be accommodating to their needs, their requests and feelings.

When you transform and you dislocate, it is with the optimism and the trust that even those who are displaced will be motivated to recover and to go along with you in the transformation process. That is why we want the people who are allegedly displaced at Caroni to work with the Government in trying to find, not only an economically beneficial solution, but a socially comfortable resolution, so that the Caroni issue will rest in peace after that and will not resurrect on the political agenda time and time again.

On page 2 of the report, Madam President, point 5, the Minister said this thing "could only survive under conditions which are dictated by sound economic, financial and technical criteria". I agree that might be necessary, but in the context of Caroni that cannot be sufficient. Many things are necessary, but not sufficient. The technical criteria might be necessary, but certainly not sufficient.

In the review of development for rural communities, a development economist Cernea, in 1995, put it this way—and I find it revealing for our own enlightenment.

“An absence of concern with social dynamics...”

—some of which I just alluded to—

“has been inherent and endemic in the econocratic or technocratic models guiding planned...interventions. Economists, as the professional body presiding most often over the rites of project making, have done little to incorporate cultural variables into project models.”

The results always take revenge on the outcome. I do not know how much stronger to put this. I have left my own sense of depending on other people who are experts in the area hoping that the Government and the Minister in particular would be persuaded to rethink the process used in this particular context; not merely the outcome and the savings, because we want to solve this problem, if possible once and for all.

Madam President, if the Government continues to keep companies and enterprises that lose money year after year, which are also filled with mismanagement and sometimes burdened with political patronage, it demoralizes the rest of the country. People do not pull their weight. They feel it is no use because money is going out. There is a haemorrhage there, why should I save? Why should I come to work on time? Why should I do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay? Look at how much money is being wasted?

As I mentioned just now, it is billions of dollars. Government has to show the leadership, but not only in Caroni as it is trying to do. It is a welcome initiative. It is welcome and it is overdue. They have to show this initiative in other aspects of state ownership. If they create anything new, there has to be a guarantee of, not only accountability, but there must be cost benefits. The administration and the implementation must have some cost benefits.

This is relevant to Caroni because people in Caroni ask if you feel that Caroni is a welfare agency—that is you just have them because you want to keep them employed regardless of the production outcome. How come you have CEPEP, URP and BWIA? So there is a sense of equity that must prevail from the Government in how it deals with different agencies, otherwise people will become resentful. I suspect, without going too deeply, that the East Indian population in this country has grown resentful because of the way they see Caroni being treated as compared

to other agencies owned and controlled by the State. It is a perception. It is for the Government to correct that perception if it is misguided or unfounded. We see symptoms of that perception and we must not shy away from it because these are structurally deep factors that affect ethnic relations in this country. When we say “Side by side we stand”, we want to mean it and the decisions we make should inspire that kind of fraternity, or the resentment will grow.

There is a letter here on page 13 of the *Sunday Express* dated April 10, in terms of equity. The headline is: A letter by Geoff Hudson. It says, talking about BWIA:

“Spend \$\$ where it can make a difference, not on BWIA

Bwee never made money, doesn't make money, never will make money and does not help one productive worker or manager or school child or student get to where they want to go on a daily basis or reduce their hours of commuter stress.

In another stroke of genius the Government gives six men 12 days to come up with an answer to the problem that governments over the past 44 years have conspicuously failed to solve, or even failed to address.”

And it goes on.

Madam President, thousands of people in this country would agree with these sentiments. Just as they find it convenient, timely and imperative to deal with Caroni, the Government must now deal with BWIA in a similarly decisive manner. For what we know about BWIA and the money we have spent on it since 2001—almost \$1 billion in loans, subsidies, advances and so on—what is the difference? They have to tell the people what is the difference between BWIA and Caroni that they can transform and restructure one because of economic considerations, but they cannot transform the other—in fact people feel that they should close down BWIA.

I think that some arrangements could be made now to give the people of Caroni a sense of equity and fair treatment. Work out an arrangement with an American or British airline to take up what they left behind. The time has come when travelling first class and all the niceties we get in the VIP lounge should not be enough to inspire us to keep BWIA at such expensive baggage on the taxpayers' shoulders. The time has come, in my view, to close down BWIA and get an alternative to transfer the passenger load. We have to face the music. They cannot use Mr. Lok Jack and his team to come up with another red herring, otherwise the

argument for Caroni would collapse and lose credibility. That is what I mean by equitable public policy.

We should be worried. Madam President, I know you are worried about these things. I know you want ethnic harmony in this country. I have a feeling that you wish Caroni to be dealt with equitably for everybody, but sometimes you look at a cricket ground and you see the team from India playing the West Indies and you see almost all East Indians clapping for the Indian team.

Sen. Anmolsingh-Mahabir: Not again! Not again!

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: It is changing now, but we should change it faster. This is an opportunity to change those perceptions and to build some patriotism and some national loyalty among all the different populations. That is why I am keen on the point of the process used.

I have an issue here, Madam President. If you look at the acreage on page 13 of the document—at present the Minister has a useful document—about 5,000 acres are now used for rice and other food crops. That is a disaster. It is too little. I am saying, therefore, that with the 69,000 acres they have now made available for agriculture, go to it robustly, put in incentives, reshape the forces that produce and attract agricultural development; get the people involved in such a way that there will be time lines for delivery; put targeted food crops in advance so that when people take an acre they should know what they have to deliver in such a time with such and such incentive, target outputs and time lines because it is going to be serious business then. It is not just giving them five and ten acres as they did in Wallerfield with 10 cows, one bull and 10 pigs and then the whole thing collapses and they are driving taxis on the roads, and the lands in Wallerfield are still neglected.

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.

Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran: Briefly, there are two aspects to the way forward in terms of attracting people for agricultural development, I find in the document and in the Bill—and I hope that the Minister would elaborate—what are the incentives to attract? It looks too mechanical to me. They are just giving out two

acres. That is another issue. Why only two acres? I think some consideration should be given for the people there to present plans. I know the letter says they can apply to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, but that is a later stage. We want an early breakthrough and some way to give them access to more than two acres if it can be justified in that first round.

I would like to see policy statements coming from this transformation with such emphasis on agriculture given to linking the output of agricultural products, under a fresh arrangement, to the School Feeding Programme. I find that this is a dismal absence. It is a gap in the overall planning for agricultural development. The needs of the School Feeding Programme are so vast and growing that if they specify certain things from the lands that they are going to use for planting and agricultural development in Caroni, if they can tie that in with what the School Feeding Programme requires, Madam President, they cannot lose. They will win on both sides—the import bill, the employment, the projection—in a sustainable manner. The School Feeding Programme is here to stay. It is a good programme. Sustainability is what we are looking for.

3.30 p.m.

When I refer to Wallerfield, I am not saying that everybody is malicious, it is just in the process of things, there was no monitoring. It was left to the goodwill of the people and their personal generosity, which we know. As Hobbes said: "Men are more brutish, given life being nasty and short." These days you cannot trust people with taxpayers' money. There must be monitoring systems and some form of accountability.

In closing, there are two aspects which I read with great interest. If my eyes did not open when I was reading the Minister's useful document, it opened on pages 2 and 3, which state:

"If the Sugar Manufacturing Company becomes viable, then it will be privatized."

I asked the question in my own mind: How long will it take to be viable, how much money is the Government going to spend in order to make it viable and for how long, a five-year period or a 10-year period, given the problems with sugar production and sugar marketing earlier enunciated? Perhaps we could get some clarification. If we are not sure, we can listen to it because it is not a definite science we are dealing with. We ought to hear something in that regard. How long is the Government going to support this company, especially if further subsidies are required? I am quite sure the structures I see will require further Government

subsidies. I think the question was asked by a Member of the Opposition: Why did the Government not leave Caroni (1975) Limited as it is? I think what the speaker was looking for is a bridge. How did the Government rationalize the bridge now constructed between the old Caroni (1975) Limited and the new one? How will the board be formed? Will we have an influx of political patronage on the board which has, to my mind, contributed to the demise of Caroni (1975) Limited? There are many party people. They are useful but they must be competent. I would put competence before party loyalty. A lot of damage has been done in this country because we put political loyalty, affiliation, allegiance and party group membership before the competence required in the particular agency. That must stop! We need a different arrangement if we want the state corporations to survive and serve the function they are supposed to serve.

In going forward, I want to know which new company and whether we will be giving concession, in terms of pricing, to the people who make candy, sugar cake, “sweetie” and dinner mints. I want to know whether the concessions given to the “sweet drink” manufacturers and Lok Jack Candy Company will enjoy the same subsidies they have been enjoying. The time for cheap “sweetie” is coming to an end if we want this country to be viable. It will be good because the less “sweeties” and “sweet drinks” we have in this country is the less diabetes we will have. Diabetes is now an epidemic in this country. I do not think the Government is doing anyone a favour by having soft drinks and candy cheap. It is time we put it at market price if we want the company to be viable and say so up front.

There is a document called the *2004 Agricultural Census*. I would like the Minister or any Government spokesperson to tell us if they used the results of the survey to inform the transformation process, so as to target the commodities it expects to grow, the family size and interest. All these things were asked. I remember when the matter came before the Senate I was the one who asked to see the copy of this 30-page document, which is pregnant with good ideas. I believe the results and the data could inform several ministries in terms of the way forward. What we have is household data, district data on preference for crops, which one you would prefer to grow and matters quite relevant to this debate. I believe we cannot just have a survey and not use it. I think it is useful for the Minister to make reference to it. If she had not done so, I would direct her attention with respect to using it.

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

As I come to the end, there is so much about planning, buildings, infrastructure, roads and commercial development with the Caroni (1975) Limited acreage. Caroni and its environment have become a hotbed for crime and delinquency. There are several reasons for it. Before I elaborate, let me suggest that before this debate is ended a statement from the Government should emerge. Apart from all that the Government is building, in terms of the number of police stations and police posts, it has to give attention to the matter of personal safety in that area because it will be developed. In the way I see it here, it is going to be a gigantic development. We must not make the mistake that we have done with the developments all over the country: La Horquetta and those other places where the buildings are put without infrastructure for security and personal safety

Madam President, these housing developments all over the world: New York, New Jersey, England and Europe, have seen crime behind them. There are several explanations for this, such as routine activities, that is, people working, so more and more opportunities to commit the crime in vacant homes. These all indicated that housing developments have become cradles for crime and delinquency. If you look at the figures—the police have the figures in these housing developments—possession of guns, smoking of marijuana, and the use of drugs are all because of the inadequate infrastructure.

I believe the Ministry of Local Government, my friend, Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas, should have a key role to play in this exercise, at the beginning. The Ministry of Local Government must have a role to play in this exercise. This should not be a Central Government matter. Further than that, the sugar union should have a role to play, somehow or the other. I know the Minister has spoken to some stakeholders. We have to ease the tension, bring in the sugar union.

Finally, we did some work. This document is called *Crime Statistics, Analysis and Policy Action: The Way Forward*. At the Centre for Criminology we looked at the crime statistics for a number of years and we made projections as to which district will be more crime-ridden and in what period of time. Page 9 states:

“‘The East-West Corridor’ is especially vulnerable.”

There are reasons given.

“However, the statistics also suggest that such crime patterns might very well change in the future.

The change is not in the sense that such crimes as robbery, larceny and murder will be reduced...but that other areas...”

This was done in 2001, after some serious thought and statistical analysis and given to the government at the time.

"such as Chaguanas, Couva...and Cunupia will experience higher amounts of crime in the future, unless, of course, appropriate steps are immediately taken as a matter of strategic crime management, reduction and prevention."

We ran other analyses to inform the debate that it was not only about development but it is about development with security and safety, otherwise we will end up, as I said, like rich fools basking under the dubious sunshine of oil and gas.

When we applied the relationship between crime and the urban and rural centres, we found that crime is much more prevalent and will become much more prevalent in those rural areas that are being transformed into urban areas, which brings the Caroni (1975) Limited issue into the picture. If the steps are not taken now what the Government is developing, whether residentially or commercially in the Caroni area, will be much more crime-ridden than we have today. "Yuh ain't see nothing yet" if it proceeds without having the precautions of security and personal safety. I will not call the figures for you. I think it is enough for me to say what I have said. Those who have ears to hear will hear.

I believe as an Independent Senator, I have made these professional observations as a means of helping the way forward. I want to congratulate the Minister again, finally, for taking the bull by the horns. What I have said I have said with great sincerity, not to obstruct but to facilitate, because it is time somebody takes on this matter. It is a welcome sign that she has taken on this serious challenge. I wish the Government and the Opposition some way along the road could see, at least to some extent, eye to eye, to bring a proper resolution to this burning issue of Caroni (1975) Limited.

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

Madam President, I am sorry. I have two minutes more. I wonder if I can make a brief comment. I am very sorry about that. I believe the way forward—we welcome a greater involvement to help the Government on the way forward—is for the Government to give consideration to having a joint parliamentary select committee. I will support that, as some of my colleagues have also indicated. Thank you.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano): Thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity. Quite a bit has been said over the past two working sessions of this Senate. It really falls into two categories. We heard

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. THE HON. D. MONTANO]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

speakers from the Opposition and the Independent Benches. The two types of contributions were really quite separate and they were saying quite different things. Therefore, when I respond I intend to deal with them in that way, with your leave.

Allow me to deal with the Opposition. When I first listened to Sen. Mark's contribution, he, of course, spoke for his usual hour and never once mentioned the Bill. He did not mention any clause or subclause of the Bill, nothing at all. He talked about land and the politics of land.

Sen. Mark: On a point of order. The Senator is misleading the Senate. My reference would show that I made extensive references to the Bill. The Senator has not read my contribution. I ask that he withdraw that statement until he reads my contribution.

Madam President: I am trying to recall and I think he made mention of clause 10. He made referral to some of those clauses. I agree with him.

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: Madam President, I will be guided. Whatever he said was of no consequence.

I listened to Sen. Baksh. That was a very surprising contribution. I will then deal with Sen. Dr. Kernahan. Something was really missing. In listening to all three Senators, they did not understand the difference between governance and politics. Their contributions spoke only about the politics of land and the politics of Caroni (1975) Limited. They never spoke to the issues of governance.

When a government is elected by the people, their responsibility tends to change. You are no longer on the political platform; you already have the mandate. The mandate now is to govern. In order to do that, you must do what you have articulated is in the best interest of the people of the country. It is not surprising to hear the statements of the Opposition Senators, as they react to the Government's plan to transform the Caroni region from being the sugar producing region, to a region that has a far more vibrant economy.

In all the contributions, both this afternoon and on the previous occasion, both the UNC and Independent Senators spoke about land. They did not speak about the people. When you are in government your responsibility is to the people, not to the land. No matter who is in power or what you do, your responsibility is to the people. That is what has happened. That is what the Government has done. The Government has addressed the people of the region. I will make my case and you will understand exactly where we are coming from.

The Government recognized that running Caroni (1975) Limited as an economic entity did not make financial sense. Sen. Prof. Ramchand said that the decision to close Caroni (1975) Limited on the part of the Government was a financial/economic decision. I will say yes it was, but not in the way he understands. The decision to close Caroni (1975) Limited was not because Caroni (1975) Limited was necessarily a losing proposition from a financial perspective. Caroni (1975) Limited had assets that could be better used for the people who worked there. They were not deriving the benefits from those assets that they should. Bear in mind these state assets do not exist for the benefit of the Government, they exist for the benefit of the people. Therefore, the decisions that you make must be towards empowering and enriching the people who can use these assets. That is what the decision was all about; it was not only because Caroni (1975) Limited was a financial loss centre. That is what happened here.

When I listened to the contributions of Senators Mark, Baksh and Kernahan, what I heard was unadulterated panic and fear. Sen. Prof. Deosaran referred to it. He asked the question: "Does the PNM have intentions to destroy the political base of the UNC?" What exactly does that question mean, "destroy the political base of the UNC"? The people of Caroni (1975) Limited still live in Caroni. If we had done them any harm we would have incurred their wrath at some point or another. I do not know how and by doing what would we destroy the UNC's political base. If we have done something wrong, we would be encouraging them to support the Opposition.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran, I believe, has unwittingly touched on the very point that has made the Opposition so sensitive. The Opposition recognizes that what this administration has done is that it has empowered, for the first time in the history of our nation, the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited so that they can own and operate their lands. [*Desk thumping*] After 100 years of Caroni (1975) Limited we closed it down and this is what happened, we ended up with 6,164 requests for residential land for housing. Of the total 9,000 workers in Caroni (1975) Limited, 6,000 do not have their own homes after 100 years. We intend to put that right. [*Desk thumping*] They deserve exactly what Sen. The Hon. Ramroop was talking about: the opportunity to climb out of economic servitude to a company where they could own the land for their own benefit. This is what we are talking about now. This has now struck at the very heart of the UNC regime.

Furthermore, these people are the farmers of the nation. We know that. Therefore, we said that every worker will have the right to lease a minimum of two acres of land. Understand that they all have jobs. They all have some other

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. THE HON. D. MONTANO]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

form of income. This land empowers these workers to be able to use the land in the most productive possible way, not for industry, housing or the production of agriculture in a loose sense. Madam President, I would be very specific. It is for the production of food. Let me detail it for you.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: I want the Minister to comment on something in the *Post Caroni (1975) Limited: A Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan*. This is something which contradicts what he is saying. According to this document it speaks about the retraining and retooling of the employee base to take advantage of opportunities presented by the global economy, in particular to participate in the expanding manufacturing and energy sectors where the demand for high value skills was outstripping supply.

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: Madam President, the Professor has not understood the document. I am glad that he has at least read it. This land is not necessarily intended as a full-time form of employment for these persons. It does not necessarily require that two acres is not that large and does not require a farmer, depending on your crop, to work it. That is not necessary. This is over and above anything else that they may wish to do. That is the nature of farming all over the world.

What we are talking about is the infusion of new high yielding land—
[*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark, when you made your contribution I think you made it in relative quiet. [*Crosstalk*] Can I ask you, please? I want to hear what is being said and I really cannot hear when I am listening to you or through this ear.

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: In these two-acre plots what we are talking—
[*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Can we have some quiet please, everybody? May I remind this Senate that everybody will get the opportunity to speak. Therefore, make a note of what you do not agree with and speak about it when it is your turn.

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: What we are talking about is 14,210 acres of new land coming into the production of food. We are talking food. Let us be specific. It is not sugar cane, which you can eat but cannot make a meal. [*Interruption*] Why not? Do you not like it? What is wrong with that? It would not be, if we had this acreage. Madam President, the Senator simply does not understand simple economics. That is exactly what we are talking about.

There is another 54,000 acres to be designated specifically for agriculture. Of the 54,000 acres, 22,000 are already in agriculture and 1,470 in pasture land. Sen. Dr. McKenzie spoke about that. There are 3,378 acres in citrus; 450 acres in wine making; 5036 in rice and other food; 1,012 in tree crops; 284 acres in aquaculture and 10,887 in private cane farming. Of the 54,000 acres we have an additional 31,872 acres available for the production of food. What we are talking about is new acreage going into the production of food. There are 45,000 acres available for the production of food. *[Interruption]* The Senator wants 100 per cent because he does not care about the people in Caroni. He does not care if they get a house, if they can have their own system of economics or their own piece of land to grow food for their families, the village or whatever else. It is just common sense! The point I was making is that this empowers the people of the central region to such an extent that they would sit and say: "Why did our own people not do this for us?" It strikes at the heart of the UNC politics, when all we are doing is governing the people in the best way we think we can. It is as simple as that. All the old talk does not make any sense.

Sen. Mark said on two occasions in his contribution: "In the interest of democracy and to avoid bloodshed, we should stop this plan and give all of the land to agriculture." Bloodshed? I think it was Sen. Prof. Deosaran who said: "Do you see anybody here who is objecting to this?" Do you hear them outside? I do not hear them. The fact of the matter is the people of Caroni (1975) Limited know that this is in their best interest.

Madam President, it may not be a perfect plan. Things may go wrong, but it is a good plan. We have done this and it is done with the best intention and the best objective that any right-thinking government could possibly have.

Madam President, Sen. Baksh—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Mark: Are you finished with me so fast?

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: What did you say that was important and deserving of the debate?

Sen. Baksh made the most surprising contribution of all. I really do not know how to respond to this one. If I am out of line I apologize in advance, because I was so taken aback by his contribution. He spoke about PNM plans. He picked up the PNM Manifesto and started to read the plans. He said the best plan worked and you cannot get anything done. Of course, in his mind there is no Point Lisas, Mount Hope, Uriah Butler Highway, steel plant, natural gas industries, methanol or LNG and secondary education only happened when the UNC arrived, and there

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. THE HON. D. MONTANO]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

is no University of the West Indies, it never happened. As far as he is concerned it never happened. Then he says: "But look at the airport." This is where I have some difficulty and why I am so shocked that he would have the absolute audacity to stand here and talk about the airport. He of all people would stand here and talk about a \$2 billion airport. We had an airport terminal and it did a fine job. It worked just as well as the one we have and it did not cost \$2 billion and nobody has been charged or arrested over that one, but over this one. He said: "Look at what the UNC did, we built an airport." He has been charged with receiving funds improperly from that. It is just crazy! He comes here and boasts about a corrupt act. I am just astonished! It is not difficult to understand why two Members of their party would stand and say: "Listen, as far as they are concerned; morality"—
[*Interruption*]

Madam President: I was a little taken aback there and I was not too sure where we stand with that. Minister, I would prefer if you did not refer in those terms please. I am not too sure about that; whether it is before the courts, but that is imputing.

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: Madam President, as I said before I started on that road, I do not know how to answer that. It is the audacity of it all.

Madam President: Then go on.

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: It is fully astonishing. Morality and ethics in politics—what this Bill is all about is morality and ethics, because it is the morality of the people. I listened to Sen. Dr. Kernahan. She criticized my colleague for the land that was being set aside in the *Comprehensive and Integrated Development Plan* for Caroni (1975) Limited. She was being critical of the land that was being set for industrial use. She asked what industry would be put there. She does not seem to understand that we have a very vibrant private sector and that all we are doing is creating these industrial estates. Clearly, she did not read the document. Page 9 of the document talks about the two heavy industrial estates and six light industrial estates. It does not talk about which industry. We are not going to dictate which industry and who will pay for it. That is a kind of “duncy” remark. The Senator does not understand what is going on here. I do not need to explain that.

Again, she criticized Sen. Ramroop. I have dealt with that.

Madam President: Please, you do not call anybody in the Senate “duncy”.
[*Crosstalk*] All right, I made a ruling on it. Let him continue.

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: With the greatest of respect, Madam President, I would never call any of my colleagues here “duncy”. What they say may be “duncy”, but they are not “duncy”. What she said was “duncy” but she is not a “duncy”. I will make the distinction.

Sen. Dr. Kernahan: On a point of order. He is repeating himself and has referred that remark to my statement and I strongly object.

Madam President: Senator, please withdraw that statement about “duncy” please. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: The Senator also spoke about bypassing the Commissioner of State Lands, as if somehow it was something new. Let me inform the Senator and this honourable Senate that this is not the first time that something like this has happened. We have a similar structure being set up for Chaguaramas. There is an authority there that has the authority to sign leases on behalf of the State. It is state lands. The Tourism Development Company also has a measure of the same authority. The Tobago House of Assembly has the same authority and so does the port.

Sen. Dr. McKenzie, you were here in 1998 when we passed in the Senate the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act. That was a UNC Bill, which is now an Act. Again, it did the same thing. Let me read it for the Senator. It states that the President may, by order, empower the Land Settlement Chairman to execute on his behalf any deed of lease under this Act to grant consent to assignments pursuant to section 15. I have the Order that was actually pursuant of that and was signed on October 12, 1999. This Order may be cited as the State Land Order, 1999. The Land Settlement Chairman is hereby empowered to execute. That is just to give you an example. In situations like these, the Commissioner of State Lands has nothing to do with those leases. In the other situations that I mentioned, the commissioner has nothing to do with those leases.

With respect to Sen. Prof. Deosaran, I spoke to his comment with regard to our intention to destroy the political base of the UNC. It may have that effect, but the fact of the matter is that we are just doing our jobs as governors of the country. It is for them to respond in the best way. I simply hope that they will not incite whoever they can incite into the streets for bloodshed. I think that will be a very tragic thing.

I was amused by the Senator's references to the Wallerfield experiment and the land that was given. The Senator sounded almost like a politician. He spoke about events that are more than 40 years old. Of course, that experiment has not

been repeated. That is not this. This is not the same thing. This, as I said earlier, is land that is being allocated for use by the farmers of the nation. We know that they are the farmers of the nation and we believe that they will have the interest and the expertise to use the land the way we intend it to be used. If they do not, then their leases will be cancelled and taken back.

He spoke passionately about the people of Central having a reverence for the soil, and he is absolutely right. That social value is understood by this Government. That is the reason 45,000 acres of land are being made available for the production of food and will go into the hands of private individuals; the growers of the nation, so that we can not only feed ourselves, but we can feed the entire region. Senator, if we do not do this, we will run into all kinds of issues even with our small island neighbours. We recognize that Trinidad and Tobago is going to be the breadbasket of the Caribbean and we are going to have to feed our neighbours. We are not only the economic centre, we must be the food basket as well. That is part of this thrust. The value the Senator spoke of is well understood.

He spoke about surplus labour and what does one do with surplus labour. He was wondering what the formula is and how one treats with that. That is very well understood. The solution to that is very well understood. It is understood in basically two forms and it is very much part of one of the central themes of this administration, which is education. If you educate someone, he will find a job or he will work for himself. He will do something for himself. The other thing that you do is that you create opportunities for the acquisition of wealth.

One of the things that Sen. Dr. McKenzie said—she was right except I would not have used the same language—is that land is power. I would say land is wealth. When people can acquire land they can acquire wealth. They can accumulate wealth for themselves and their families. As they accumulate wealth you will find that they invest in all kinds of productive things, as well as they use that wealth to educate themselves. This has been the history of the Caroni region. Those who have acquired any form of wealth have used it to educate themselves and their families. This is very well understood. Once we do this—and the wealth is in the land—and we provide the educational opportunities, we are developing your economy and we are removing these individuals from the economic servitude that was formerly Caroni (1975) Limited.

The Senator said that the Government must have a sense of equity in dealing with Caroni (1975) Limited. I think the Government has had more than a sense of equity in dealing with Caroni (1975) Limited. This Government has never shied

away from its responsibilities. It has incurred very significant layoffs at the Port, WASA and the Public Service Transport Corporation, but the Caroni (1975) Limited workers not only received their VSEP but received an enhanced VSEP. Over and above that, they have the opportunity for the investment in housing as well as agricultural land. That has never happened in the history of the country. If anything, the bias has been in favour of the Caroni (1975) Limited workers, not against them.

With respect to his point on BWIA, it is well taken. It is something I can assure you, as I am sure he understands, that this Government is looking at very seriously. You must understand that regardless of what the view of the Government might be; the Government must not simply act in an arbitrary manner but must not be seen to be acting in an arbitrary manner. BWIA must be given every opportunity to make its case to persons of integrity and competence, as to whether or not they should survive. That is exactly what is taking place. It is not rocket science. We are looking at that situation and the Professor's comment, as to whether it is time that we purchase routes from other airlines, has been discussed. We must not act hastily and recklessly. We must take our time and act wisely, engage the experts we can find in the private sector and consult with them to see what we should and should not do.

Sen. Prof. Deosaran also made a point about the sugar for “sweetie” manufacturers and soft drinks. Contrary to what you might think, the Government does not subsidize the sugar to the sugar manufacturers. In fact it is the other way around. Sugar and glucose can be imported into the country far less expensive than Caroni (1975) Limited can make them. Many of the manufacturers are allowed do that, but in doing that they have to pay a 15 per cent surcharge to Caroni (1975) Limited. It is not the case that the sugar is subsidized for their benefit. They are paying a tax on the sugar they are importing. That tax goes to subsidize the sugar manufacturing business. It is completely the other way around.

I want to deal with Sen. Dr. McKenzie and some of the issues in the Bill. Sen. Dr. McKenzie said that Tobago once fed the nation. It is not so any more, unfortunately. This, hopefully, will make an attempt at trying to correct that, so that we can feed ourselves.

Somebody mentioned genetically modified foods. I think it was Sen. Dr. Kernahan. Unfortunately, all the rice and flour that comes in from the United States into Trinidad and Tobago is genetically modified. That is one of the

problems we are wrestling with right now. There is a committee under my patronage at the Ministry, which is looking at this thing. In the first instance, the issue is the question of labelling. The question is should it be labelled or not? Should it say on the package that the product is genetically modified? That is the issue worldwide, on which the jury is still out. The Europeans say yes and the North Americans say no. We are somewhere in between at this point. There is a committee that is looking at that.

Let me look at the Bill. I think the difficult part is clause 10 of the Bill. This seems to be giving everybody some difficulty. Much has been said about the lack of checks and balances in the whole system. This Bill vests the Caroni (1975) Limited land in the State, not into the EMBDC. It does not automatically license the manager in the Bill to treat with this land. Under clause 10(5) the President may, by order, subject to a negative resolution of the Parliament, prescribe the land that can then be dealt with by the EMBDC. In other words, before the EMBDC can deal with any of the land we are talking about, it first has to come to the Parliament. It says negative. *[Interruption]* I am telling you what is in the Bill. That is the point; it is not a simple question that the EMBDC all of a sudden has 76,000 acres at its disposal. On each occasion that the EMBDC wants to treat with land, an Order to that effect must come through the Parliament. That is the check and the balance.

Furthermore, clause 12 states that within three months the manager must report to the Minister who must lay a report in the Parliament as to the specific transactions that have taken place. In both instances, on both sides of the equation, on both sides of the land transaction, Parliament has oversight of what is taking place. There is nothing that will be taking place in secret or anything of the sort.

Sen. Dr. McKenzie also had concerns as she expressed to me, that land could be stolen. It happened and it happens now. There is not a whole lot that anybody can do about it. It is fraud. It does not make it so. It is fraudulent, but it means that somebody has to have access to the original records. Quite frankly, while it happens, it does not happen very often. We know that it has been happening in the land registry. We know of instances where certain persons have managed to gain access to the original documents and have tried to interfere with them and we can see that things have been changed. That can always happen, but what you have here is a legal system of contracts in its normal sense. A lease is a contract in the normal sense and there are usually two sides of the lease. The lessor has one and the lessee the other one. It is not that easy to come and change it just like that. Do not forget that the changes have to come through the Parliament. The transactions

at the EMBDC will have to be registered here. It is not just a question of someone fraudulently changing the name. The transaction has to come through the Parliament. If it does not come through the Parliament, then it is not a valid transaction. I think we have checks and balances.

I want to make one last comment with respect to something that the Independent Senators were talking about. We are talking very much about using this land for the benefit of the people and we are saying that some must be used for industry and housing. There is no way to get around that. If we do not do that, what land do we use? We will use state lands somewhere. What do we do? Do we encroach on the forest, the hills or the wetlands? What do we do? We are a people and we exist for the benefit of ourselves. Therefore, when you look at the land that is in fact available, is what we are suggesting not reasonable in the context of the entire country? Where else should we go? If we were to go and clear the forest in the central region we would have a howl from the EMA. We would never be allowed to build there. The EMA would not allow the State to do that. What do we do? Do we not build houses? I think the UNC will be happy if we did not. We must do that. Is the plan that we have articulated unreasonable? I think not. I think the plan is an eminently reasonable and sensible plan. There are changes that will be coming. In the very foreseeable future, a new authority will be established, which would be called the State Land Management Authority. This is not our plan. This plan actually comes out of some issues and were in fact left behind by the UNC when they were there. It is anticipated that this State Land Management Authority may in fact take the place of all of these agencies we have, whether it is the CDA or TIDCO, or at least may have an overall governing responsibility for all those agencies. The details have not yet—[*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. [*Hon. J. Jeremie*]

Question put and agreed to.

Madam President: Do you think you will be finished by 4.30 p.m. or do you want to come back and take your 15 minutes?

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: No, I will finish now.

Madam President: Continue.

Sen. The Hon. D. Montano: I was really on my last breath, almost. The long and short of it is that there will be changes. In the short term there are some needs to be satisfied as quickly as possible. The most urgent is the land that is needed immediately for the workers for farming and housing. That is what we need to get done at the earliest possible opportunity. The rest will come in the fullness of time.

Madam President, the Indians are growing restless. It is almost tea time. I thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you for your consideration. Hon. Senators, the Senate is now suspended for tea. We will return at 5.00 p.m.

4.28 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam President: Senators, I need you to remind your colleagues that tea finishes at 5.00 p.m. and we should not have to wait for a quorum. Who is the next speaker, please? Senator, go ahead.

Sen. Roy Augustus: Madam President, thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*] As usual, I rise to make my short intervention. It is always a very passionate thing to speak about land, and you always have to adopt a mode where you want to be very careful. There are many wars that have been fought over land; and many persons have been pushed off their land. When you go through the pages of history, one always has to be careful. When I say “wars” I do not want anybody believing that I am advancing that there will be bloodshed if things go wrong in Caroni (1975) Limited. I know people are quick to jump to conclusions. I am not talking about that; I am just talking about the historical situation as far as land goes.

We have a situation in Trinidad and Tobago where we are dealing with 80,000 acres of prime land, and we are dealing with it in a situation that is somewhat different to some other territories. There may not be territories where you would have had the kind of ethnic divisions—sorry, I do not want to use the word “division”—but the plurality, as we have in Trinidad and Tobago. You know, sometimes that can lead to enmity and jealousy. Let me explain what I mean here.

First of all, I keep hearing the question of the UNC not having the guts to close down Caroni (1975) Limited, or that the UNC wanted to close down Caroni (1975) Limited and did not have the guts to do it. My information is that the UNC never intended to close Caroni (1975) Limited.

That is my information. In fact, like you would do with anything, you would examine the options that are available—prepare positions and options that are available—and one of the options that came to the then UNC cabinet was the question of closing down Caroni (1975) Limited, and that was rejected outright, because the UNC thought that there were other more creative, even though more difficult terrains to travel, in terms of how to deal with Caroni (1975) Limited. In fact, the position, according to the UNC thinkers, was that closure was a shortcut, and it was an easy way out in terms of the economics—it was a cop-out. The other ways of going, in terms of the kinds of things that you had to do for the diversification and so forth, would have called for more will, more creativity, more work, more sweat and more thinking on the part of those who would have had the reins in their hands at that time. I say that to link it up to another point that I was about to make, and that is the question of the land distribution, and when it was thought that Caroni (1975) Limited was going to be closed by the UNC, and that the land would have been cut-up and given to all those persons who worked on the land at the time. There is where the ethnic plurality comes in.

During that period, I remember talking to a very high-ranking member of that group. The UNC was in power at that time, and there was that talk that the UNC was going to close Caroni (1975) Limited down and distribute the land to all those persons who lived on the land. That man told me that it pained him to travel by air during those times. Whenever he looked down at all that prime land, he said he wondered whether “you people”—he was talking to me—really going to take all that land and share it up around the persons who were working on that land. He said that it was not rightfully theirs; it was land where money was expended by the State, so it belonged to everybody and, therefore, if there was really to be any distribution, there should be some kind of plurality, equity and that kind of thing in the distribution. I am not advocating that now. I am putting a point of view that was held by a very senior person in that group across there, at that time. It does not appear that is the position now. I am not doubting or disputing whether it should be or should not be. I just want to show you that when people are in different positions they assume different stances, and one has to be very careful with how we go; how, we are advocating vesting all these areas of land into a company and, according to clause 10, we are giving that manager, which is the company, a lot of authority. I see the President has been put in there as a sort of buffer. However, I know how these things go. I am not casting any aspersions on the President.

Sen. Mark: The President is the Cabinet.

Sen. R. Augustus: That makes it even worse. We are now vesting all this authority in the manager and, therefore, in the Cabinet. Are we satisfied that all the mechanisms would have been put in place to ensure that there will not be rape in the distribution? Are we satisfied that greed will not be the driving factor in the distribution? I know on paper it looks good; I know on paper it says two acres per farmer who so wants; and I know on paper it says industrial estate here and industrial estate there and so forth—all is owned by the State.

Our history in Trinidad is replete with instances of land and property being divided up among persons who have a succession in line. At the end of the day, two or three families have all that land coming to them. We have a situation, therefore, where a number of persons legitimately get the property, but even before they got the property, loopholes were found in the law and so forth and there is somebody waiting for it to be transferred to them after a certain period of time. Even in the selection of persons for the distribution of that property, sometimes you make sure that you deal with persons who you are sure will be amenable to the transfer when the time comes. Can we put all that authority into the hands of the manager and the Cabinet now? Maybe we should, but after we have ensured that a group of independent minded thinkers assist a joint group from this body here to sit down, and not only work out how best to distribute the land into the different areas, but also the implementation of that distribution.

It was said here and, quite rightly, sometimes plans are so good—they look very good and you follow them blindly—but the implementation seems to be the problem. I am saying that the select committee that we are advocating on this side should have as part of its terms the question of also looking at how the final picture looks as far as implementation is concerned. However that is going to be done, I leave that to the very big thinkers that we have among us.

Madam President, one has to advance that we must do as much as we can possibly do to ensure that the land is used profitably, and in the best interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am not asking that you divide the land among all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but I am saying that the land usage should be such that the capital that is derived from the usage of that land should redound to the benefit of the Consolidated Fund, down the road, and this will help all of us. Therefore, this will call for a lot of creative activity on the part of those who will be assigned the responsibility for the kind of diversification that must take place. In other words, we must go back into the question of citrus; we must go back into the question of rice farming; and we must go back into the question

of fresh water fish farming with the tilapia and the cascadox. There must be areas that will lend themselves to this growth; food as some persons would say. Let us feed ourselves.

I can empathize with the President of the Agricultural Society who is asking on behalf of her organization and, therefore, on behalf of all farmers and the agriculturists in the country that this arable—these highly productive lands—be used fully for the benefit of the country in agriculture. Again, I have no problems with the farmer having his plot of land and his home. I have no problems with that. I have no problems with using some little areas for light industry. I would hate to see heavy equipment going in there. I would hate to see that. We must concentrate on that diversification—rice farming, fresh water fish farming and so forth.

We must go further into our rum distillery. What prevents Caroni (1975) Limited rum distillery from being profitable in a place like Trinidad? [*Laughter*] What prevents it?

Sen. King: We are not drinking enough. [*Laughter*]

Sen. R. Augustus: You see. We are not managing the thing properly, and we are not putting enough capital into the retooling of the distillery, to ensure that we get proper, refined stuff in good quantities to make it economical. Then we have to look at other areas. We have to farm out some of the transportation, that would of necessity be needed in all the little industries that you are putting up there, to the private sector. In other words, what we want to see is a combination of the private sector doing some of these light industry work like transportation and so forth, and working along with the Government so that everybody would share somewhat in the benefits of the land.

If we are distributing lands for residential purposes—I think Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran touched a bit on this matter. I was walking outside when I heard him mention the question of ensuring housing security and safety in these developments. In the past, we have developed areas along the East-West Corridor, which have become breeding grounds for criminals, because we did not put the necessary infrastructure in place for playfields and proper schools and so forth. These things came long afterwards. As a result, we started to pay a heavy price and we continue to pay a heavy price. So, in planning those little housing settlements that we are going to afford our people to use the lands for, let us look at security; let us look at how we will distribute our police personnel—what kind of infrastructure in terms of police stations; and what kind of equipment we are going to have. We

also have to be aware that when we have houses we can have fires, so we need to buy hoses, and to make sure that they are not leaking. We need to equip the fire service with better equipment.

Sen. Mark: Yes, of course. Is it \$30 million?

Sen. R. Augustus: Well, I do not know. Downtown may seem to have been a mess, because you could not get water through these lines. I hope we run proper water lines, and that we would have water running through these lines; I hope we go through an extensive programme of repairing hydrants throughout the country, and for these new housing estates that we are putting down there should be new hydrants, so that if anything happens in these new developments, you can have an early and quick response. I hope that we do not have a fire officers' reform bill coming here to develop the fire service. I hope that we do not have to go that way. We must put all these things in place. We must also ensure that there are school places for those children who, by reason of the comfort that you claim that you are giving to those people down there, will be born, for want of a better term.

Madam President, there is another area that I looked at and I thought that I should ask the Minister to give me a little more information on it. I was particularly interested in—Sen. Prof. Ramchand also pointed it out—the question of retooling our people. I keep hearing about the training that is going on, or the training that has gone on; I keep hearing that there are not too many persons who are interested in agriculture.

I saw in the programme the broad areas that people accepted. I do not know whether there was a survey done to see what persons were interested in, or whether these programmes were just offered and some persons accepted. I need to get more information about where these persons have been placed if, in fact, they have been trained. Where have they been placed? If we are training, we say because of a certain demand, then you would have identified the demand if there was a demand for a certain kind of employee, therefore, you would have identified that demand. If this level of training has already gone on, I would suspect that the Minister, in her closing remarks, will give us a better picture of those slots which have been filled by persons who have been trained, as a result of that programme of training that has been put in place, according to the plan here and the statements made earlier on by the Minister.

As I say that, I seem to get the feeling that people on that side feel that everything in Caroni (1975) Limited is hunky-dory—you know, everybody is happy—because they are not saying anything. I know that is not true. There are

levels of discontent. There are certain bodies of people who do not articulate their positions as aggressively and vociferously as others. I want to advise that we should not make the mistake of relaxing and thinking that we have done it well; we have done it all; and nothing will happen and there will be no eruption. I want us to continue looking seriously at people, and what they have benefited from what we have done. Let us see whether the people—and we have to keep asking all the time—are, in fact, satisfied.

Madam President, it was the first time that I listened to Minister Ramroop very closely. I was a little disappointed with his contribution on two counts: one was already dealt with, in terms of persons moving up from agriculture. I am certain that is not what he wanted to say, and I am certain that at some other time he would take the opportunity to let us know that he understands that agriculture is extremely important, and that people have built themselves and their countries on the basis of agriculture. I do not want that to continue going down in the record that people “rise out” of agriculture. No, not at all.

The second matter—maybe I was wrong—is that I got the impression that when the Senator started to talk about doing the right thing and being in the right place, he was trying to convince himself that having become a member of the party of which he chooses to become a member, that he was now convincing himself that he was right. That is the signal I was getting. I may be hopelessly wrong, but the manner in which it was put over, that was the signal I was getting. That had me even more disappointed than talking about agriculture at that level—not that I feel that it is a good thing to join the PNM. What had me disappointed is that whenever one comes in and looks at that side and one sees people of a particular ethnic background inside there, one feels good; and whenever one comes in and looks on this side, and one sees people of a particular ethnic background, one feels good. The process of assimilation must be taking place. You have an African-based party—I know they would object to that statement—and you have an Indian-based party, and there are those of other ethnic origins who align themselves deliberately, then that is a good thing for the country as a whole, and absolutely nobody should make any apologies for that. Minister Ramroop, I hope that I read you wrong when I thought that what you were doing was trying to convince yourself you did the right thing. If I had met you before then you would not have done that.

Madam President, are we still involved in the buffalypso herd? Do we have plans to go there? Do we have plans to expand our dairy herd, if we still have a dairy herd? I think this is another area where we can go. I strongly suspect that is something that we should look at very closely.

Madam President, as usual, I always say that I do not like to overstay my time anywhere or overstay my welcome anywhere. I would also like to hear from the Minister, the number of persons who attended the counselling sessions—counselling more than the financial training sessions. It must have been traumatic for person's lifestyles—it does not matter how we talked about it and planned for it over the years—to change as drastically as their lifestyles must have changed and, therefore, there must be trauma. Some of us are stronger than others. I would like to hear more information about those persons who availed themselves of that opportunity and the kinds of results—I know that it is difficult to quantify those results, but I would like to hear more about that.

As I said, the important thing is for us to look at all our peoples there; let us ensure that we do not fool ourselves into believing that they have accepted, and that all is hunky-dory; let us ensure that we put mechanisms in place for the proper utilization of all that land, machinery, equipment and human resource skills that we have to ourselves now, using the windfall that we are enjoying at the moment to make sure that the people are dealt with properly. I say none of us, in any of these three Benches, could have all the answers. It is in that context I want to further advance the point that has been made here so eloquently by Members of the Independent Bench and some Members here, to go into select committee; and let us spend some time dealing with this matter, using professional expertise to make sure that we get the sums right.

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

Sen. Mary King: Madam President, thank you very much. It is very obvious that many of us in this Senate are very concerned about the development of land in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam President, through you, I would also like to inform Sen. Ramroop that one does not have to live in Central to understand Caroni (1975) Limited, and to be able to talk about the development of land and agriculture.

It is not really pleasant to be here to talk about this Bill today as it is almost as if it were a requiem mass for Caroni (1975) Limited, and we have had some requiem masses this last week which have been very sad.

Caroni (1975) Limited was considered to be a drain on the Treasury and a drain on the public purse. We must remember that we drove it ourselves into being uncompetitive in the production of sugar, even though we had special concessions from Lomé, we still allowed it to remain in the cutlass stage and

become more uncompetitive as the years went on. So we have basically shut it down, and we are now only barely producing the sugar that we would need for our own needs

Sen. D. Montano, in his contribution this afternoon, told us that the decision to close down Caroni (1975) Limited was because Caroni (1975) Limited had assets which could be better used for the people. We have not seen the strategic vision or the strategic plan for Caroni (1975) Limited lands. I think we need to see this. We need to know that there is a policy on land use, and there is a strategic vision for Caroni (1975) Limited, because there is more to sugar and sugar production than we seem to understand. There are many downstream industries which can be developed from the sugar industry, and had we been a more economic-efficient country, we probably would have seen the need to innovate and to move into the new production technologies, or to diversify into the very great potential that we have from sugar in downstream products.

I have recently been told by persons who are actually involved in Caroni (1975) Limited and who are still working in Caroni (1975) Limited, which is now the Sugar Manufacturing Company, that they had already done lots of research into the ethanol production, which we are now looking at again. They have also done research into the bagasse problem where we had the mould that we could not solve. Apparently, that research had also been done, but it appears that none of these were important enough to our decision-makers to actually do something about them. Obviously, we can say nothing was probably done, because we have oil and gas and, therefore, we could continue to subsidize, which is what we actually did.

We could continue to increase the price of cane to the planters with no reference to the world price of sugar, and no reference to competitiveness because we have oil and gas. The subsidization has now come to an end for whatever reason. Obviously, something had to be done about the wastage and the losses. We are not saying that something did not have to be done. We are here today to actually dispose of the holdings of Caroni (1975) Limited.

Madam President, if we look at the situation in the world today, we are again in the position of very high oil prices and very high energy prices and, obviously, we are very lucky to be in this position as our Government gets high taxes and royalties from these enterprises involved in the energy sector. We must also remember that there is backlash. We do not grow anything; we do not manufacture any consumer goods; and, therefore, all the countries from which we

do purchase and import these goods, we are importing at high prices because in those countries, the price of oil and gas is high. So, there is a backlash. We have to be aware that there are some things that we can do to minimize some of these high prices that we are now importing. The price of food alone is steadily increasing. If you look at our consumer price index, it may look small, but when you look at the individual sectors, you would see that food and real estate are rising increasingly, but we can do something about the price of food.

Madam President, if we look at food across the world and the imports of food that we are now doing, you will also realize that they are being very highly subsidized; both in North America and Europe, but when we actually implement the World Trade Organization rules and regulations, all of these subsidies will stop and, therefore, we will again be back to very high prices for food, because those farmers would no longer be subsidized. So, we would be exacerbating the problem even further.

Everyone knows that oil and gas are limited resources, and our reserves will only keep us going possibly another 20 or 30 years. The imminent peak in oil production is being talked about across the world, not just in Trinidad and Tobago, and we would be pushed to use up our reserves even faster, because of the peak in oil, so that we can supply the United States of America with its energy needs, and this will leave us with no alternative but to then be even purchasers of energy. That is not a non-realistic statement. If you look at Indonesia that used to be a large exporter of oil, that country will soon be an importer at a very high price. They are doing a lot of research on conservation and alternative sources of energy. I do not even think that we are looking at the alternative sources of energy or doing any research in that area.

Madam President, Brazil has large vast areas in sugar. The energy content in tropical sugar is much higher than it is in beet sugar which is the competitor. Brazil, realizing this, has developed a very large ethanol production sector, and they are leading the world in ethanol gasohol which is a fuel based on ethanol. A very large comparative advantage that we have is really being in the tropics and having sugar cane which is such a high energy source, which is much higher than beet. Therefore, we should be looking at ethanol and renewable resources of energy. People in Caroni (1975) Limited have told me that they are aware of this and they have done the research, but nothing was actually implemented.

We have mentioned buffalypso today, and we were pioneers in the development of buffalypso. It is competitive in a couple of countries, and we are importing lamb from New Zealand which is far away. I often ask the question:

Why are we so incapable of developing a deepening food industry, given our high imports of food, apparently now approaching \$2 billion a year? Even the chickens that we are selling at the fast food outlets are really assembled from imported parts. It is really very hard to understand how we have come to this position.

The point I am trying to make is that if we are ready to look past our oil and look past our gas resources, we could indeed provide large numbers of employment, which is something that we know the energy sector does not do, but which we know the agricultural sector does. We also know that the more downstreaming we go the more jobs that we are actually creating as well as earning a lot more foreign exchange and, therefore, why not food for the nation?

If we were to use our brains and create the competitive technologies in tropical agriculture, what is this problem? If we look at our history in agriculture, we were actually the leaders in agricultural research. When we were the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture—even if that research was based at the commodity level of products and for the benefit of our planters—we had developed the capabilities and the skills to do this research. Why are we at this sorry state? This is just very hard to understand. What I am saying is that we have to take the opportunity before us to create an indigenous research and development unit within either the Department of Agriculture, or some new centre of excellence developed for that purpose, and do research into products that will use our basic commodities that we now have.

Madam President, I maintain that high-tech agriculture is one pillar upon which we can build our 2020 economy. Agriculture needs land and, indeed, in Trinidad and Tobago, we are indeed short of land for a small island, and that is why this requiem for Caroni (1975) Limited is so important and so critical that we go about it in a manner that will not put us in a position, which is a worse position than we are now, and in a position where when oil and gas is done we may starve. I think we have to be very serious. The decisions that we make today in supporting this Bill about the use and the disposal of the land which would be released by shutting down Caroni (1975) Limited could constrain all our opportunities to get involved in high-tech agriculture. We must not let it stray too far from our minds. I think I have said it twice already that peak production is here, and our reserves will not last us longer than 30 years. I will repeat, with no land, we might actually starve.

Madam President, Minister Montano also told us that this Bill is all about morality and ethics in politics. When I went through the Bill, I was very concerned that clause 10 of the Bill did not give me the transparency that I thought was sufficient for us to pass this Bill in its current form.

Clause 19(6) talks about leases and other assurances for residential, commercial, industrial, light and heavy manufacturing and agricultural purposes. Since the land available is very limited, if it is put under concrete, I think it is lost for all time to agriculture. I think it is of crucial importance that we decide on a reasonable and realistic land use plan.

This same clause calls on the manager to collaborate with the institutions of government responsible for establishing policies regarding land capability and land usage among other things. Madam President, I think this is an outrageous statement to have a Bill where the manager will collaborate with institutions that are responsible for land policy.

I think the manager has to be bound by a proper land use plan that must be approved by this Parliament. The manager should have no discretion in land usage. Apparently, the Minister, in the other place, gave some indication of the uses and distribution of land, based on the land classification at hand, to justify the use of agricultural lands for non-agricultural purposes.

Madam President, I think a few persons have already mentioned the article by Prof. John Spence who has also, I believe, written all the Members of the Senate on this issue. There is just one part of his letter which I would like to quote from. He is stating that he feels that no action should be taken to alienate land from agricultural use without reclassification of these lands. He went on to say that soils under the present system, may be classified as class six, but may nevertheless be first class soils for certain production. He mentioned the growing of rice, the growing of cocoa or pasta to raise our buffalypso. Given that, how do we actually decide on the split, if any, as far as local use is concerned for this land use?

Madam President, our Government talks continuously about Vision 2020, and the corresponding need for social and economic development. This development would depend primarily on our ability to innovate; and our ability to become competitive, because we are in an era of globalization and we must be competitive even in our own regional market. I believe innovation depends on original inventiveness. There is no sphere of activity before us today where we have such an ideal opportunity as we have here now in high-tech agriculture. We will never

and cannot ever be competitive in general manufacturing, given the likes of China and India. Even today our local textile manufacturers are actually having their manufacturing outsourced to China. So we can never be competitive in that area. We would need to jump straight into the world of robot manufacturing; the steel collar worker which is now actually replacing all other kinds of workers in many of these countries on factory floors across the large competitive areas of production.

Our other manufacturing that we have, which is the heavy manufacturing of steel and petrochemicals, will depend on the continued existence of our natural resource of oil and gas. We know the lifetime of this reserve is a clear indication that we cannot build a 2020 vision on heavy manufacturing or processing.

Again, I think this was mentioned earlier in the debate that one must question the advisability of building an aluminium smelter; a complex that takes up so much land. Someone called me just a few days ago and asked me if I heard the Prime Minister stating that we are now building not one, but two aluminium smelters. I wondered what madness are we in now in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam President, we really need to have some kind of proper strategic planning of not only the oil and gas sectors, but all the other areas.

5.45 p.m.

Madam President, I do not want us to sound as if the only industry we should be involved in is high-tech agriculture but, I maintain, it offers us a fantastic opportunity to be indigenously original to provide high quality jobs, to be competitive, aided by natural, tropical and comparative advantages and our high level skills which we all know we have among the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. I believe that our 2020 vision depends on the creation of small and medium entrepreneurial enterprises in downstream agriculture, as well as, in all the other sectors, including the energy sector, with the related opportunities that exist there.

On specifics of this Bill before us, clause 8 talks about the Minister transferring or vesting in the present sugar company, any part of an operational undertaking necessary for the company to undertake sugar cane processing not already in its hands. That clause of the Bill alone tells me that if there is a vision for the company, it is simply sugar, as stated in the Bill; producing sugar for local consumption. Then clearly, there is no Vision 2020 for the major agriculture producer of this country, and it really saddens me that we are at this stage and this sorry state. Therefore, I am glad to have the opportunity to convince the Minister that perhaps we do need another look at this Bill before us.

Without a vision that includes the innovation, expansion and diversification, then any lands that will be designated for the operation would be equally constrained or curtailed. So, in other words, until the Vision 2020 committee or perhaps some other wise men and women can advise on what high-tech production we should be engaged upon—and of course, upon which we agree as a nation—then the disbursement of Caroni (1975) Limited lands I think, is a non-starter. It is true clause 8 does not actually specify how much land would be vested in the sugar company, but I humbly advise that no vesting to anyone should take place until we define our vision for agriculture and the associated land use plan is defined after we do a proper land reclassification exercise.

Clause 10 seems to give the manager the right to do anything, rent, assign or otherwise deal with real estate undertakings, et cetera, et cetera. Further, it states that the manager can execute in the name of the President such grants, deeds, leases, et cetera. I have to ask the question: Does this mean that the manager will also have the right to sell the land that is vested in the State? It is certainly not very clear in the Bill. Although they say the condition is that it would be approved by the President, we are really reading there, the Government and the Cabinet, and this is of concern to—not just us—many people in the country, that we have this uncontrolled clause, with no policy guidelines. We do know that the manager must have some powers and he must be able to deal with land under his control, however, this emphasizes the point that the land put under the manager, must be or should be, as a result of a fundamental decision on the resources needed for agricultural development and some binding plan as to the use of the rest of the land.

I would certainly support this Bill under some conditions. One of the conditions is that this Act—when proclaimed—would be subject to a land use plan which is approved by this Parliament, and I do not think this is the first call for the developing of the land use bill to be brought back to this Parliament, as we were here when it was passed and it lapsed. We really think it is a very important bill for development, as land is important to everybody. It is not just the Caroni (1975) Limited workers that the land is important to, it is important to everybody and I think it is an important Bill that has to be brought back, before we actually get through with this vesting of Caroni (1975) Limited land Bill. In other words, none of the lands should be disbursed to commercial manufacturing activities, large scale housing or development, until a land use plan and land reclassification has been carried out and also approved by this House.

I would agree with other Members who called for a select committee, taking up these issues, to bring back a Bill which will have within it the necessary conditions that ensures a land use policy and that the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited can be definitively split, as agreed upon by this Parliament among the potential uses of agriculture, housing, industry and commerce.

I thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: If there are no other speakers, I am going to call on the Minister to wind up. Are you going to speak Sen. Ali? Sen. Ali asked my permission to read and I have given him that permission, because he is not very well.

Sen. Basharat Ali: Madam President, I thank you for the opportunity for speaking on this very important Bill, and especially as I was not here last week.

I started preparation for this debate on Thursday, March 31 and on Thursdays there appears religiously a page in the *Daily Express*, headed "Public Notice", with respect to the applications for grants of Probate or Letters of Administration, from the estates of deceased persons. The notice is under the hand of the Registrar of the Supreme Court and states that unless a caveat is lodged within 21 days with the Registrar, the probate or letters of administration would be granted. My dictionary gives a definition of caveat in law, as "a process in court to suspend the proceedings".

Madam President, Orange Grove and Caroni (1975) Limited are to all intents and purposes deceased and I was indeed struck by the analogy with this Bill before us. I do not know whether the presenter of the Bill, hon. Minister Christine Sahadeo, is here in her capacity as a representative of the Corporation Sole or of Caroni (1975) Limited and I presume that she is acting as an executor, but the Lord High Executioner has completed his task and has moved on to less green pastures where I read that he is having some difficulty with the resurrection of the dead.

The analogy with respect to the caveat of the notice, to me, is quite compelling and the outcome of this debate may indeed be most meaningful. On that same Thursday I was struck by an article by Prof. Emeritus John Spence and reference has already been made to that article. Prof. John Spence, a former member of this Senate, a learned member that is, and that article was headlined: "Save those Caroni lands". I propose to return to his article later in my contribution.

I would like to deal briefly with developments which have ended up with the demise of Caroni (1975) Limited. Almost from its inception, Caroni (1975) Limited, the Tate and Lyle successor, has been the subject of studies related to the economics of the entity which remained as a mainstay of employment in the rural regions of the Central South Trinidad. The economists said that on one hand, the cost of sugar production at Caroni (1975) Limited was unacceptably high and product disposal depended on large measure to concessionary prices in the European market. On the other hand—as economists are wont to say—the employment benefits and resultant social stability were significant factors in maintenance of sugar production as a major element in the economic structure of the country.

So, we have over the years done quite a lot of studies on Caroni (1975) Limited and its viability. Let me give you a sampling, Madam President. In 1978 we had the Sugar Rationalization Committee Report by the Corporate Department of Caroni (1975) Limited. In 1980, the Fundamental Structural Change in the Organization of the Sugar Industry, the so-called “Rampersad Plan” by Frank Rampersad, that eminent public servant, who I think was the chairman of Caroni (1975) Limited at that time. In 1984, we had Dr. Eric St. Cyr, Report of the Professional Committee on a Policy Towards Optimum Utilization of the Resources Allocated to the Sugar Industry, Ministry of Agriculture publication. In 1987, a Medium Term Development Plan 1988—1992 by the Planning Division of the Ministry of Agriculture. Beyond 1987, I am not aware of any published reports during the earlier PNM administration and of the succeeding UNC administration, though there had been much discussion of Caroni (1975) Limited’s future. Many attempts have been made towards diversification of Caroni (1975) Limited into an agro-industrial enterprise, including industrial development, food production, animal breeding and farming, rum production, et cetera.

In the mid-70s, I was involved as an engineer on the Board of the Industrial Development Corporation in two projects related to the sugar industry. The first was the manufacture of ceiling boards and medium density boards as an input into furniture manufacture. The company, Trinidad Bagasse Products Limited was a subsidiary of the IDC with Caroni (1975) Limited providing some equity in the form of bagasse to the plant. That project was eventually abandoned and I can assure you that it was not for want of trying by myself and others, especially Mr. Bernard Primus, who was then the Chairman of IDC and Trinidad Bagasse Products Limited. Perhaps the project was doomed to failure on many grounds.

The first was that the sophisticated plant was before its time. We were on a drive to metrication—and that reminds me that the hon. Minister Valley had promised this honourable Senate that the Metrology Act would have been passed in June; it would have been implemented in six months. That time has gone.

Madam President, a plant designed in hard metric was installed, by hard metric I mean not only dimensions but actual equipment was bought and installed, supplied by a German company. Maintenance became an early problem because of the unavailability of even the simplest parts.

The second problem was that metric board production did not fit into the then booming construction sector, wasteful off cuts had to be done to cut to fit. The second plant problem was that in the organization, relatively under-skilled labour from Caroni (1975) Limited was recruited to run the plant. Lack of any operations and maintenance management led to frequent, long down time, which resulted in much loss of raw materials, adhesive, et cetera, in a plant which was designed to operate on a continuous shift basis.

A third problem, to surface was in the marketing field where cupboards—particularly in certain residential areas—began to show mould or fungus. It was not only costly for the cash strapped company to correct, but the product also got a bad name. The source of the problem was identified as high sucrose content in the bagasse. I know Madam Minister has been talking about high sucrose content in sugar cane as a measure of quality, but here we had sugar content remaining in the bagasse and after processing appeared as mould.

In order to correct this problem, quite a bit of additional capital had to be employed by the addition of dryer capacity and bagasse washing. All these led to very low morale and one of the problems was that nobody really wanted to work with Trinidad Bagasse Limited. So that, finally, the project was doomed to failure.

The second diversification project with the IDC was a project development of a very special nature. It was for the production of furfural from bagasse. The bagasse pith is an essentially complex carbohydrate which could be converted to the product furfural, a solvent used in refining lubricating oil. This was novel technology with an offer of supply from a Finnish company. The original technology had been adapted for the use of olive husks as raw material in a plant in Spain.

The technology from the bagasse was supposed to be commercialized in the Philippines. Some of us had reservations on this project. Hon. Dr. Saith is not here now, but he would certainly remember, because Trintoplan were the process

consultants on that project. We did have one locally based foreign company interested and that was Texaco, that, of course, was interested in the lubrication field, and it was decided that a team of engineers would journey to the Philippines to look at this particular technology. We saw very little of that plant in operation and we were unable to conclude on the suitability of the technology for a local plant.

At that time, our sugar production was just about 200,000 tonnes per annum, that is compared to the target set now for about 60,000 tonnes. That is equivalent to a bagasse production of 2.5 million tonnes a year. The problem was that, unlike the Philippines, we had a seasonal sugar crop which would have meant either providing enormous bagasse storage capacity or oversizing a plant, which would shut down for half of the year. In the end, because of the possible market problems and the number of imponderables, we ceased to do further development of this project in this direction.

I turn to the subject of the treatment of Caroni (1975) Limited workers and the question of VSEP or retrenchment—whatever one chooses to call it. Severance or retrenchment is always a painful and sometimes traumatic experience. I, myself have been through this type of process from both sides of the divide. In the mid-60s oil was no longer black gold as it was thought to be, and many companies went through restructuring exercises in one form or another to reduce cost and to increase margins. We were not immune to this exercise. Some may remember that it was in this period BP chose to dispose of all its assets, which they found no longer viable or of strategic value. BP moved north to Alaska and to the North Sea where the return on its pounds was expected to be higher. This move spawned Trinidad Tesoro on the production side and Government was left with a handful of gas stations which BP owned, and formed NP, not as a matter of strategy but as of necessity. Shell, Esso and Texaco were not interested in these service stations, selling gasoline at an uneconomic retail price.

Within Shell Trinidad—where I was employed—massive exercises took place to rationalize the petroleum assets of shedding non-essential items, hospitals, trade schools and some housing. Within the refinery, rationalization was the name of the game. I was given a personal task to come up with a more efficient refinery flow scheme and secondly within this rationalized flow scheme, which meant shutting down some older plants and integrating processing into more efficient ones, to come up with manpower numbers to suit this model of operation. Coming up with the numbers was a simple exercise, identifying who should go and who should stay was a difficult, painful task, since I knew many of the people and their families personally.

In the end, a very brave managing director announced a total voluntary separation scheme. Of course, the more marketable were the first to up for this scheme and at that time refining was quite a viable option outside, places like St. Croix and the Bahamas. In the end it worked. Of course, there were those with little hope of employment and as soon as their money was spent the social problems began, but that is a long story. Today, Point Fortin has returned to boom town days through Atlantic LNG.

Madam President, 1986 saw the first change in party administration from PNM to NAR. Some organizations were more affected than others. I was then in the National Energy Corporation, which was earmarked to be the holding company of Government's interest in the energy sector. In fact, it was a policy enunciated in the election manifesto of the NAR, but this was not to be. At the same time, the country was subject to IMF conditionalities for restructuring of the economy. This was my second encounter with severance and I have to say, that I am in fact a VSEP recipient and a survivor. I was in the unusual position, as an acting CEO of the National Energy Corporation for almost two years, to propose that my substantive job—Head Engineering and Research Division—was surplus to requirement, I applied for voluntary retrenchment, my application was accepted, and I saw I was among those who received \$100,000 tax exempt severance in accordance with the recently passed law. Most of the NEC staff who were retrenched were able to fit into jobs because of their background and training, and so the trauma of separation was minimized.

I have looked at the VSEP settlement with the 7,870 daily-paid employees and including the enhancement—I prefer to refer to it as the sweetener—the total amount \$438 million is equivalent to an average of \$55,650 per hourly-paid worker. I note from the hon. Minister's presentation that the enhancement was based on a bell curve and I am not too sure why it was so, a bell curve being a statistical tool for normal distribution, but that is what she used, and perhaps she might give an explanation as to why that was chosen. The youngest and the oldest got the smallest amount of enhancement; those in the middle got the largest chunk of the enhancement.

For the 1,137 monthly paid, the \$300 million is equivalent to an average of \$264,000 per worker. As far as I can judge, they were the principal beneficiaries of the increased income tax exemption of \$300,000. As regards to the daily-paid workers, \$55,000 is not a large sum and I know that recipients have been given advice on prudent investment of this lump sum. I would not wish to be a judge of how many of the families of the VSEP recipients will fall by the wayside. Much

capital have been made of the counselling and training sessions being offered and a reasonable number have taken up the offer. In common with many of the speakers, I would be more interested in the follow up as to what employment job has been created and in what capacity.

I would also like to find out whether there was any screening of trainees, especially the technical jobs, there would be the need for a certain minimum education to be able to appreciate and to get into that form of training. Is there—I wonder—make-up education for any of these people, so that they can have the benefit of the technical education?

Let me turn my attention to land use planning and management. In this respect I note that recommendations of the Report of the Inter-agency Land Planning Team, April 30, 2004, have been endorsed by the Government. The terms of reference of the team were listed as:

- (1) undertake a land use and land capability study of Caroni (1975) Limited lands;
- (2) identify those lands which were considered suitable for different forms of economic and social activities; and
- (3) ensure that the commitment given to the former Caroni (1975) Limited employees and the mandate of the Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited (EMBD) could be met.

My major concern in the terms of reference is for the team to ensure that the mandate of the EMBD could be met. Elaboration of that mandate is given in sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the Report, on page 2. Section 2.2 gives the mandate in two Cabinet Minutes.

6.15 p.m.

Cabinet Minute dated January 20, 2002, identified as key objectives the development of light industrial estates, agricultural estates, housing estates and commercial complexes, as well as the management of the leases of these lands.

Cabinet Minute No. 1275 dated July 03, 2003, expanded the mandate of the EMBD to include development of heavy industrial estates as another key objective. The Cabinet Minute also outlined the procedural framework for the management of Caroni (1975) Limited lands by the EMBD according to the following key steps, and it is listed here in the Inter-Agency Report:

1. EMBD would accept proposals from parties interested in leasing land and would submit those proposals for the consideration of Cabinet, through the Minister with responsibility for EMBD.

Who would then designate the land required and approve the lease.

2. EMBD would deal with such land in accordance with the abovementioned mandate and develop, manage then distribute, rent, lease, et cetera.
3. EMBD would prepare and execute all deeds and other assurances in the name and on behalf of the State.

That is reminiscent of clause 10 in the Bill.

4. EMBD would submit quarterly reports to Cabinet, through the Minister with responsibility for EMBD on all approved transactions within three months of the end of each month.

That is also within that clause 10 of the Bill; and

5. Finally there is an expansion of the mandate of EMBD. The mandate of the EMBD was expanded in 2003, to include responsibility for the evaluation of requests for consideration for priority for the lease of residential lots and agricultural lands from former Caroni (1975) Limited employees.

Madam President, who is EMBD? I was specifically asking at that time, who is Mr. Uthara Rao, Chairman and CEO of EMBD. As far as I knew, I thought he was a man of steel or a Mittal man.

Hon. Senator: Steel or iron.

Sen. B. Ali: Steel or Mittal. I think that is the new name of Ispat. Mittal. So is he a Mittal man? What are his qualifications and who is in his working team? Who is the Minister to whom he reports? Madam President, I thought we were preaching local content—[*Desk thumping*]*—*but there appears to be a case of outsourcing like the Canadian who is responsible for HMB, UdeCott, TTMF, NIB; a real tzar.

Madam President, with the above listed mandate of the EMBD, the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force is largely academic. They just have to ensure that EMBD objectives can be fulfilled; so that the Trinidad and Tobago land capability classification might be meaningless. I think Sen. Mary King has already read what Prof. John Spence wrote in that article in the *Daily Express*.

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. ALI]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Madam President, let us also listen to Wendy Lee Yuen, the President of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago who wrote in the *Express* on Friday, April 01, 2005. It was not an April Fool's Day letter, because it was repeated in the Sunday *Guardian* on April 03, 2005, and in another newspaper. I believe what I would have liked to say has been said already by Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate continue its 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. B. Ali: Thank you, Madam President. As I said, I have some grave doubts about the work being done in this, and I have had access to the Inter-Agency Task Force Report. I do not know whether it is in the public domain, but I believe the hon. Minister said that it is a transparent Government and I did have this report.

I note that the hon. Minister, Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano spoke of at least two-acre parcels of lands; whereas in this Report, item 12:17, the team noted that EMBD had already been utilizing the two-acre maximum guideline in the interviewing and screening process, which established a location of agricultural land requested as well as agricultural purposes.

Sen. D. Montano: Senator, if I may, that is a guideline in terms of what they are entitled to. That is an entitlement, because they were employees of Caroni (1975) Limited. There is still another 32,000 acres that anyone could still apply for, so that is when I say at least the two acres, that is the minimum or the maximum, depending on how you look at it, but that is their entitlement to apply for.

Sen. Bro. Khan: Why not five?

Sen. B. Ali: Madam President, this Report at Table 10 gives economic size holdings for different types of agricultural activities: mixed farming farming, 2—5 acres; citrus, 10—12.5 acres; cane, 10—12.5 acres; dairy intensive, 2—5 acres; dairy extensive, 20 acres; rice, 5 acres; vegetables 2.0—5 acres. Then it goes on to say that for the sake of equity among former Caroni (1975) Limited workers that they had to reduce the size and so this famous two-acre parcel came up. It is a

strange kind of logic that you say these are the economic sizes and then you are saying that the workers are only entitled to two acres. I could not understand it. I still do not understand it. That is why I have raised it.

Madam President, I viewed this report—I have looked at it; I have studied it and I really cannot understand how that report melds with what we have in the policy.

I have one other matter and that is, I have looked at the expenditure on agriculture for the year 2005, and I wonder what the commitment of this Government to agriculture is? The recurrent budget for 2005, for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is \$400.8 million out of a total budget of \$25,493.9. The percentage of that total budget is 1.57 per cent. The development budget, \$52.2 million out of \$2,075 million, 2.51 per cent. So on an average, \$453 million out of \$27,568 million, 1.64 per cent. What is our commitment to agriculture which represents an economic sector of this country?

In the context of the land distribution, et cetera, I did have one final question, and that relates to the team's report. It said that the team was advised that a strategy for sustainable development and sound environmental management would be articulated in a new National Physical Developmental Plan (NPDP) for Trinidad and Tobago; for which the terms of reference to engage consultants were being finalized by the Town and Country Planning Division, and the National Physical Development Plan would be completed by 2006. Where are we in the preparation of this NPDP? Is it on target for 2006, or would all the land be already distributed before this plan sees the light of day?

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

Sen. Brother Noble S.A. Khan: Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me these few moments to share some thoughts on what is before us: “An Act 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.”

As previous speakers have mentioned, Madam President, I think that what is before us is one of the most significant pieces of legislation that would have come before us within recent times. It deals with something that takes us back to when Columbus first came to these lands. Our history book is replete with it; when he

landed, a sword in one hand, accompanied by certain elements and they took over the land and proclaimed it to be in the name of the King and Queen of Spain, and there it remained for quite sometime, until 1797 when it changed hands.

In the meantime, much has taken place within the land and even what we refer to as the Orange Grove area and the Caroni area. We saw the movements of people, the near elimination of people, and replacement of people on the land. The question of land was very important from the earliest times and we saw movement from people of the other islands, I think 1789 on thereabout, when we had the Cedula of population of people coming to Trinidad to occupy lands. Again, we had the same Caroni area being a primary area and we had massive estates there, where you had cocoa and a host of other crops taking place. Even some of the Orange Grove lands, too, were used. These crops were later replaced by sugar as cocoa went down and sugar came up.

In the meantime, because of labour shortage we had movements of other people coming from Europe, Madeira, China, South Asia and later on from other areas of the Middle East, and what have you. What is important here is that, substantially, many of those people who came were linked with the land and their link with the land was still controlled by the ownership of the land where, to a great extent, you had a complete transfer as it became uneconomical, and so we had Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove National Company Limited coming to possess much lands.

This continued for sometime and, again, the vagaries of the world economies and what have you, the question of sugar being the prime monoculture at the time, that continued to slip, and so we had the past foreign owners easing out themselves and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Government, becoming the major owners of the land.

There is a similarity between that and the other part of the economy which developed with respect to the oil sector. It is important to note that when it became unproductive or no longer economically viable, it fell upon the Government of the day to assume ownership. I do remember it was around the end of 1955 where you had the British moving out from the Trinidad scene. At that time the prime producer, as far as the economy was concerned, was in the oil industry and, regrettably, when the British moved out and they were under pressure because of cash foreign exchange, the Americans came in.

As a young person at that time it was a bitter taste in my mouth. Even at that time we did not take the initiative because if we were to check into the records, I strongly suspect that it would come out that not even our ruling local elites—which at that time there was an increase as far as the participation of the people was concerned—did not get into the action. I do not know if they were pushed aside by the British or what, but perhaps it might be an area where we could have some work done by the universities, et cetera. I myself do not know if that was done but it is an important aspect where, again, we had foreign domination and we had the Texaco people and what have you, dominating the oil sector. There again, when it became uneconomical or because of the strategies of the internationals of shifting their areas of production and the siting of their refineries taking place, you had them moving out. The Trinidad and Tobago Government came in again. At that time we bought the areas in Pointe-a-Pierre which were bare shells, by then, but we paid handsomely for that. We continued along these ways.

With respect to the land, there was always pressure on the land from people. Some of the land, when they started to have—and you may find similarities that took place in the English experience and by all means they would have brought that to the areas that they had colonized. I think that the people from Ireland, particularly the people from Scotland, when they had the amalgamation with the lands and they got rid of the clans, et cetera, they had that experience to use in these parts, of pulling the land together, of making them into large groups.

In the meantime, to some extent you had what I always refer to—I think in the literature you might see it—as the marginalization; where our own people here had only the margins to deal with. All the rich lands were in the hands of these people who owned it, the dominating force. So to some extent, when we assumed the ownership of the land—when I say we, the Government assumed the ownership of land—we still continued to behave in a way, just as if you move “A” and you put “B”, and the people continued to be under the system that, regrettably, remained just as when they had the foreign owner. To some extent trade unionism and all of that had come in and there was some form of amelioration as far as conditions of service were concerned. This happened in the oil, sugar and in the other areas too.

I strongly suspect in the area of oil, the question of local participation hardly ever exists. It is relevant because, what I am trying to put here—I had prefaced what I am saying that what is here is very important, this question of the land. I

remember somewhere around 1912 the whole economic philosophy came about in England with respect to the question of ownership of land on that basis, but we would not touch on that for the moment.

When the Government, so to speak, took over the land and formed the ownership, the whole question of how we will manage it continued to be a very difficult thing to deal with. Even in the days of the colonialists, there was an element of patronage, an element of dealing; where, to some extent, it was not pure agriculture that was taking place in these areas. It was like a whole cultural milieu, and I am sure some of us, particularly the older ones, even inside the Senate, could link-up with what took place. Even when some people were able to gather some funds, et cetera, to buy lands, it was a bit difficult, but some did break through and they bought lands and became what has been referred to as some of the big landowners and they continued in tradition of the cane farming basis; cane farming in the sense of a big owner.

Later on we had what has been referred to as the cane farmer input, where lands were leased to people, or people were allowed to use the lands and they planted cane. We have heard here mentioned in the Senate that there were times too, even today, where the cane farmers' cane is cheaper than the cane that is produced by Caroni (1975) Limited which one would expect. It is a paradox of the economy of scale that you will find when you have a bigger scale it would cost more, as against the small fellow doing his thing. So you had that taking place. To some extent, the cultural linkage is very important to note in this. These all have elements for what we are about here, in that much of the people, as soon as they came, particularly soon after the experiences of slavery, many of them moved from the land because they did not want to be associated with it. Some were, but by far and large some of the best cane farmers and people in agriculture were still from the slave heritage, so to speak.

Very often we hear that there seems to be a dichotomy between people based on ethnicity, of some people attached to the land and some people not attached to the land, but that again I think is a big misnomer. Perhaps we could possibly guide ourselves into looking at it again, because I strongly suspect that if you were to take a sort of census of the people who are into agriculture, you may find that the bias is such that it does not exist; some of these ancient and difficult attachments that people seem to hold and wish to split people along very artificial lines. This is an important aspect to think in terms of when we come to think about the lands—very important.

Now, the whole question of the element of culture must impact on what we are about here. Madam President, when I think of culture, I think in terms of a wider aspect, and one could think of culture in the way that there is a strong link even with the soil. If we were to look at the origin of the word, just think in terms of culture as having a strong link with the soil. The generation of the words is similar. Just think in terms of cultivate and you would see the linkage.

The question of how we look at it with respect to this aspect—I remember even the word “Aryan” as we would think in terms of it, means a cultivator, one who is linked to the soil. It is a very ancient word and it also carries the meaning—some words have different meanings—and one of it is “noble”. [Laughter] That is so from the literature. Attachment to the soil is a most important aspect from ancient times. There are some cultures that will tell you, particularly my ancient African brothers who still have connection here, and even what remains of our indigenous people, you will see, symbolically, even in their orations, a link with the soil; the respect that is paid to the soil.

These are symbolic. It does not mean that the soil or the earth itself is a god or an object of worship, in the sense that what is due to the creator who has created you and this land of ours. But there is a sacred linkage, an element of sanctity when you come to deal with the soil and the earth. For some of us who are required to do our prayer, our foreheads touch the earth many times for the day. This in itself is in oration to the Creator who has created the soil. So this is a very important aspect. Very often you would find a close linkage between when we start to desert or leave out that connectivity with the soil, you start the destruction of a people and it could start with us, me; you, we, as a group, when you seek to separate that.

I will just divert for a second to the question—I will use the word, “khaki”. The word “khaki” is a Pharisee word, a Persian word, that means the earth and in certain disciplines you will find a term that they would use to a person who has adopted a certain pattern of life. I remember a person who, when you asked him what was his name, he had mentioned “Khaki”. He was asked: “What was the link with that?” It means the earth. To some extent it is a spiritual link, so to speak, in that form of discipline; a very ancient form of discipline that goes way back. So you will see that this khaki is the same cloth that we use to make clothes. So we see this sort of linkage that comes as a heritage to ourselves.

As I said before, when we start not to pay the respect to this trust which is very important—I may have mentioned here before, that when we think in terms of when we come and when we leave, we come with nothing and we leave with

nothing, so whatever we meet, it becomes a trust. That is part of the heritage that we, as human beings, speaking for myself and my tradition, this is how we look upon it. That armour, that trust, that is given to us is very sacred and we should pay the greatest respect to it and how we deal with it.

It is against this background when we think in terms of those elements of the social implications as far as culture is concerned—because when we think in terms of human societies, we must have a linkage with what has been referred to as the culture, and the culture, as I have said before, could commonly mean civilization per se. That does not mean to say that—for example, recently we had Holi which is a spring festival that has a link with the earth and link with the harvest season. All peoples have some element of thanksgiving.

Recently I visited our Baptist brothers and sisters and we went to the table of thanksgiving, and it definitely had that linkage of the earth there; your fruits and what have you. So in all traditions we have this link and it is very important what we are about.

6.45 p.m.

I would also like to bring to our attention that I am putting these against a background; culture in itself is not narrow. Of course, we can look at it because some words, as I said, are interchanged and you know we have a Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs for whom we have the highest respect—[*Desk thumping*] and she tries, and she is making a great success in her attempts in the area of culture.

This is one aspect of culture where we speak of the arts and I will definitely like to see more being put towards that area, because that in itself brings an appreciation of the other aspects of culture which is the sum total as far as civilization is concerned. So we can see the very important aspects of the culture, and the personality of all our individuals is most important.

Now, when the incident happened, or the event took place we saw the dismantling or shattering of a very old system that came down to us through Caroni (1975) Limited experience and what the company had. Even from slavery days the company that organized, or the landowner, or slave owner who organized the estates, so to speak, was a sort of total system and one can think in terms of Caroni (1975) Limited as being total systems in the sense of close cultural systems, in the sense that all who were attached there found they would have had a comfort within that embryo. So that is an important aspect as far as elements of culture are concerned in dealing with Caroni (1975) Limited.

I would like to shift a little with respect to my personal history because I am a product of the indentureship system of those who came and it is important to look within our own recorded history to see what took place. On my mother's side, her "nana" and "nani", "dada" and "dadi" came and as soon as the experience on the estates came—this is an important aspect as far as the land is concerned—particularly on my mother's "nani" and "nana's" side, that is on her maternal linkages, grandparents. As soon as the estate boundary was completed, they had what was referred to—I refer to it—as an urban pull, and in that urban pull, they settled in the East Dry River area which were marginal lands at that time.

In 1922, my mother's "nani" drew up her deed—a small piece of land and my mother told me of the conversations she had with her grandmother when this deed was being drawn up. She said my mother's grandmother had one daughter and about five or six sons and when she had made up the deed, she left her sons' names on the deed. So my mother asked her: "Why did you leave out Halimah?" She said that is how it is done. We are talking culture here against the land, though coming out of the Caroni (1975) Limited experience, here you see it going back into the recorded history of our people, of my family.

She said she has to see about her sons and Halimah's husband has to see about her. So my mother told her she does not think that is correct, and she has to see about Halimah, et cetera. The conversation was final when she said: "Betee, this is how it is done in India." That is how she dealt with it. She would see about her sons and my mother said well—and I knew it too that—Halimah's brothers would ensure that she was looked after and they had built a house for her on the little piece of land.

So here we had a change of values taking place against a background of people coming to an area, the land was small and it was not too long ago that the last inheritor, who was one of the sons' wives who died in her nineties and was not of the same racial origin either. She was a church-going person and when her husband had passed away she asked who will make up the papers and see about the little piece of land, and one of the grandsons or somebody dealt with it within the family and that was settled.

What has come out here, to my mind, is an attachment because of the cultural links, and when I speak of the cultural links, I am speaking here about something that could be learnt over a period of time. Here, these people were coming on the land and by far the majority of the people who were on the land at Caroni (1975) Limited were not of one—and even up to now—ethnic origin. By far, it may

appear so, but they are people of different ethnicity who are on these lands and by all means, the question of connectivity of the land is one that had been there and fostered over centuries and maybe millennia. From whatever the traditions may be from the great African Continent or maybe from South Asia.

So we now come to the question of what is taking place through this Bill. To my mind, some attempt is being made, and over the period of time when we think in terms of how we would manage an economy for people who have more or less taken responsibility entrusted upon them. It is important, because according to Prof. Beckford, we still continue to be poor and persistently so.

Madam President, the question here now—no matter how we came and remained attached to that land—is what position we held on the land. It was one of what was referred to in biblical terms as drawers of water and hewers of wood, or it can be put the other way around, and so we continued in that way. But there is a connectivity that we have had over the centuries.

I will just make a diversion between the two acres and five acres matter that because of people who, when they had served their time in the early indentureship were given five acres. I do not think this was so across the board but now we see the question of a maximum of two acres. We may play with nicety of words and what have you, but the whole thing about it is what for, wherefore, when, et cetera.

My father-in-law and mother-in-law worked in agriculture all their lives and raised 14 children. All got big, they are healthy, et cetera, so there is some form of living that obtained from that time, and one of the things in speaking with him was that he was a very wise, decent and spiritual man. I remember he had said there is no bad land; you just got to know what to plant on it. This was a very simple man sharing his wisdom and there are many other things that I can recall of the agricultural experience from the fields.

My grandmother, my mother and I were born on the hill and there were generations coming away from the agriculture, and I always promised myself that I would cut cane and plant rice. Regretfully, up to now, I have not been able to do any, but there is a connectivity. The family always had their goats and within recent times—we do not have any more goats but all my children and I grew up on goat milk. That was part of the tradition of how we grew up.

This is important to remember because coming back to all of this, I do remember in 1976, I may have mentioned it here, but it stands out in my mind. It was in the month of Muharram in 1963, that was the month of fasting, and I do

remember it clearly because there was a whistle stop as far as election in 1976 was concerned and Dr. Williams had passed through and I went to hear him. He was on top of a truck and spoke from there and there are two things I wish to share with you on that.

When he came up on the truck he said that election will be from 6.00 in the morning to 6.00 in the evening, go and vote from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Some people may ask why he said that, but the speaker before was the representative of the area and she had said that by 9 o'clock we finish beat them, as far as the election was concerned. Now, if you are in Laventille as I guess in every other area—through you, Madam President—I am sure Sen. Augustus will understand what I am speaking about. People had their culture, so if you see 9 o'clock reached, a neighbour calls this one and that one and asks the time. Is it 9 o'clock? He would then say, well we finish beat them and nobody going to vote after that. So from the time he said six to six you could have sighted the message.

He mentioned, they talking about planting, planting, planting, who are planting? And this stuck in my mind. In Laventille we had good goats. We had Mr. Yearwood, Mr. Williams, Mr. Gamble, my brother; I had some too, and the boy up the road. We had about five or six good goat herds in Laventille. I cannot recall if any exists now. Mr. Yearwood and my brother have gone to the great beyond but we have no succeeding generation as far as agriculture is concerned. I am sure when we come to think in terms of the use of these two-acre and three-acre lands that some would be used in this area.

I hear they have a new breed of goat they are using now. I know about the Alpine, the Tottenburg, Sanaan, the Anglo Nubian. I also hear there is one called the Boer, a South African goat which is big and hardy. I have not seen any yet and I understand there are some in Trinidad, but I have not seen what they look like. So we are thinking in terms of utilizing some of the land in this area.

This will help insofar as making use of the land because food security is a very important aspect and I am sure that much of the curry goat that you get now—I am sure my friend, Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas will know of a good curry goat from Jamaica or even the smaller islands. So if we can have more of these herds insofar as the use of this land, I think it would be a good way to go.

With respect to the question of what is before us, I would like to think in terms of the utilization of the land. It would seem to me that an attempt is being made to have a shift away. Perhaps it is a shift that because of the time, I do not

Caroni and Orange Grove National (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. BRO. KHAN]

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

get the feeling that we had a good command of the whole situation which is a sad thing because here we are dealing with the major pièce de résistance of what our economy is supposed to be guided by. We have heard it repeatedly said that—

Madam President: Senator, how much longer do you think you would speak? It is now 7 o'clock to which the extension was taken. Are you going to be much longer?

Sen. Bro. N. S. A. Khan: I would think so, My Lady. [*Laughter*]

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Madam President, I am sure on the next occasion we would continue to be regaled with stories of Dr. Eric Williams, but in the meantime, I beg to move that the Senate be now adjourned to Tuesday, April 19, at 1.30 p.m. when we will continue the debate on this Bill.

Sen. Wade Mark: Madam President, may I inform the Senate through you that I had a Motion on the Adjournment to deal with the matter of the Promulgation of the Minimum Wages Order.

The hon. Minister has since tabled that Order in both Houses of Parliament and I therefore wish to withdraw that particular motion, but to inform the Senate that I have about five others and I will raise them in the coming period.

Madam President: Sen. Bro. Khan, you have spoken for 34 minutes so you have 11 of your 45 minutes remaining for the next time, and then 15.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.02 p.m.