

*Leave of Absence*

*Tuesday, November 21, 2006*

**SENATE**

*Tuesday, November 21, 2006*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MADAM. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam President:** Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting to Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano, Sen. Ato Boldon and Sen. Dana Seetahal, S.C., who are all out of the country. I have also granted leave from today's sitting to Sen. The Hon. Satish Ramroop due to illness and also to Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand.

**SENATORS' APPOINTMENT**

**Madam-President:** Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Professor George Maxwell Richards, T.C. C.M.T., Ph.D, and Her Excellency Dr. Linda Savitri Baboolal, Acting President of the Republic of Trinidad Tobago:

**“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

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

/s/ G. Richards  
President.

**TO: MRS. JOAN HACKSHAW-MARSLIN**

WHEREAS Senator Satish Ramroop is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of illness:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, JOAN HACKSHAW-MARSLIN, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the period of illness of the said Senator Satish Ramroop.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 21<sup>st</sup> day of November, 2006.”

*Senators' Appointment*  
[MADAM PRESIDENT]

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**“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

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

/s/ G. M. Richards  
President.

**TO: MR. NILEUNG ROLAND HYPOLITE**

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

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, NILEUNG ROLAND HYPOLITE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2006 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Danny Montano.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2006.”

**“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

By Her Excellency, DR. LINDA SAVITRI BABOOLAL, Acting President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ Linda Baboolal  
Acting President.

**TO: MR. ANTHONY SAMMY**

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

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LINDA SAVITRI BABOOLAL, Acting President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you,

*Senators' Appointment*

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ANTHONY SAMMY, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Ato Boldon.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 16<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2006."

**"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

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

/s/ G. Richards  
President.

**TO: MISS ALTHEA ROCKE**

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

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

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 20<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2006."

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

Joan Hackshaw-Marslin, Nileung Roland Hypolite, Anthony Sammy, Althea Rocke.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. The report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Environmental Trust Fund for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill)*]
2. The annual audited financial statements of Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 1999. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
3. The annual audited financial statements of Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2000. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
4. The report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Statement of Recovery of Expenses of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ended December 31, 2005. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
5. The annual audited financial statements of the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) Limited for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
6. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1986. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
7. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1987. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
8. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1988. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
9. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1989. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
10. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1990. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
11. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1991. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
12. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1992. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]

13. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1993. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
14. The unaudited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1994. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
15. The audited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1995. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
16. The audited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1996. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
17. The audited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1997. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
18. The audited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1998. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]
19. The audited financial statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the year ended September 30, 1999. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]

**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Desalination Company of Trinidad and Tobago  
(Termination of Contract)**

**3. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) whether the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has terminated the contract entered into between itself and the Desalination Company of Trinidad and Tobago (DESALCOTT);
- (b) the date such termination was effected;
- (c) the precise reasons for the termination; and
- (d) the effects of the termination of the contract with "DESALCOTT" on the ability of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) to fulfil its mandate?

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Madam President, the hon. Minister is out of the country and I am, therefore, asking for a deferral of one week in respect of this question.

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, I do not want to burden you or the Senate, but it is the first time in my memory that it has taken one year. It is very important that a question on the Order Paper has not been answered for one year. This is unprecedented.

**Madam President:** Okay, Senator. Thank you.

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, I am asking you to take action.

**Madam President:** I appeal to the Leader of Government Business to try his best to bring this answer, hopefully before the end of the year.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (AMDT.) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid):** Madam President, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act be now read a second time.

We have before us a very simple amendment, a single amendment, but it will require some explanation, which I hope to provide. I will begin by reading a few relevant sections of the parent Act, which will provide the context within which this amendment is being proposed.

Act No. 16, or the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act 2004, was proclaimed on July 09, 2004. Section 26 reads:

- “(1) No institution shall carry on the business of post secondary or tertiary education or use any of the words ‘university’, ‘college’, ‘tertiary college’, ‘polytechnic’, ‘community college’, ‘technical college’, ‘technical institute’ or ‘technical university’ in its name unless registered under this Act and any regulations or rules made under this Act.
- (2) A registered institution shall not—
- (a) alter its accredited programmes without prior approval of the Council; or
  - (b) misrepresent to the public the recognition gained by it for its programmes or awards.”

Further to subsections (1) and (2), subsection (5) says:

“An institution which fails to comply with subsection (1) or (2) is guilty of an offence and in addition to any other penalty imposed by this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine of twenty thousand dollars and to a further fine of five hundred dollars for each day that such offence is continued after written notice of the offence has been given by the Council.”

Section 29 is also immediately relevant because it says, where it provides for transitional provisions:

“(1) Institutions lawfully performing their functions in Trinidad and Tobago at the commencement of this Act, shall—”

—as you will recall commenced on July 09, 2004—

“for the period of two years thereafter, be deemed to be authorized to continue to perform such functions, provided that no such institution shall advertise or offer to the public any new courses or programmes without the prior approval of the Council.”

Madam President, the key words in section 29(1) are “two years thereafter”, which means that institutions have been allowed a grace period of two years to continue to operate legally in Trinidad and Tobago before being registered. It was contemplated that the two-year period provided for in section 29(1) would allow the Accreditation Council to establish itself and register institutions. This would mean that institutions would have to meet the standards required for registration. We are proposing that that two-year period be extended by a further two years. I will explain what we have done during the period of the first two years and, hopefully, we will provide the justification for the extension that is being proposed.

It has taken us two years to actually establish the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) properly, as we think we have, and we think it might have been overly ambitious to have expected to have completed the establishment of the ACTT and the upgrades in the post-secondary and tertiary institutions that would be necessary to allow them to meet the standards for registration in two years—and may I also point out that we hope that the process governing our activity is the facilitative and developmental process.

This is important because we are hoping to work with the institutions to help them to upgrade themselves rather than take a big stick or punitive approach where we say these are the standards, meet them or else you shall not be registered. What we are doing is assisting them; providing them with technical

expertise and guidance as necessary so that they can themselves upgrade. We have found them to be quite willing to upgrade and meet the standards. It is just that the technical expertise has not been available to them and we hope to provide that.

The Act was proclaimed in July 2004 and the board was appointed in September 2004 by the President. So it took us just about two months to have that board appointed. The secretariat was established when we hired the Executive Director in February 2005. We have engaged in a phased recruitment process between March and October 2005.

It is to be noted, even in the hiring of an executive director and members of staff, that quality assurance and accreditation in higher education is in fact an emerging field in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Caribbean. As a consequence, there are few specialists available in Caricom, so much so that, having hired persons we determine to be qualified—you can imagine of course, in circumstances where there are so few available—that we would take longer than might be normally expected to identify and to recruit them. Further, we have had to invest in exposing our staff members to further training; to seminars and conferences that might exist throughout the world.

In July 2005, we established the offices of the Accreditation Council in Port of Spain. For a very short time they occupied a small space within the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, but you would understand that it is not the best idea to have an independent accreditation council reside within the Ministry and so we moved very quickly to have them identify and relocate themselves to separate quarters. They did that in July 2005 and we were also very successful in establishing an office in Scarborough, Tobago in March 2006.

Within the context of the region, the University Council of Jamaica was established in 1987. That is now under review because we have now a Caricom Draft Bill which is significantly different from what was established in Jamaica in 1987. The Jamaicans are now reviewing their own legislation to ensure that it is compatible and consistent with the provisions of the Caricom Draft Bill, which you will recall forms the basis of our own legislation, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 2004.

Barbados, Guyana and St. Kitts and Nevis have adopted the Caricom Draft Bill and they have established their national accreditation bodies in their legislation. So we are just putting ourselves and what we have been able to do in the context of the region. We have been able to appoint our board, have our legislation put in place, hire our staff, invest in training for our staff, establish our offices and we are looking at it all the while in the context of what the region is doing.



At present, I am very proud and happy to say to this honourable Senate and to the national community that the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, within Caricom, is the most fully structured and staffed national accrediting body of any available in the region. We are boasting a highly qualified staff of 29 persons and the best resourced institution, able to carry out the functions as they relate to accreditation. [*Desk thumping*] As far as accreditation goes, we are ahead of everybody else in the region.

Madam President, you will recognize that the reputation of any country's higher education system must be predicated on the competence, integrity and transparency of its accreditation system. It is its accreditation system that will tell the world what are the standards of its higher education system. We understand immediately that we cannot practise accreditation. No national accreditation body can perform its functions in a vacuum. You must understand how you fit into accreditation as it exists in the rest of the world, so you must look first to international standards of best practice and that is what we have done. We have looked to the US. We have looked to the UK, Canada and Latin American countries with a view to determining how they have set themselves up and what might be the best system for us in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the United States—and they have been performing accrediting functions since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century—today, they have a system where they have divided their country into six regions for accrediting purposes: the North-Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the New England Association, the Middle States Association, the South-Southern Association; the Western Association and the North-Western Association.

As you can tell by their names, they are divided on the basis of geography. The largest of the six is the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, which has over 100 years experience in accrediting. What we have done as we have proceeded to establish our accreditation council, is to establish immediately a relationship with the North-Central Association of Colleges and Schools in the United States and it is within the context of that relationship that we have been able to benefit from their experience and to learn from them how to establish a national accrediting body in Trinidad and Tobago.

They have provided very valuable guidance to us in the establishment of the structures and systems to be used within our ACTT. They have also provided for us valuable assistance in the training of staff and in the adaptation of criteria, policies and processes to ensure international comparability of standards set by the ACTT. Accreditation is nothing new, but setting up an accrediting body requires specialist expertise and we have found it critical to lean on those more experienced in the field.

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We have spent considerable time putting in place the policies, systems and practices that will allow us to earn international recognition. As we say that, it is not that we propose to liaise with the North-Central Association of Colleges and Schools of the USA, but there exists an organization which is called the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education or INQAAHE. The membership of INQAAHE includes every recognized and reputable accrediting and quality assurance agency in 73 countries. It is comprised of accrediting bodies throughout the world. The accrediting bodies of 73 countries are members of INQAAHE. It is like the United Nations of accrediting bodies, except that it has more stringent membership requirements.

The membership therefore is not automatic. One cannot simply say that one has established an accrediting agency in one's country and expect to gain membership. It must be based on compliance with very stringent requirements in terms of the governance of your accreditation body, your autonomy, which is provided for in your legislation, your policies and your organizational capacity. They look at all four criteria before they determine whether to accept you as a member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. So there are very stringent criteria with which you must comply if you are to be admitted into INQAAHE.

**2.00 p.m.**

It is a very stringent criteria with which you must comply if you are in fact to be admitted into INQAAHE. INQAAHE assists would-be members to—Again, this is facilitative and developmental. We have been able to rely on INQAAHE to provide lots of assistance to ensure that the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago is meeting international standards. Over and above that, all members are committed. When I say committed, you must declare your commitment to abide by what is called “the code of good practice for external quality assurance agencies”.

I am happy to announce, remember I said 73 countries, but individual countries may have more than one accrediting body. As is the case in the United States, they have six. There are 156 members of INQAAHE today. I am proud to announce that Trinidad and Tobago is a member of INQAAHE; having met all of the standards required.

So involved are we, we have been very instrumental in establishing the formation of the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education, (CANQATE). This is a subregional body or network of INQAAHE. There

are other subregional networks. This is nothing new. There exists such networks in Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Pacific. We have been so instrumental, our Executive Director of the ACTT is the Vice-President of CANQATE today.

We are also a member of the National Recognition Information Centre of the United Kingdom (NARIC). They hold the most comprehensive international database of recognized institutions and programmes. That database is of critical value to us. It allows us to compare degree programmes and institutions, as we go along.

We have all along proceeded with a policy where we collaborate and consult with the more experienced institutions that have been established and have performed accrediting functions for more than 100 years. We have used all that experience to recognize what is international best practice. That international best practice, as we have determined, has informed the development of our document, which is called the Policies, Procedures and Processes which govern the operations of the ACTT in Trinidad and Tobago. That document, the Policies, Procedures and Processes, which has taken some time to do—all these relationships do not come overnight—the consultations and research have taken place over the last two years.

Our document, the Policies, Procedures and Processes identifies some of the issues that we have addressed; the criteria for the registration of post secondary and tertiary institutions. We have to establish carefully what criteria we will use, the process for the registration of post secondary and tertiary level institutions, the criteria for accreditation of institutions and programmes, the process of initial and continued accreditation of institutions and programmes. I must point out that there is initial accreditation. Accreditation is something that must be monitored over time. Accreditation has a lifespan, as it were. An institution may be accredited in 2004, but the standards may drop over the passing years, with the effluxion of time. Maybe the institution may not be monitoring itself. We have initial accreditation and we also have continuing accreditation. Both are critical.

There are the criteria for conferment of institutional title. I remember years ago reading the justification for the establishment of the ACTT in the first place, and what they identified was a situation where there was an indiscriminate use of titles. Institutions were calling themselves colleges, campuses and universities and there was no agency conferring titles and it was left to whatever anyone chose to call himself, as the case might be. The Policies, Procedures and Processes would also address the revocation of suspension of status and the process of appeal against a decision of the Council. We have a comprehensive document which would guide the work of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

Where are we now? We are now in a position to work with the institutions. It has taken us this time to establish the Accreditation Council, hire the staff, appoint the board, train our staff, satisfy ourselves and get accommodation right and to develop the international relationships and to develop the policies, procedures and processes that would guide our work. We are now in a position to work with institutions, I keep saying, facilitative and developmental.

We recognize that our institutions are playing a valuable and critical role in the education of our people and we would like to work with them to help them upgrade their standards. We are not inclined to shut institutions down. We are inclined to help institutions up.

We are now in a position to work with institutions to make sure that they meet the requirements necessary for registration. Some of these are the legal and regulatory requirements; they must have proper governance and administrative structures; quality management systems, a resource management system; there must be effective teaching/learning processes and there must be review mechanisms and continuous improvement strategies. All of these can be scientifically measured by an accredited body, which is what we have been learning to do with the relationships that we have been developing.

To extend the example, the ACTT will evaluate the governance structure, for example, the administrative strength and capacity. You cannot have, for example, an institution of a particular size which is governed by a single individual. You must have your board and we must determine the extent. The ACTT, using its scientific measuring instruments, will determine the extent to which the governance structure matches the size of the institution and what it is proposing to do.

They will also look at the academic policies and procedures, the quality of faculty, a critical factor; the quality of the members of the teaching staff; the physical facilities and the financial stability, among others. Those are the kinds of issues that will be addressed when we review the governance structure of the institution.

On Monday, November 13, 2006, the ACTT met with the management and owners, in some cases, of our tertiary education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. We met at the Bureau of Standards in Macoya, where a full presentation was made to members of private and public tertiary education institutions, outlining carefully what is required for registration and the process that is involved.

We have also published handbooks and distributed those handbooks. We have them available. They are outlining very carefully, so that our institutions will know, what the criteria for registration are and what the process is. We have published those and made them available to all our institutions. The institutions now know what is required of them, in terms of standards and the process. Now, it is our hope that once they have applied, we will work with each institution individually to ensure that we identify wherever their shortcomings may exist, advise, work, guide and support them to build their capacity and strengthen the institution, such that they perform their function in delivering tertiary education at the standard required by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. As I have said—this has been the fifth time—for a facilitative and developmental process.

We expect that the work with the institution, which is now beginning, will be completed by July 2008. Between now and July 2008, we are hoping to work with institutions so that they will all meet the requirement for registration, so at that stage, we could then say that if you do not meet the requirement, you shall not be registered and as a consequence, you would not be able to operate in Trinidad and Tobago. We are actually asking for an extension of the period.

It has taken us this long to get where we are. We need to have that period within which we would work with institutions.

**Sen. Mark:** May I clarify?

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** You will speak just now. You will talk for an hour.

**Sen. Mark:** I want clarification.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** You are going to talk for an hour. I will give you my clarification at the end. All right, Senator, get up.

**Sen. Mark:** Through you, Madam President, I want my colleague to give us an idea of the institutions of learning that may have met the criterion and timeline that was established initially in the Act. I would like him to share the names of those institutions and those institutions that may not have met the deadline. I am trying to get some clarification from him.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Okay Senator. We have only now finished our work and are now inviting them to apply. Some may have applied before, but the criteria is now set. We are now in a position to determine who will meet, who has met and who would not have met. From now on—it has taken us this long to

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establish our policies, procedures and processes—we are now ready to engage the institutions. There is no list available that I can provide for you. These institutions will continue to operate and, gradually, over the following two years, we will work with them to upgrade. After July 2008, that is when we expect to say that they cannot operate without registration.

I have tried to outline the work that we have been doing within the Accreditation Council. I think that we have worked well and accomplished a lot in the two years. I think, though, it may have been a little ambitious of us to have expected that we would have accomplished everything, including the upgrade of institutions. This remaining period is to allow the institutions to benefit from our experience as they upgrade. That will require investments in the institutions. In some cases, they have to get better faculties, expand, develop their physical infrastructure, change their management structure and their governance structure. That will take the institutions some time.

Even if we were to identify all of the issues that needed to be addressed in any single institution, it will take the institution some time before they are able to meet the standards as required. I hope my explanation has been adequate. We are proposing to extend the period. The amendment we are making is that in clause 29 we are changing two years to four years. That will deal with the extension of time that we are proposing.

I thank you very much. I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam President. I listened attentively to the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education trying to present a rationale for the extension of the two years that was needed by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago for doing its works and carrying out its functions. We note that he indicated that it was passed in June 2004 and the board was appointed in September 2004 by the President.

Subsequent to that, the secretariat was established in February 2005. Now it is about 18 months since the secretariat has been established. Obviously, a council has been established as well. Although he said that it is a simple amendment moving two years to four years, there are a number of significant questions that need to be answered.

My colleague, Sen. Wade Mark asked one of the most important questions a while ago. The first is, if you have set up an Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago accrediting institutions, post-secondary and tertiary institutions, when we look at the definition of post-secondary institutions in the parent Act, there is left a lot to be desired in terms of what exactly is post-secondary. I understand the meaning of post-secondary, but what are post-secondary institutions and what are

tertiary institutions? We have in the definition section that “post-secondary” means “all education and training programmes which are not at tertiary level, but which are offered to secondary school leavers to meet their vocational or continuing education needs.” Are there such institutions in Trinidad and Tobago? If there are such institutions, what are those institutions? That is the first thing the Minister has to explain to us.

He ought to come to tell us how many institutions are there in Trinidad and Tobago, which need to be certified or accredited by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the first piece of information he should give to this Senate. The general public is so confused about the plethora of institutions that are moving throughout Trinidad and Tobago; whether they are public institutions, private institutions or quasi institutions. You are quite aware of it. If we do not have that basic information, what is the use of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, if he says he is fully staffed and boasting about 29 people on the staff and a council has been elected since February 2005, 18 months ago?

If I were the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the first thing I would want to know is what are the institutions to be accredited in Trinidad and Tobago.

There had been an accreditation committee before, operating in Trinidad and Tobago called CORD, Committee on the Recognition of Degrees and NIHERST remained for many years the only agency that issued statements of recognition of foreign or other qualifications that are required by Government agencies and companies in the private sector, when making decisions regarding recruitment. What has happened to the work of CORD? Is the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago aware of the activities of CORD and have they taken that into consideration in formulating what he said about policies, procedures and processes in their document of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago?

This population is aghast for wanting information. We are hearing about an accreditation committee. It was brought up here when we debated the Pharmacy Bill. We were asked to do this with the Accreditation Council because they were supposed to give some information on what are the requirements for the pharmacists to come in. We met with them for a short while. I think it was the chairperson of the Accreditation Council who was able to say that they were operating and linking with an international organization in Britain, which had already accredited a number of these pharmacists there and all over the world. Based on their accreditation, they were taking a lead. Whatever that institution accredited in Britain, they were going to accept.

This is a monumental task. I want to ask if this Government knows what is required in an accreditation council and what is the work that is required, besides knowing, first of all, which are the institutions that have to be accredited? Let us ask the questions: Is there a relationship with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago and UWI? UWI, as we are aware, is a tertiary institution. Who in the Accreditation Council can have the expertise to go through all the myriads of programmes and degrees in UWI to determine whether UWI could be accredited or not? Is UWI one of the tertiary institutions which has to be accredited by the council?

The second is the composition of the council. I am a bit cautious. I do not like to cast any aspersions on the competence, expertise and ability of individual members of any board or anything. I am wondering, the Minister has alluded to the fact that they do not have the specialists available in Caricom. Few are available, if I am quoting him properly, for doing this type of work. It is not just a matter of looking at the institution and saying: "We accredit this institution." You have to look at the programmes, the courses, and he is going to look at the lecturers.

That council now would have people on its board, with just a first degree or some degree, or little skills here and there, comprising members of a council, who are going to look to determine what a professor at the university is competent and capable of doing. That person has to go into the programmes when that university is conducting classes and determine whether the professors are teaching properly, which he alluded to a while ago.

Besides looking at the university to determine how many university degrees they are giving—whether it is a bachelor degree, a masters, MPhil degree or PhD degree—then they have to look into the programme and course content of these programmes. You have to answer, hon. Minister, whether UWI is part of this accreditation issue. I really feel sorry. I do not think that council will ever be able to analyze UWI's courses and content because it is so myriad. If he was ever thinking of going that way, he might as well forget it. That is one institution you might as well forget. If you were thinking of the Accreditation Council accrediting UWI, that has had international reputation already—56 years as a university—do not bother to go there.

The second one is the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Sen. Mark:** That is a runaway horse.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Why was the UTT established?



**Sen. Mark:** A one-man show.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** When we have UWI offering degrees and tertiary level education, what is the rationale for establishing the University of Trinidad and Tobago? It is because of the whims and fancies of your Prime Minister supported by the czar of the energy sector?

**Sen. Abdul-Hamid:** On a point of order. May I ask?

**Madam President:** What is your point of order, Senator?

**Sen. Abdul-Hamid:** May I ask the relevance of this, please?

**Sen. Mark:** What nonsense you asking about relevance? We are talking about tertiary education.

**Madam President:** Please, Senator.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** “Yuh fraid the questions coming”?

**Madam President:** The Minister has every right to ask a point of order if he so wishes. It is up to me to decide whether it is relevant or not. I think I would allow him to continue because he is talking about universities and other educational institutions.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam President. If I am going astray, I would be the first one to come back. I believe it is quite relevant. The University of Trinidad and Tobago is now a parallel university to UWI and they have to give to this nation the rationale for establishing UTT. We are asking questions. Is it because you wanted to put one individual at the helm of something which he had not been able to do for a long time and he could not be the principal of UWI and you decided to set up another parallel institution of the UTT so you can give the czar of the energy sector to be the czar of the education sector?

I want to quote the hon. Minister on the *Newsday* recently.

**Sen. Dumas:** I was President of the Student Guild. I know.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** We do not know whether the University of Trinidad and Tobago is in fact a university, a polytechnic or a community college—

**Sen. Mark:** Or a PNM party group.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** My colleague has said—

**Sen. Mark:** Or a PNM party group using taxpayers' money.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** We do not know whether the person who has been appointed to head UTT is a principal, the chairman, or the pro-vice- chancellor.

**Sen. Mark:** Or the Prime Minister.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** UWI had, in the past, a Principal of the University of the West Indies. That post moved to a pro-vice-chancellor position. The Pro-Vice-chancellor has some difficulties. This administration did not want to reappoint him, and when we made noise, they decided that they had to appoint him. All the Caribbean university people decided that they will—

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Point of order of relevance. We are not debating the University of Trinidad and Tobago. We are debating the Accreditation Council.

**Sen. Mark:** Why are you so jittery about the University of Trinidad and Tobago? The President has ruled.

**Madam President:** Please.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Madam President, I am addressing you, not over there. I am asking the relevance of the debate?

**Madam President:** I think at this point I need to intervene. I did say that you continue to say what you were saying, because you were referring to UTT as far as the Bill is concerned; but you are actually going into a debate on UTT and I do not think that is right.

**Sen. Mark:** No, man. He is talking about tertiary education. Why is he afraid of the UTT?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I was asking about the accreditation of institutions.

**Sen. Mark:** Is there corruption?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The University of Trinidad and Tobago is an institution. I asked whether UWI is going to be part of the Accreditation Council's accreditation that will go on, and whether UTT, as a tertiary institution, will have to undergo the accreditation process. What is the rationale of having a separate University of the Trinidad and Tobago, when the Principal of UWI said he was updating the media on the progress of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, which offers programmes at the diploma level? He said honorary doctorates would be conferred to two people. What is significant is that he said that the university has a few undergraduate and post-graduate programmes, which include maritime management.

The University of the West Indies has a faculty for marine biology and maritime affairs; an operation in biomedical engineering, UWI has a biomedical engineering department; and food production, the university has an agriculture department. What is the rationale for setting up this? He said that initiatives which are important to Trinidad and Tobago, were not being satisfied by UWI. I just gave examples. The initiatives he is speaking about are biomedical engineering, food production and maritime management; all are occurring at UWI.

He also said that more significant programmes that would be added are fashion designing, sports studies and performing arts. Just three or four years ago, UWI established a sports facility and sports management unit under a distinguished lady who is carrying things forward. The cricket now has to go to UWI because they have not done so well in sports studies.

With respect to performing arts, you know that UWI has a liberal arts and performing arts centre. What has this Government decided, by setting up UTT? Is it because they want to have their own business of control education and control everybody? Is it a control freak that is going on in the country? They want to control everything. They want to control UWI. They cannot control it so they want to go to the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

More so, the Accreditation Council has to look at whether they are giving doctorates. He said it is open for diplomas. They are giving postgraduate doctorates.

I beg to differ from my colleague the other day. They are giving PhDs. Who in UTT, where there is a faculty of 250, can give doctorates and train postgraduate students? One must have years of experience as a professor and you must have gone through the process of training before such a candidate is put for you to work with to have a PhD degree. This whole thing seems to be—

**Sen. Mark:** A bogus institution.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** It is pathetic. We had a similar situation at the medical school, you know that. The University of the West Indies was not getting enough places in Jamaica, because our places were limited to 25 and 30, when Jamaicans were getting 80 and 90 places out of 120. Their Prime Minister, whom I agreed with at the time, decided that we must have our own medical school, and we did, because they were not facilitating the entry of more than 30 of our students from Trinidad and Tobago. But UWI is capable of holding 15,000 or 20,000 students in anything. Why do you want to have a University of Trinidad and Tobago? The reason is to put their own boy there to head something to control the education system in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Sen. Mark:** That is true.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The other issue.

**Sen. Mark:** The czar went to China and Malaysia to do what, I do not know.

**Madam President:** Senator, you know you will have your turn.

**Sen. Mark:** Yes, Ma'am.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** All this issue about polytechnics—what are polytechnics and community colleges? The next area I want to come to besides UTT and UWI is COSTAATT. I have the *Sunday Express* of November 19, 2006. The Minister said that COSTAATT is closing and that degrees are closed. An institution which incorporated NIHERST and stood by itself for years and had made tremendous contributions, in terms of education. We brought NIHERST, John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and San Fernando Technical Institute together. It was under our regime that we brought COSTAATT together because we saw the rationale for bringing all these institutions under one umbrella.

You do not like the name, so the Accreditation Council is now saying—the hon. Minister is head of the Accreditation Council. He has to give orders, directions and make regulations. He does not like what is happening with COSTAATT, so he says he is closing down COSTAATT and making it a community college.

**Sen. Mark:** Imagine that. Who give that man the authority? He thinks he is in the Jumaat?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** You are moving the College of Applied Science—

**Sen. Mark:** He thinks this is the Jumaat?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** ...Applied Arts and Technology.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, I ask that you be more judicious in your remarks and to please keep your voice down.

**Sen. Mark:** You are a member.

**Sen. Abdul-Hamid:** Go outside and say that.

**Sen. Mark:** We will hear about you.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** That is another institution that the Accreditation Council will have to look at. You say that you are closing it down.

**Sen. Mark:** I would expose you.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Listen to what the Minister said:

“Degrees issued by COSTAATT will be valid long after the college is no more.”

You are making the statement that it will be valid as though you are the Accreditation Council.

**Sen. Mark:** That is the young czar.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The reassurance was given yesterday by the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, Sen. The Hon. Abdul-Hamid, as he sought to clear the air on the Government's closure of the institution.

By vaps you are moving COSTAATT to a community college. By vaps you have closed BWIA. By vaps you close down TTT and made it CNMG. Everything by vaps. You are moving from one to another and there is no rationale or justification.

The public has no knowledge about why you want to close down COSTAATT. You have an apology to the nation. Why are you closing down COSTAATT to make it a community college? A community college is—the thinking of university personnel all over the world—lower in standards than a College of Science Technology and Applied Arts. The hon. Minister said that the institution was merely being disestablished.

**Sen. Mark:** Oh God! What is that?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Disestablishing an institution. You are taking an academic institution where people have gone through for years, trained and gotten a diploma and a degree and you want to disestablish that?

**Madam President:** Are you speaking to the Minister or to me?

**Sen. Dr. Kernahan:** That is the cry of a mad man.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** To set up a successful community college. He was speaking at COSTAATT's graduation which was held at the Hilton.

“Many students were worried that the qualifications they had worked so hard to get over the years would no longer be valid.”

Because of this administration.

They have an apology to this country for opening up UTT and not giving the rationale to the country and closing down COSTAATT and making it a community college and not giving the rationale for it. What are you all doing in education?

Madam Minister, this is not your forte at all, because this is not primary or secondary education or early childhood education. I am wondering whether the Minister is a figurehead in this whole thing—

**Sen. Mark:** He is.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is really the czar. He is dictating to the Government. I wonder if the hon. Minister of Finance shed some crocodile tears the other day when he wanted to go on the trip to China and Japan and the Prime Minister said he could not go?

We want to know what the hon. Minister—

**Sen. Enill:** I do not understand what—he is talking about me? Is he?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I am coming to it.

**Sen. Enill:** I really do not understand what he is talking about.

**Sen. Mark:** Did you cry to go to Malaysia?

**Sen. Enill:** To do what?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** You shed some crocodile tears.

**Sen. Enill:** I was supposed to be going somewhere?

**Madam President:** Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh, I expect better of you to refer to a Minister in those terms.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** It is our understanding—

**Sen. Mark:** We have much more to say about "he."

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** —that the University of Trinidad and Tobago, through its principal, chairman or pro-vice-chancellor went to Japan with the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries on a trip. The relevance? You are not allowing me the time to come to the relevance.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Before he digs himself deeper into the hole, I did not go to Japan. I went to China and Malaysia.

**Sen. Mark:** With Calder Hart.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Why did the principal, pro-vice-chancellor or chairman of the UTT have to accompany the group that went to—no, this is relevant; whether they went on a matter of education.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Again, I raise the question of relevance. The hon. Senator knows that he can file a question in this Senate and get all the—

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The questions are not answered after a year. You have to answer now.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** You cannot use a debate on a Bill to ask questions that are not related to the Bill. Again, I ask what is the relevance of the irrelevant Senator?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The relevance is that the head of the UTT went on a trip and we are asking whether he was able to get any other organizations in Malaysia or China to come and be part of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, so that the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago will have to accredit them? What part these foreign groups will have? We understand that a Japanese company has come and formed eTecK, which is part of UTT, and that company has gone bankrupt. We want to know what is happening here. What part of the University of Trinidad and Tobago is owned by the nationals? What part is owned by foreign people? And are you bringing bankrupt companies to come to the University of Trinidad and Tobago so that your Accreditation Council will have to accredit a company which is bankrupt in Japan and has formed eTecK in Trinidad and Tobago?

The hon. Minister said, in his rationale for closing COSTAATT, that it was simply a case of an institution stretched too wide and too thin and was terribly under-resourced. You have changed it to a community college and the under-resourcing and stretching too wide.

**Madam President:** Are you fighting with the Minister?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** We are fighting the issue. The issue is the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Sen. Mark:** Next year we would be fighting them.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** He said that it was an institution stretched too wide and too thin. When you disestablish the COSTAATT and make it a community college, it is the same situation. It will still be stretched too wide and too thin. Is this a joke? This is a national joke and disaster in the education system. You said

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[SEN. DR. GOPEESINGH]

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that an institution is too thin and stretched too wide, but you have disestablished COSTAATT and formed a community college. I would like to see how your accreditation council will accredit this community college. Where are they going?

He said that the Government needed to change these things, and over the last four years, has been doing so to establish what he termed a “genuine community college.” What is a community college?

Jamaica had a community college near to Mona Heights at the University of the West Indies. They closed it down and opened something that is parallel to UWI. Besides closing it down—this was in the *Sunday Express* of November 19, 2006, and they said that they have closed down COSTAATT and that the degrees are good—the next day in the *Sunday Express*, I saw an advertisement from COSTAATT indicating that applications are invited for the following degrees. You have closed down COSTAATT and the next day, just two days ago, applications are invited for the following bachelor degrees at COSTAATT. Have you forgotten that you have closed it down?

**Sen. Mark:** Look it open back up boy. He is a joke.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Their own colleagues have to laugh. What is going on with this administration? Get your house in order. If they cannot get their house in order, we are ready to be in that position.

**Sen. Mark:** We are ready to take over.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The mess that the education system is in today, we will correct that immediately, because we have the capacity, competence and the capability to do it. The Minister made a statement, and I have passed the CV of 45 pages for him. It was not a joke. He has it in front of him. We are not going with that again.

We understand that there are almost 800 people who would be graduating at COSTAATT very shortly, or have graduated. We want to know what the Minister has to say about the degrees that have been granted to them, and whether the Accreditation Council would say that these degrees are relevant, or they would have to get a new thing from the community college. Could you imagine working for three or four years and going through an education system and suddenly, by vaps, the thing is closed down and you have to see whether your degree is relevant?

**Sen. Mark:** He got a dream. You are a dreamer.



**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** This is really a joke. Do you know what is the real rationale for all these things? It seems as though this Government is to be on the pathway—they said that they want to increase the number of people going for tertiary education, so they are going willy-nilly, trying to move everything to have more and more students in tertiary education. We are for tertiary education. We will support any government moving towards increasing the number of students at the tertiary education level.

You should take note from your predecessor, Minister Imbert, he launched the Accreditation Council in 2004.

**Sen. Mark:** He was an independent Minister. Julian tried to control him.

**Madam President:** Senator.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** It is relevant to what the Minister said. He said the report recommended that this legislation, which is the Accreditation Council, should be confined to the tertiary level since it is a sector where there is a proliferation of private and offshore institutions. We agree, but the Minister does not seem to know what are the offshore institutions and what are some of the proliferating institutions that are taking place in Trinidad and Tobago.

He said that the secondary, primary and preprimary levels are undergoing major developmental changes and would require some time to be completed. He said that there is a barrage of private schools offering degrees.

Now we have moved away from UWI, UTT and COSTAATT. Let us deal with the private schools now. There are two large private schools in the north that are offering a number of degree programmes. It seems as though they are doing very well. Their courses are recognized internationally by Heriot-Watt University and Anglia University. If this Accreditation Council was established in 2004, by now, October 2006, we should have heard the hon. Minister saying that we have already looked at these two institutions—the School of Accounting and Management and the School of Business and Computer Studies and other institutions like that—and determined whether they have met the requirements for their accreditation. Do you know what has happened? They do not know where they are going, what they are accrediting, what programmes they are looking for to accredit and how they will look at accrediting programmes. Obviously, it is a monumental task that is before them and they seem incapable of performing.

The other issue is the regulations.

**Sen. Mark:** Sit down? What wrong with you?

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** He is being rude.

**Sen. Mark:** Not only rude.

**Sen. Dr. Kernahan:** Obnoxious.

**Sen. Mark:** He is out of place. Anyway we will deal with you at the Jamaat.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The regulations are supposed to have—

**Sen. Mark:** He is a Jamaat man.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The regulations which are supposed to be there—

**Sen. Mark:** He was part of the coup in 1990.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** —for providing the wide objectives for this accreditation process.

**Madam President:** I am totally fed up with the crosstalk that is going from one end to the other end, Sen. Mark and Minister. I cannot hear my ear and I cannot hear what is being said. I have spoken to you more than once.

**Sen. Mark:** Sorry, Ma'am. I apologize. I profusely apologize.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** We need to find out, as urgently as possible, what these private institutions are offering and whether the students and parents who are paying this amount of money to go to some of these institutions are getting legitimate degrees that can stand international scrutiny. My belief is that they can, but we need to have it certified and recognized properly.

The Government has continued on our programme where we gave dollar for dollar. They brought the Government Assistance for Tertiary Expenses (GATE) programme. We had the Dollar for Dollar programme and they changed that too. They have the propensity for change. They have changed it to GATE. On what basis—we are in total support of giving students free tertiary education—have they determined whether the private institutions are really sound private institutions so that when the students go there they are getting the qualifications that will have some international recognition?

There are a number of law schools that have been opened in Trinidad and Tobago, which are granting university degrees. I believe that they have a link with the University of London and, probably, the University of Warwickshire or Wolverhampton. We would have expected the hon. Minister to explain all these things to us. It seems as though he does not have the iota of what is happening in his Ministry. He seems to be lost. If he cannot tell us one institution that has been

looked at by the Accreditation Council how can he tell us what is the proliferation there? This Government is trying to move apace to increase the tertiary education level to 20 or 25 per cent by 2015. They do not know what is post secondary or tertiary, and how you define what your country index of post secondary or tertiary education level is. Is our country, 10 per cent, 15 per cent or 20 per cent?

I understand that the United States, Canada and Great Britain used a cohort age to determine the percentage of citizens in their country who are going to post-secondary and tertiary education. They used the age range of 17—24. The United States can say that they have a 50 per cent enrolment in tertiary education; Canada has approximately 40 per cent; Singapore, strange enough, has a lower percentage. It is approximately 25 per cent. Malaysia is approximately 11 per cent; and Trinidad and Tobago is approximately 10 per cent. We have approximately 170,000 in the age range of 17—24, and 17,000 students are receiving tertiary education at UWI, COSTAATT, UTT and private institutions; 17,000 out of 170,000 is approximately 10 per cent. They want to move this to 20 per cent. Do you know what is going to happen? You would lower standards in your quest to increase your numbers in tertiary education, which they are already doing. You are offsetting standards of quality education just to increase numbers.

This happened in the health sector and everything. They wanted to see how many operations they could do. People are dying because they have said that they are doing more operations.

What has happened to the teachers' training college? There were two well-established teachers training colleges—Valsayn Teachers' Training College and Corinth Teachers' Training College. We understand that by another vaps, they have decided to move that to the University of Trinidad and Tobago. What is happening? They are taking well-established institutions to come under an umbrella where no standards have been established before. It is starting for the first time, two or three years, without international accreditation. You want to give doctorate degrees!

Poor Brian has to receive a UTT Honorary Fellow. Brian Charles Lara should receive the largest medal in the world because he is the best in the world. You have jumped on it and feel because you can give an Honorary Distinguished Fellow to Brian Charles Lara, you feel that UTT will be recognized because you have done that. If I were him, I would not accept it, because it is not a recognized university. It has no international recognition. When they ask him where he got his Distinguished Fellowship, the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Where is that? What is that?

St. George's University—is the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago going to be looking at medical schools? Will they be looking at the accreditation universities throughout the Caribbean and the offshore medical schools?

Caricom was forced to make a decision to establish a Caribbean Health Education Accreditation Board. That board has been making the rounds throughout the Caribbean and they came to UWI Medical School recently to see whether UWI Medical School reaches its standard. This situation arose when UWI Medical Faculty was informed that starting last year, its programme was no longer accredited by the General Medical Council of Great Britain. The accreditation status with the General Medical Council normally gives graduates the ability to register and practise in both commonwealth countries without further scrutiny.

The situation has developed because of the United Kingdom's membership in the 25 countries of the European Union, and the need for GMC to comply with the European Union's accredited regulations regarding academic and professional training programmes. That accreditation committee for medical degrees has been set up by Caricom. Does the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago have any working relationship with the Caribbean Health Education Accreditation Board? Medicine is a separate and distinct thing. Is your Accreditation Council, which would belong to the wider Caricom Accreditation Council as one of the members, be looking at accreditation of medical schools?

I am asking that in the context that we have many students who are attending St. George's University in Grenada. If at the end of it, these students have qualified with COSTAATT and they are then told that their degrees are not recognized—not because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is sending students to the St. George's Medical School, it is a fait accompli that their degrees will be recognized.

For years, UWI stood against recognition of any of the offshore medical schools in the Caribbean. We never certified or recognized and we were even debarred from lecturing or being external examiners in offshore medical schools. The Trinidad and Tobago Government made the decision to send students to Grenada, and we do not know the criteria for selection of these students. Who decides what scholarship, who is getting scholarships? It is party groups scholarships.

They are giving scholarships if you can play sports and are good in public debate—All sort of criteria they use for giving scholarships to the University of Grenada. Who formed the composition of this scholarship committee? This country does not know who forms this scholarship committee. It is a hidden secret. Who are the members of the scholarship committee?

We used to hear so much of international countries giving scholarships in Trinidad and Tobago. It used to be advertised in the newspapers. During the last four or five years, not one advertisement whatsoever. They give scholarships to the University of Grenada. How many students have been given scholarships? What is the criteria? Are they going to be recognized when they come back to Trinidad and Tobago by the Accreditation Council? We want to know what is happening with the University of Grenada.

We have no jurisdiction. We have no problem with giving scholarships to students. Do you know what is ironic? The cost to the University of Grenada to educate a child for a scholarship is higher than if that student was accepted at UWI Medical School. You have UWI Medical School, where the cost is a certain amount, but you choose to send them to the University of Grenada because you want to lower your standards for admission into the Medical School. That is a deliberate attempt by this Government to lower the standards so that students of a lower standard would get into medicine. Do you know what is the eventual outcome of that? We will have doctors in Trinidad and Tobago who will—the health sector is deplorable at the moment, so lives will be lost much more. This Government has a lot of explanation: Shrouded in secrecy, the UTT, COSTAATT and community college; St. George's University, Grenada—sending students on scholarships.

They want to bring down Valsayn Teachers' Training College and Corinth Teachers' Training College into—where are they taking them? It is sad that the people of Trinidad and Tobago have to accept this all the time and they do not speak out as much as they should be speaking out. Thank God, we have the opportunity in Parliament to be the voice and the views of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

There is a National Advisory Council on Education, and their role has been to advise the hon. Minister of Education and advise on education. Has the Accreditation Council sought any liaison or collaboration with the National Advisory Council on Education? The committee has a lot of brainpower in it. There are people in there who are very competent, and I advise that the Minister takes the advice that this Accreditation Council should work with the National Advisory Council on Education so that they can get some advice.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. Dumas:** On the condition that there are no more lies.

**3.00 p.m.**

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam President, I want to thank Members for allowing me another 15 minutes to continue the debate on this issue of extension of the Accreditation Council from two years to four years. Now, we do not know whether this Accreditation Council is going to be looking at accrediting paramedical institutions or what type of institutions.

Madam President, we have a number of laboratories in Trinidad and Tobago—ultrasound and so forth—proliferating throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Anybody is setting up an ultrasound thing; anybody is setting up a laboratory. We want to know whether these areas come under institutions.

**Madam President:** Senator, may I? I think you are going to stray if you go to laboratories and ultrasound, et cetera. We are talking about educational institutions now.

**Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** But, there are educational institutions in Trinidad setting up for training. There is one in Arima now that is training people for these paramedical things. Are those paramedical things going to come under the University of Trinidad and Tobago or are they not? Are we going to ask for them to be registered because you know that we have to maintain standards in almost all professions, not only as an institution. These little things that are being set up from time to time have to be linked with a particular organization or institution where standards ought to be set, maintained and evaluated.

One other area is the Technical Vocational and Educational Training. (TVET). The Minister will have to tell us: What is the role of the National Training Agency, in relation to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago? Because the National Training Agency is looking at training people in industries and making these people competent; at the end of it, they will need some accreditation. So, is the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago going to be working with the National Training Agency? The chairpersons on the accreditation committee started under the National Training Agency, and they moved from the National Training Agency to the Accreditation Council. We want to know, in terms of Technical Vocational and Education Training where the National Training Agency has a role to play: What would be the collaborative issue and mechanism or association between the National Training Agency and the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago?

Madam President, I just want to summarize now and to close my contribution. I would like to indicate that global trends on the internationalization of tertiary education have created a situation in which the quality of programmes ought to be analyzed, scrutinized, monitored and evaluated on a continuing basis. This Act has in it somewhere that it is going to be monitored and evaluated every three years.

Madam President, there is somewhere in the Act where it says that you have to be evaluated every three years. Now, after two years, they have not been able to accredit one institution, far less at the end of three years to be reevaluating for reaccrediting. [*Interruption*] I have been advised to go to section 28(1) and it says:

“The Council, with the approval of the Minister at intervals of three years, shall cause a review to be undertaken of the functions of the Council...

A review pursuant to subsection (1) shall be undertaken in collaboration with regional accrediting bodies established for the Caribbean Community and with other recognized competent authorities.”

So, they have to get their act together first, then seek collaboration with their other Caricom bodies and then for them to come together to look at the process of reevaluating, re-monitoring and reaccrediting some of these institutions. At the moment, they do not seem to know which are the institutions.

It continues:

“A report on the results of each review shall be submitted to the Minister and shall be laid in Parliament within three months of receipt by him.”

So, if you are still in Government—and I hope you are not. I hope they call the election and we can be on the other side there very quickly—[*Laughter*—]in 2007, when their three years are up, this Minister should lay in this Parliament—Here it is we have an Act which talks about providing certain measures to fine people, charge people and convict people and so forth and they have not even put their house in order. That is prohibitions and registration under the Act.

Section 26 says:

“No institution shall carry on the business of...unless registered under this Act and any regulations or rules made under this Act.”

So, for two years plus institutions are being run in this country without any registration and no accreditation whatsoever. The question of monitoring and evaluating seems to be far-fetched.

Section 26(3) of the Act says:

“An institution in breach of subsections (1) and (2) shall be informed in writing of the nature of the breach and shall be requested to comply within a stipulated time period.”

I think they should go back to that part of the Act because that time period is not mentioned. Is it going to be one month or three months? They said that if the institution fails to comply within the stipulated time the Minister may remove the name of the institution. So, you do not have a stipulated time for any evaluation, but you say that the Minister may remove that institution.

Now, what is the right of appeal? In the Minister’s contribution in 2004, when this Bill was brought to Parliament, the Minister spoke at that time and said that they could go for judicial review, but we want to ask the hon. Minister, when he is doing the registration of some of these institutions, whether he has set up any appeal board so that an institution before the Accreditation Council which does not satisfy the requirements, in terms of programmes and award of degrees: Are they going to be struck off? Is there an appeal process by this Accreditation Council? I believe there is none. They have not even put themselves together far less set up an appeal issue.

Section 29 says:

“Institutions lawfully performing their functions in Trinidad and Tobago at the commencement of this Act shall, for the period of two years thereafter, be deemed to be authorized to continue to perform such functions, provided that no such institution shall advertise or offer to the public any new courses or programmes without the prior approval of the Council.”

You have seen the plethora of advertisements that have been on the newspapers within the last two years where they have been advertising for new courses, and there are new institutions coming up with new programmes, et cetera. So, you have to get your act together and bring your Accreditation Council to some meaningful and purposeful arrangement so that they can do their work. It is useless boasting and Members beating their drums and beating their chests that they have 28 people of high calibre working within the organization. What work have they done? If they had done any work the Minister should have come today and proudly said that this is the work that they have done. [*Desk thumping*] They have been getting paid for the last two years; 28 people. What is happening to the education system in Trinidad and Tobago?



In summary, we on this side of the House find it very distasteful and questionable as to the reasons for the setting up of this parallel university which this Government ought to answer to this population. By virtue of this debate today, we are asking the Government to account to the nation the rationale for setting up the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Why duplicate the same courses that you have at the University of the West Indies and set them up at UTT? Why do you want to close down COSTAATT and bring a community college? What is happening to those graduates who are going to be graduating this weekend? Why did you close down the training colleges and bring them under UTT? There are so many of these questions in the education sector that this Government has to answer to the population. We demand an explanation by the hon. Minister. He ought to come to this House, if he is not prepared today, to give us answers to all these questions.

I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran:** Madam President, thank you for the opportunity. Before I start my contribution, I am reminded and I should welcome our new Senator, Mr. Anthony Sammy. [*Desk thumping*] On behalf of the Independent Benches, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you.

Madam President, it has occupied my mind for about two years now that this Parliament should engage itself in a very serious prolonged discussion on tertiary education. [*Desk thumping*] I say so, not only with reference to this particular Bill, but if you look at the way the country is moving, both socially and economically, the results are derived from the momentum created by tertiary education. I think, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is, at the present time, one of the most important ministries with respect to our economic development. [*Desk thumping*] Why do I say so? Of course, you could make the same claim for health and national security. I say so because in a democracy, you cannot have a Government here, there and everywhere by the very definition of a democratic society. In the more precise configuration, we expect in a democracy that the civic, civil society and the private sector will fulfil their role as democratic participants in such a society.

Over the years, what we have been witnessing is an economic sector driven primarily by the Government—sometimes forcibly so, even where the Government does not want to enter—and you see the product from tertiary education not matching the economic requirements, in terms of skills and attitudes. There is a big gap which seems to be filled up sometimes and, unfortunately, temporarily by programmes such as CEPEP and URP, because these

young persons coming out are not sufficiently skilled so as to occupy sustainable employment that will fit the direction of proper lasting economic development. So, we need now to revisit the whole question of tertiary education and see the extent to which we could tolerate, and for how long we should tolerate that mismatch between the tertiary education product and the needs of your socio-economic requirements. I can put it no simpler way, but that is the essence. I think this country is now in a dilemma, in terms of its needs, not only immediately, but for the long term.

How long can we tolerate this large gap of misfits as they were—not of their own doing, but because of the product coming out from tertiary education not being able to match the requirements of the country? We have that surplus labour situation; not surplus only in terms of numbers, but in terms of the requirements for sustainable employment. Any Government in office—may I say, with respect, Madam President, will face that same dilemma, at least, in the reasonably short time. That is why you started with crash programmes with all these different names and so on. There has been a mismatch. The mismatch emanated and continues to emanate from the product coming from the tertiary education sector.

Whilst you have this flourish of early childhood education down here, you are moving up the scale, but up here it is as if this early childhood education does not find its terminal fulfilment in sustainable employment. So, you see, the steps toward the highway to economic development are obstructed by several gaps in the system. That is why I believe you need an enlightening—It could have its political energy here and there, but you need a very enlightening debate on tertiary education, and the extent to which it now fits in the economic model we have which is a free-market economy; meaning that the private sector should pick up its role more precisely and within an environment of accountability and proper accreditation. The last speaker put his case so eloquently and energetically before the Senate. [*Desk thumping*]

The other related dilemma is that in this same democratic society, the Government expects the private sector, not only through training capabilities and institutions, but through its job absorptive capacity to take these products of the tertiary educational system. I do not believe that we have enough of that absorptive capacity; not only in terms of the initial stage of taking a new employee, but training them sufficiently as apprentices and through internships, as we had in the old time days. My colleague, Sen. James is going to remember that in the oilfields, also in T&TEC, you had apprenticeships.

In my view, with respect, the private sector needs to enter the democratic arena more forcibly and productively, if we want to have a robust democratic society. So those are two related dilemmas, I believe, that will embrace this whole issue of not only accreditation to tertiary institutions, but the whole system of tertiary education in a democratic society. I think that is one of the key words. There are other agencies, bodies and sectors that have a responsibility.

Madam President, the Minister's presentation seems to me an attempt to fill a gap that has accrued for several reasons; some of which I understand and other reasons I am a bit uneasy. I believe some of my colleagues here have also expressed some uneasiness,

Let me preface my remarks by saying, whenever we speak about a government doing this or that in public policy, this is really, in essence, nothing about a Minister per se. This is about public policy. It is unfortunate sometimes that when you make these remarks—sometimes critical, sometimes asking for questions of review—I believe some Ministers take this as a personal affront, and I can understand why. They believe that they have now come into an office and they have been working so hard—Saturdays and Sundays and sometimes not fulfilling their families' responsibilities, and then they have to face these criticisms, but the criticisms are really not necessarily against this or that Minister personally. [*Desk thumping*]

I wish we will begin to understand that one of the first functions of this Parliament, not only through our Constitution but, historically, is to give a proper account to the people for the moneys used and the bureaucracy which such moneys support. I would certainly ask the question, as I would have asked any other Government on the other side: What has this staff been doing for the last two years? [*Desk thumping*] I have to ask this question and I hope the wiser heads in Cabinet, or some other wiser heads in Cabinet will ask these questions and ask for a proper review if they want to have a collective responsibility in such a manner. There is nothing personal or anything about any isolated case, but this is a general question where the people expect proper public accountability. I think there is a gap here in that issue of public accountability. We have 28 or 29 persons, and we appreciate the challenges for accreditation. Some of us, who are in the university system or in education, as Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie was pointing out to me, know the difficulties in getting an accreditation system operative. It would have been very convincing and helpful to the Government if we could have heard—at least some preliminary assessment was done in some schools, some of which are more obvious than others and on a better footing.

You do not need a rocket scientist to tell you how many such tertiary institutions are in the country. I could get a research assistant to do that in two weeks' time. I already have a list in my office which only needs a little updating here and there. When I looked at the question of update, it struck me that we really have a crisis, through you, Madam President, to the Minister, in other areas. I must admit that he is very energetic, and he has taken on this challenge of tertiary education very robustly. I know that. It is a monumental task. We are going to come to that in a short while.

We have a crisis of these free-for-all offerings all over the place. You are seeing all kinds of buildings housing this school, a college of that and a tertiary thing of that. One day I passed in Curepe and I saw a meat shop and a grocery, and the next two weeks when I passed there I saw a tertiary education school put up there. The money is coming freely. This is what I mean when I say Parliament must be responsible to the taxpayer; any Government. I hope if these things that are immediately in front of me happen—of course, if it does happen and I happen to be here, I would hope that they will put their money where their mouths are. I kept on saying several times that I have seen three governments come and go and the political dispositions do not change much. They are very defensive; they want to explain and defend everything as if they are Jesus and they are here. You get a feeling of divinity, as if they can do no wrong, and as if they are not open to one's advice. Certainly, we want to change that culture across the board; it is going to make our lives and the question of accountability more effective.

I think the Minister should really call his staff and do some preliminary analysis in terms of how many of these institutions need the kind of repair job that he has spoken about. Even in a hospital you have a casualty ward, an emergency ward and a cardiac ward. Madam President, I do not know if you know about these things. [*Laughter*] I am just trying to tell you an example. You have hospitals, yes, and you have a system, but you grade the patients or the people coming for help by certain rough criteria because there is a question of manpower. You want better response and so forth. I believe you need that kind of arrangement here, as well in this circumstance.

The second point is, in terms of accountability, Madam President, we have to get serious in the way we govern and manage our public institutions; be it the police, be it the medical doctors, be it management in the schools and every other public institution because taxpayers' moneys are being used, and the Parliament, as its duty is designed, is responsible for ensuring that kind of delivery in a disciplined manner. Here again, I ask the question: Two years have gone and you

are asking for another two years? The Minister should know that there is a disaster on the ground. Many ambitious young people are paying their money, or the Government is paying the money for them, and when they get inside there and it is crowded like sardines—they have no place to park. The university is suffering the same fate. If I have time I would like to talk a bit about the university because it has been raised. This is a place where I have spent almost 25 years of my life. I would really like to ask some questions as to what is going on at the university that I have served. I would not say “very well”, but I will just stop at “served”. There is something else I might bring in if I have the time; a very yucky question.

I do not think it is a happy message for the Minister, as careful as he is and as helpful as he wants to be. I understand the question about forgiveness, restorative justice and facilitating, but you do not play around too much with taxpayers’ dollars and people’s educational rights. [*Desk thumping*] Education is not only a right; it is a right to the right education and these “fly-by-night” institutions we have all over the place are designed, in my respectful view, primarily for profiteering which is all right. [*Desk thumping*] That is the free-enterprise system. That is why the ministry and the Parliament, where taxpayers’ moneys are being used, should ensure that whilst there is a profit, there is also accountability and a fair measure of service to the clients therein. That is the umbrella of accountability.

Madam President, with respect again, I think the Minister's gentle way of trying to deal with them, I really do not believe that is sufficient in the circumstances. We need discipline in managing taxpayers’ money. [*Desk thumping*] This idea about helping them along, and you do not want to use the big stick, you see that, even the *Bible* will tell you spare the rod. So, what you are doing, initially, is setting up a culture of inefficiency, non-delivery and laissez-faire service which is so crippling the country in so many other respects. This should be an opportunity to set the record right. [*Desk thumping*] This should be an opportunity to send the correct message of discipline and accountability, especially where the private sector is enjoying taxpayers’ money through GATE and other such prerogatives. The question, therefore, is that the Minister has to do some more work with his staff. I understand the need for facilitating and helping to build up but, even that being the case, maybe you should have helped COSTAATT too. [*Desk thumping*] Why do you not build up COSTAATT? I do not mean this in any derogatory manner. I am just showing, for example, the inconsistency that would put the Government and even the Minister in problems later on by setting such a precedent and, on the other hand, saying that you are going to help, build and improve, and you do not want to use the big stick.

Madam President, with respect, may I quote from the *Newsday* dated November 17 on page 5. The Minister said it is clear—there was not any doubt or grey area, perhaps or possibly or it seems as—which means some measure of assessment took place, and there is an accreditation system somewhere in place. How else could it have been “clear” if you did not have a system to make it clear? I doubt the Minister would want to rise and say that it is clear on his own behalf and without the support from his staff. I do not think Minister Rennie Dumas would want to do something like that. He will consult with his PS and come with a system, and go down Siparia or somewhere and quote from a document or a White Paper or a Green Paper or something.

The Minister said that COSTAATT was badly conceptualized; it was spread too wide, too far and too thin. Now, that is an assessment. That can only come from an accreditation exercise. [*Desk thumping*] So, you really do not need two years; you do not need four years. It does not seem so in this particular case, and COSTAATT is a much more complex institution than the other ones that we have all over the place. I am saying so with great respect.

In the last couple of months the Minister seems, in my view, to be taking a very robust and aggressive approach in this whole tertiary system. He is really moving dynamically and energetically, but sometimes we are moving and we do not see things that are close to us. We need somebody to remind us, how better we can do what we are doing. I think it is in that spirit that I make the point about COSTAATT.

I want to emphasize that many people are unhappy with the proliferation of these schools, and the way that they are managing the affairs of education for the students. There is an inclination now to partner with overseas institutions, and that might be good. In some instances there are reputable universities attached for combined degrees like business management and so forth, but not all is well. I am sure the Minister will take a second look at these schools and their combined degrees.

Last year, I had an opportunity looking at applications for a graduate programme. I have seen some of the transcripts, the curriculum and the course content from some of these overseas institutions, and I really could not recommend acceptance into a full Masters degree, MPhil or a PhD. They wrote us letters appealing and quarrelling, but we just have to be careful. For graduate programmes, the claims made by these tertiary institutions, especially those with international collaboration, the level is sufficiently good enough for a graduate programme. I must tell you that the experience has been very enlightening and it needs some serious attention.

Madam President, all is not well. Young people are very anxious to get a certificate; very anxious to be educated because opportunities are being opened up. I could tell you that there are all kinds of opportunities in this country now, and if only the young people could focus their minds—not only in terms of skills, but in attitudes and mental focus—there are opportunities. This brings me back to the first point I made, and that is how do you get them veered into those opportunities. I have spoken enough about that.

There are some little irritating things that I heard. Mr. Imbert was opposite here delivering the Bill the first time and he made a number of amendments and we questioned certain things and, in my view, he did respond properly. It was a better Bill than what he came with—Sen. King will remember—and he was of the disposition to listen. I do not know if he has changed now, from what I have been hearing recently.

We raised the question of two years. That is why I say when we speak, we are not speaking about a minister today or a minister tomorrow; we are talking about a government. When a government gives its word—that is why there are Treasury Bonds—that is the word a government gives, not Sen. The Hon. Enill—that it can do this, if that word cannot be kept completely, at least, there should be some compromise and some preliminary analysis done to tell us exactly what Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh asked—how much, what kind and what is the timetable to get rid of the backlog, as you would do in case management studies. We need to do some improvements. I am merely saying this so that the Minister, he may not be personally responsible, but he has to go to his staff and, perhaps, get them a little more energized and focused with some time lines, in terms of delivering something that he could be proud of in the near future to bring to this distinguished Senate.

I am not too pleased with the idea of helping these private institutions because the resources you are using are really taxpayers' money. Your staff that you are hiring are really technicians that are going to be paid with taxpayers' money. You have to understand that in a free-market economy, if a business is established by a private person that private person must know in the spirit of risk, there is a profit to be derived, and if the business does not do well, well so be it. If the Government finds that this practice is happening too often, this is something where it should revisit public policy, but along the way do not say that you are helping them and you want to bring them up because you do not believe in this. That is not a personal business that you have; this is a government's responsibility where you need discipline and accountability.

In the free-market economy, just as you tell the Government that it is spending too much money, and it must stand the bounce of inflation, it is the same way the private sector must stand its own bounce for taking the risk which is not calculated enough and sufficiently well, and does not merit accreditation. That is what I am saying. You need a conceptualized understanding of what is taking place beyond accreditation, although we cannot get too far into other issues. So, this matter of helping them out does not work in a free enterprise. If you want a socialist democracy, then create one and help them. We will understand what you are about, but the private sector tells you clearly that they are in a capitalist economy and, therefore, the prices are so and so. That is understandable because that is a system we live in. The question of ethic which should intervene between government expenditure and the rise in prices seems not to arise at all in the minds of the private sector. So, if it is hardware argument that you want, I would like to see the Government take a more deliberate, disciplined approach toward this plethora and rapid spread of what we call, generally, tertiary institutions; not only for taxpayers' accountability, but to ensure that the students who go there get their moneys worth and that their future is properly insured by the academic expectations that they have when they come into these institutions.

While you are taking time to repair this and to patch that with institutions, there are students coming in and getting out there with, what? Answer me this then: Reasonably with what? You are patching and fixing and what is happening to the students in the meantime? This is not oranges growing; this is not rice you are planting on Caroni (1975) Limited lands. This is the mind of children.

I think the United Negro College Fund of America had said to waste a mind is a terrible thing. You cannot take chances with young people. When they come out with a half-way certificate or sometimes no passes, you know what is going to happen. We should ask Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph what might likely happen when they leave with such discouraged and broken expectations. That is why the Minister of Education has a great challenge to what I will step lower down.

The output from the secondary school system, which is linked to management, accountability and discipline, not only by the children, but by the school's management—that is why I am pretty strong on the issue of sending the message of discipline throughout all public institutions, of course, starting from the Cabinet and the Government itself.

Only this morning on the newspapers the President of the Republic made a sterling plea for using education for development. So, that is why I said at the beginning that the Minister has a very important portfolio; both Ministers, but in



this context, tertiary education, because of the need to match the output to the economic development of the country.

There is an advertisement on the *Newsday* November 17, 2006. It is the MuST programme. This, again, is another indication—it is not a matter of blaming but once you start to blame you are going to have to blame from captain to cook, from top to bottom, and I would not know where to start the blame, because these are endemic problems that we are now seeing in certain ways. They are now appearing more visibly, but they have been festering all the time. It is always a difficult thing to tell a government how to prevent something.

I have found it difficult to convince a government which is pressured by so many everyday things—we want this and we want that tomorrow—to think about prevention, four or five years. Do not talk about six or seven years, because they do not see much beyond five years. This five-year election is something stuck like magnet that everything has to be planned for the next election. This is not a matter of one government, but this is how the Westminster system works. I think in the Constitution Reform exercise we are going to put some things that have more permanence to cross over government and let there be incremental growth rather than just cutting out what the other one did and starting afresh so many times.

Madam President, MuST is a good programme. It must be a good programme because there is a need for a number of things here—masonry, carpentry, painting, tiling, welding, electrical installation and so on for the construction industry. I am not speaking by guess. Last night I met three contractors and the stories they told me, I could write a book on them, but we do not have time and I do not want to distress you with my adventures into other areas other than what is before the Bill.

I want to suggest that these programmes which are responding to the present situation—this brings me back to what I said earlier on, and that is we do not have a clear-cut idea as to the economic development, and at what point to bring in what kind of educational programmes; at what point should this one be shifted and a new one be brought into it. It is difficult to predict, in this scenario, in getting this connection.

Many countries have puzzled over how to have an educational system designed to fit their economic development, both in the short term and in the long term. This is a very elusive public policy challenge. We have some knowledge of what is happening, but what I want to suggest with this programme with the masonry, carpentry and so forth, if it has not been done already, is that there

should be some form of certification and a level design, so the persons who take masonry, for example, will know that he is at level I. So, if they have that it is going to help. Do they have it?

**Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie:** Yes.

**Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran:** So, when he or she goes to get jobs afterwards, he or she could present this document to show what he has covered, or if he has to be hired by another contractor, if he leaves he can produce his document and it is going to help. I suspect, as I have been hearing, that this is already being done. This should be done for all courses.

When YTEPP was first introduced, I think I told the then Minister, Mrs. Jennifer Johnson, that she should do that with YTEPP. I think that suggestion was accepted. I would recommend it again, if it is not so, for all these programmes so that they are levelled, and people will have some piece of paper to show that they have been proficient in such and such areas.

Madam President, perhaps, I am entering an unpleasant part of my contribution. I was very taken up with Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh's contribution on the University of the West Indies and the University of Trinidad and Tobago and, perhaps, at another time, we can talk about the management of UTT and the hiring procedures and so forth. If I go into those things it might take us a little too far from the Bill, but there are things happening at the University of the West Indies, suffice it to say, that really need to be revisited. In this discourse, I am asking for tertiary education.

Of course, as we know, the university functions under a charter since the old Queen days and so forth, and that still exists to the point where governments cannot interfere too much. Even the courts cannot interfere too much in industrial relations—staff problems and so forth—because of the chartered protection. I am wondering whether those things should be changed now. As I said, that should be left for another debate.

In assessing universities or tertiary institutions where the Accreditation Council may have to do at some time or the other, one of the factors you have to look at is the ratio between lecturer and students; physical facilities; publications by staff at tertiary education, especially at the university level; research grants and how much they get. That is why Harvard, Yale, Princeton and London universities and so on—

Madam President, I met a professor, I know, Prof. Bowling from London University, King's College and he told me that they are now being examined for accreditation programmes. There are a number of things that you have to look at

carefully. Precisely, you look at the extent to which your graduates get jobs; how the business sector thinks about your graduates and that is a gap we have not done. I would recommend to the hon. Minister—she is so inclined to listen—that that should be part of the accreditation process. How do your clients—the business sector, for example—think about the graduates? It will give you an evidence-based approach to know how to perform the accreditation later on or where the gaps might be in terms of staffing, competence and so on.

It also looks at the alumni and what role the alumni play in these institutions; the loyalty issue. If you ask me one reason why these denominational secondary schools perform better—even though they have differential intake—it is because of the loyalty the teachers have to those institutions. [*Desk thumping*] The teacher loyalty and the alumni loyalty are also an important part in strengthening the institution.

Madam President, research grants also form part of accreditation, because you cannot teach well without having a proper research-base to teach, otherwise you would merely be recycling ideas of one generation after another. You do not teach only ideas; you teach ideas that are based on research that are tested and, therefore valid, so your teachings will not be based on propaganda, but it will be based on evidence. That is why, before he became Prime Minister, Madam President, Mr. Patrick Manning visited the Centre for Criminology at the university. I invited the university registrar, the Dean and we had a meeting with him, because he wanted to find out about crime and so forth, and we helped him for free, of course; free advice

**Sen. Bro. Khan:** “Freeco!”

**Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran:** I am not saying that caused him to win the election—[*Laughter*]*—*that may or may not be so. We talked about accreditation which is important through research. Of course, I am not going to tell you how he commended the Research Centre for its good work and so forth. It is difficult to get research grants, but in terms of strengthening our accreditation capabilities, the then Mr. Manning, Opposition Leader—this was an experience that I will never forget whether he is a Prime Minister or not—as a gentleman at the time, promised to provide grants to the Research Centre for research projects if certain things happened. [*Laughter*]

When he became Prime Minister, he did provide two grants to the university so that we could strengthen the Research Centre and bring accreditation strength as well to the university. Those moneys were used to help graduate students; to

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[SEN. PROF. DEOSARAN]

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help research the prisons; to create for the first time a database so that we can know at present that there is about 60 per cent recidivism rate in the country; and we mapped out 42 recommendations for the ministry to accept and implement. I will not tell you what happened to those recommendations. That is a different story. I merely want to say that when research grants are given to the university—I want members of the media to listen to this very carefully—those moneys are not given to Prof. Deosaran personally. Those moneys are given to the university and handled by the university bursary for accountability and payment in order for us to have proper accreditation and accountability. [*Desk thumping*] I do not see a cent. It goes to the university.

I must tell you that university lecturers—perhaps they will want me to say this—are allowed to do professional consultancies. Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh knows this. So, if the moneys were paid to me, as a professional consultant, like Dr. Mastrofski and so forth, I would have said so, but this is not the case.

In fact, I must tell you that in terms of strengthening the institutional capability, I wish the work that Mastrofski and his team are doing can really help this country, because I am a citizen here, and I wish whatever they do, or whoever it is, can help this country. I stand hopeful and optimistic because the situation with respect to crime is very serious. That is the end of that point.

With respect to the UTT issue, it has been raised here and it has been raised publicly, and the accreditation issue is connected. I am not going to deal with the management and hiring practices, but it is my view now, having travelled several places visiting universities, I believe that you need to break the monopoly at the university level, not so much for Trinidad, but also the Caribbean. [*Desk thumping*] There are many reasons which I will not go into. That is why I said let me have that debate on tertiary education. I will speak in a more fulsome manner. It is not only to give the students a better choice of things that are more theoretical as against things which are more practical and short term to fill the gaps, for example, nursing.

There is a new paralegal practice. I have to speak to the Attorney General about that, and because of the university overload there is no place to park and sit. Where are you going to put all these other persons who deserve tertiary education or whose choices may not match what is presently available at this monopolistic university? Good as the job it has been doing in years—things are expanding and there are new ideas—you need a new way to look at things. I am speaking here not only about the students, but I believe that the time has come to give professional staff with their PhDs and graduate degrees a choice to join which of the two universities they want.

I have found that having one university really cramps your style, and sometimes all this talk about academic freedom, is “boundaried” by political limitations if you dare to speak your mind critically in a monopolistic institution; even Cabinet for example. I am not saying that you should have two Cabinets. I am just saying that you should have two universities. So, it is a long story which I am going to cut short only at the point of principle. I am not dealing with the czar and so on now, but at another time we could handle that, but as an institution, I think the establishment of UTT is a deserving one as an institution in the present state of our country.

Madam President, you see, you do accredit a whole institution sometimes, but we accredit programmes. You accredit a particular programme. I say so because even the University of the West Indies had problems with some of its programmes being accredited—dentistry, medicine and engineering. I think Sen. The Hon. Dr. Saith will know something about the engineering example. So, it is not because you have a university for donkey’s years, everything that it does will naturally be accredited. There are programmes that need to be revisited, and we should bear that in mind when we are talking about institutions and their traditions.

There are other points that I have, but I think I have said sufficient to close and to make my major issues known, except to say that perhaps when I reflect now on what I am saying about breaking the monopoly, I think what we should have had really is a University of the Caribbean, and not just one of Trinidad and Tobago, because as you are doing now, you would have been accepting students from other islands. When you say the University of Trinidad and Tobago, to me, it was a mistake. It reeks of, unjustifiably of course, parochialism, smallness, insularity and “islandness”. It would have been better—I am not saying that was done with that effect, but I am saying that it does conjure, in the public imagination, some unfounded allegation of parochialism. If it were a university of the Caribbean, it would have been a better marketing strategy internationally.

**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. Mc Kenzie*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. Prof. R. Deosaran:** Madam President, so what I have said, some of it I hope the Minister would reflect upon, and there are other larger issues related to the Bill that the Cabinet itself would have to consider, such as the two points I made with the two dilemmas facing public policy, economic development and tertiary education in that triangulated fashion in a free-enterprise economy.

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Madam President, when we talk about accreditation and strengthening our tertiary institutions, I wish to point out that over the years this tension between the Government as the State and the private sector has fluctuated. The World Bank would tell you that in one period it is better the Government intervenes more. The unions will have a different view. Time passes and they will tell you again, especially if it is connected to loan arrangements, that the Government ought to recede and let the private sector and the free-market economy take over, but now they are telling you about globalization.

There are serious concerns about globalization that are affecting our tertiary education and expansion. We have to make sure that the education we give, without being parochial, is indigenously rooted, so our engineers will know how to handle the soil when they are building bridges; and the person with the degree in agriculture will know what season to plant and so forth. We have to take this globalization matter with a step of caution. That is why we have a new book by a Nobel Prize winner, Joseph Stiglitz—my colleague will know it—*Globalization and its Discontents*. It is a literature coming out because developed countries of the world are feeling the pinch that globalization, including the expansion in tertiary education is a new methodology for economic colonialism. [*Desk thumping*] I say with respect to developed countries; they all act in their own interest. America will tell you so.

When they give you a boat or something it is in their own interest in terms of terrorism or drug trafficking. We have to be more robust. I am not seeing the Minister of Foreign Affairs here.

**Madam President:** He is right over there.

**Sen Prof. R. Deosaran:** That is another issue—not only preserving our sovereignty in that rigid way, but our interest. I await the day when I can hear something about foreign policy in a cohesive manner which I know the Minister is quite capable of doing. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, there are other issues, but there should be a time to say goodbye. Thank you very much for listening to me.

**4.00 p.m.**

**Sen. Wayne Munro:** Good afternoon, Madam President, I rise in this honourable Senate to make my contribution to the Bill "An Act to amend the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 2004". The topic of education is very close to my heart. The reason is that, I am from a family which was

brought up in the Morvant area. The schools I went through—the background—were Maryland RC, Belmont; then I went to Belmont Junior Secondary School and from there I went on to Malick Senior Comprehensive School. After Malick Senior Comprehensive school I went to a very, very good class by Mr. Mervyn Elder. From there I did A level math in four months flat; A level economics in six months flat and started UWI tertiary education. As an important impetus to education, I remember the words of my mother and my father, that is to say that education is one thing that once you have no one could take that away from you. [*Desk thumping*]

In that light, my contribution to this Bill will focus particularly on two issues. The first issue is that I will spend some time talking about the importance of education as an engine for growth and development within a particular country. Then I will talk into the Bill about the whole accreditation process. I am going to go through now to maintain what is going on as an observation within the private as well as the public tertiary level institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. Then I will make my closing remarks.

Firstly, education as an impetus to development. Education could be seen as an important engine for growth and development, since education actually empowers the human resource. The human resource labour is a factor of production, once educated, it makes itself more marketable in the environment. Therefore the contribution of a person who is educated can make a difference in society to increase not only national income but also to increase the overall development of a country.

In that light, the importance of educating labour as a human resource is important because it tends to improve the marketability of that resource labour, as well as, it provides the human resource with that skill required to make that contribution towards the overall development and growth in a country.

It should be noted that a number of countries have invested heavily in education. For example, I can talk about the Asian tigers and as a major impetus for growth and development in these economies, tertiary education was an important factor that contributed towards the growth, development and the sustainability of these economies.

Additionally, with education one has to be careful that the curriculum that is being put forward is the correct one, in that to prevent a mismatch from taking place within the economy, in terms of the demand for labour resources, as well as the supply of labour resources in the economy. Once the demands equal the supply and the needs of the economy are put forward, then one can see true development taking place.

In the context of the accreditation process. The accreditation process is a means of acquiring international recognition, by setting standards, standards upon which universalistic principles can be adopted across the board. When such universalistic principles are adopted across the board, the setting of academic standards are essential, since these standards can be used as a common core to determine which programmes are viable; which programmes are not viable; which programmes are acceptable and not acceptable, not only in the world of work but also internationally.

Madam President, if the standards are not met then a number of institutions will be offering programmes in Trinidad and Tobago that would not be accepted internationally. The Minister said that they are not in the process of shutting down institutions, but they will be working with these institutions until they reach the required standards in Trinidad and Tobago.

The statement in itself that was made by the hon. Minister indicates that there is some body of knowledge in the public gallery, that there are some institutions out there that are providing tertiary level packages of education that are not up to international standards. The Minister should come and tell this Senate the names of such institutions. The reason is that there are a lot of young children out there paying or going to these private institutions to get some package of tertiary-type education. At the end of the day, these packages offered by these tertiary-type educational institutions may not be accepted not only in Trinidad and Tobago but also internationally.

The question is that the whole process of accreditation is a process, that is why it is still in the accreditation process. It indicates a level of continuity, in that education and maintaining a standard require you to upgrade yourself along the way; a level of upgrade. The reason for the level of upgrade in the education system being put in place time and time again, is that circumstances may change, and with changes in circumstances we will have what? Changes in the degree to which the degree will be accepted or not accepted over time.

For example, if I consider in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean the acceptance of Grade III CXC as a particular standard; we moved first from Grade I and II, then we are now to Grades I, II and III. It is a cut-off point for the acceptance of the Grade III. A person who has done the CXC exams in the era in which Grade III is not accepted, it means that the acceptance comes from a particular point in time.

If I apply that concept to accreditation; if an institution is not accredited to date and persons pursue programmes at that institution they would get qualifications. They can take these qualifications and they would try to get work



from it internationally or locally, but will not be up to international standards until those institutions reach up to those standards which were required to be considered as what? As acceptable. It means that a person could be doing a degree programme at a private institution which falls short of the accreditation process and at the end of the day that degree that they obtained will not be accepted until that institution gets accreditation from that point onwards.

Madam President, a number of factors have to be considered in looking at the whole accreditation process. The first point one needs to look at is the number of institutions offering the tertiary level packages. If we have no indication of the number of institutions offering this tertiary level package to improve and to develop the human resource in Trinidad and Tobago, what do we have? The Minister came to this honourable Senate without any indication of the number of institutions offering this tertiary level package in the private sector.

Additionally, the whole accreditation process is a process that requires you to know the number of qualified staff members. Qualified staff members in terms of the number of Masters degrees held by those individuals; the number of Ph degrees held by those individuals, as well as the working experience of such persons in those private institutions.

Another impetus within the accreditation process is what we call the ratio of students to teachers. There must be a balance between student and teacher ratio to be considered to be accredited internationally. There is also the issue of space. The spaces in which persons are allowed to receive that tertiary level package.

There are other issues like the use of technology, that is to say in the training process and most importantly, the duration of the courses offered at these types of institutions. To date a number of problems continue to occur at the private institutions.

A poor person who wants to pursue a tertiary level type education—a poor person, let us say a person from Laventille East/Morvant—who wants to try to improve themselves, they will go to a private institution to try to get this tertiary level education that is so important for development, for growth, for well-being, for long term increases in income and to move one out of the holes of poverty in a particular area. When they go to these private institutions what are the realities? There are a number of harsh realities.

The first is that a number of these private institutions that form overnight lack the capacity required to house such individuals to receive the tertiary level package at these institutions. The Minister came to this Senate and he said nothing about the space at the private institutions that need to be addressed.

At a number of these institutions is the whole issue of the problems faced by the public at large. Some of these said institutions, those on that side contribute towards what? The fees of persons attending those institutions. Some persons go to a number of private institutions and at these institutions they change the lecturer overnight, leaving the students at bay.

Another problem occurring at these private institutions is change in the programmes and courses. A number of my friends who went to private institutions—I will not call names. When they went to these institutions there was something like a “bait and switch policy”; we offer this programme; you sign up for that particular programme.

Let us say you sign up for the London External Bsc and all during the semester they paid—payment is a different issue. They go on to the programme to do the London External Bsc, be it in accounting, economics, what have you and at the end of the day they change the programme and say no, you have to do the ABE Level I. Where is the programme? Where is the accountability? The accreditation body should go into those institutions and demand explanations, because persons are being taken advantage of by a large number of these private institutions.

Not to mention the fact that there is what you call an increase in registration fee at a number of these private institutions, overnight. So a poor person going to a private institution to receive a package of tertiary education; traditionally before Government funding the registration fee was \$200, now the registration fee increases to \$3,000, \$3,500 and in some cases \$2,000. It is taxpayers' money that has to be put out to pay for these things. Therefore, the business psyche is that the Government is providing us with payment per person; we have to make a little money at the side. So in order to make the money at the side, no accountability whatsoever; no monitoring at these institutions; they just increase the registration fee and a large number of poor people still cannot get access to this tertiary level package in Trinidad and Tobago.

What is the other side doing about that? Nothing. He came here without a list to even identify the inefficiencies and the private institutions in Trinidad and Tobago that are not providing that service that is up to international standards. If an accreditation was done of his presentation and the non performance of document he would have failed the accreditation process. [*Desk thumping*] He would have failed that process; he brought nothing to the Senate; he would have failed that process.

There is also the concern of the cancellation of courses at these private institutions. These foreign degrees and programmes require the local body to pay a fee to the foreign body. Therefore, Trinidad and Tobago has an institution—let us call it IABP for example—they have to pay fees to a foreign body so that the local persons could use the name and certificate; that is how it is done. Over time we have changes to the value of the pound and in some cases they might increase that fee overnight. When such fees are increased overnight they take money in for one set of courses and they cannot meet the obligations to these foreign educational institutes and what happens automatically is that some courses are cancelled without the students being able to do anything about it.

There is also the concern in the whole process of accreditation. To have effective accreditation you must have some foreign inputs in the accreditation process. If I consider accreditation, it means I am trying to get international acceptance for my programmes, be it my degree, and be it my certificates programmes, so I need some foreign intervention. The foreigner coming to tell me yes, these are the standards that need to be met in order to maintain and over time I grow within the programme.

This now-for-now accreditation process and now-for-now setting up of institutions of learning to provide tertiary level packages is questionable. The reason is that, over time all institutions and organizations take time to grow, to develop that level of scholarly, what you call achievement, research and development bank. Could we say that the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) has that research and development bank to date? No. And they are offering PhDs, Madam President.

**Hon. Senators:** Bogus, bogus.

**Sen. W. Munro:** So if I have to go and look at the accreditation process, would that organization be accredited today, tomorrow, when? Persons doing programmes via UTT, will these programmes be accredited or will there be retroactive accreditation? Will there be retroactive accreditation? Why? Because if they get accreditation from 2008, it means all those individuals; those poor people from the Morvant/Laventille area—like myself—who did those courses, those degrees will not be relevant, only from the point at which the accreditation is accepted. [*Desk thumping*]

The continuity of accreditation—and they are misleading this Senate, because they are going with the fact that once a person gets accreditation today, historical information will always be accredited, and that is not true. It is a misleading of the process and a misleading of the Senate.

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With the above in mind, that is my contribution.

Thank you very much.

**Sen. Mary King:** Thank you, Madam President. I have very few points but I would like to have the opportunity to make them.

First of all, I think that we have waited a long time to bring this amendment back. If we were assured during the last 18 months that these institutions were not going to be in a position to be accredited, then why did we wait until two years after the fact? We should have brought this a long time ago and brought us up to date with the process and what the problems were. [*Desk thumping*]

Two years after we passed the Bill, it is now an Act, the Accreditation Council has been set up, and the population may still be being fleeced. We do not know if they are but we have no guarantees that these institutions are actually doing what they say they are doing and the public could very well be fleeced.

It is now a little worse for us in that since we have introduced the GATE programme then all of this funding is public funds, taxpayers' money and I really feel that we have been irresponsible to have allowed this to happen for two years without a report to the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

Another concern I have, Madam President, is the process of some of these institutions. We have many of them which are accepting students with O levels to enter the institutions. After two years they are graduated, as they say, as associate degree people. This associate degree paper allows them to then enter a full university and after two years again, they can come out with a degree. Within two years they can come back out with a degree. We have allowed these institutions to bypass our normal university requirements which are two or three A levels at a certain grade. We have allowed these institutions to take people with a few O levels and bypass the whole structure of the basic education system upon which we have built our standards and our accreditation at certain levels.

I have a problem with that and I really would like the hon. Minister, through you, of course, Madam President, to explain to us how the Accreditation Council deals with these institutions and under what basis do they accept these full-fledged degree people. This also allows people to proceed and do Masters, PhDs and they have not really been through our structured university entrance. I have problems; they need the basic, basic background. I would like an explanation on that.

I will like the Minister to try and explain to us, please, what exactly are they doing? Will these degrees—and I am calling them so-called degrees—be accepted and recognized across the world like our university graduates are? We may have lots of trouble a couple of years down the road.

I think I will like to inform my learned friend on my right, that the engineering faculty at the University of the West Indies has been fully accredited for many, many years and our graduates are well accepted all across the world. A lot of them go and lecture at MIT, Harvard and the University of London, all over the world. [*Desk thumping*] They are very, very well thought of.

Going back to the degrees, I think the amount of money that we are spending at the level of tertiary education under the GATE programme, we could be wasting a lot of money when it comes down to their recognition across the world, because we want our graduates to continue to be the best, and, they have been the best in many fields up until now. [*Desk thumping*]

If the Minister has adopted some countries' models for this type of accreditation, this type of entrance into tertiary education, I think he should enlighten us as to which countries, which models are we now using and why. [*Interruption*] I would like specifically to know which model in the USA and why?

Madam President, my last question is, who actually is accrediting the University of Trinidad and Tobago? We need to know what is happening at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. I will like to make a special plea to the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education that he ask the UTT to please prepare a report to this Parliament so that we could be aware of what is actually happening at UTT. How is UTT spending the funds that it is getting from the national budget? What percentage of that national budget is its total revenue? How does it get its other revenue? What kind of grants is it getting from large corporations? How has it established its board? Is it registered under a Charter? Is it registered under the Companies Act? We do not know. I think that it is time the Parliament got information as to how our money is being spent at UTT. [*Desk thumping*] What are the accreditation plans for UTT, because it is not accredited? What are the plans? What is its process for recruitment of staff? What is its focus and what will be its proposed output, as far as fields of endeavour are concerned? What will this output do for Trinidad and Tobago's national development? What will be the benefit to Trinidad and Tobago given this output which they have planned? Those are my main concerns.

I thank you very much.

**Madam President:** Senator, all right, I will let you start; you have six minutes before the tea break, then you will continue after.

**Sen. Anthony Sammy:** Madam President, I am indeed very grateful to have been afforded the opportunity to serve in this august Chamber. I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the Members of the Senate for the warm welcome extended to me. I truly appreciate this gesture. I wish to speak albeit briefly on the Bill that is currently being debated in this honourable Senate.

The Bill before us is entitled "An Act to amend the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 2004". According to the Minister's earlier presentation, he stated amongst other things that no list of institutions that falls under this Act was available to date. The Minister also advised that after July 2008 the Accreditation Council will be able to assess post secondary and tertiary education.

My question is, what is happening in the interim whilst 29 people are being paid for doing what and at what cost to the nation? [*Desk thumping*] Why now, after four years, when they were supposed to be functional since 2004/2005? The Minister said in essence that he is hoping that by 2008 all institutions will be accredited, but seeing the lackluster performance to date, it seems inevitable that the Minister will again in 2008, ask for another extension.

Whilst the Minister's Accreditation Council is looking after accredited institutions, is the Minister aware of the many varied institutions that require accreditation, such as public institutions, private institutions, for-profit institutions, non-profit institutions, single purpose institutions, private career institutions, faith based colleges and universities, distance learning colleges and universities, law schools, medical schools, health professional education programmes?

Only one kind of accreditation would not be sufficient to address the accrediting needs of the various institutions that require accreditation status that I mentioned above. This is why accreditation organizations provide two major types of accreditation and they are institutional accreditation, specialized professional or programmatic accreditation. These two major kinds of accreditations are used for quality review, assessment and assurance of institutions all over the world.

In spite of the Minister's attempt to justify this amendment by extending the period from two to four years, to me there still seems to be several key areas that are not clear; maybe it is because of my newness. As I understand it, section 8(2) of the Act clearly outlines the functions of the Accreditation Council.

Is it that some or all of the learning institutions that fall under this Act have to date not met the requirements of the Act and have therefore been acting illegally? Are we therefore now being asked to legitimize these learning institutions by extending the period from two to four years? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, I promised that I would be short, especially as the tea break is now due. Let me once again in closing, extend my appreciation to all the Members of the Chamber and to you, in particular, for allowing me this opportunity, without any interruptions from the other side, on the occasion of my maiden contribution in this honourable Chamber.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam President:** Let me congratulate you on your maiden contribution. I cannot guarantee that you would not get any interruptions the next time you speak. Anyway, we shall now suspend for tea and return at 5.00 p.m.

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

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

**Sen. Walton James:** Thank you, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this Bill. The Bill is cited as the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt) Act, 2006. The purpose of the amendment is to extend the period from two years to four years, that institutions lawfully performing their functions in Trinidad and Tobago in the sphere of post secondary and tertiary education are authorized to continue to do so without being registered in accordance with Act No. 16 of 2004.

It is very important to students whether the post secondary or tertiary institution of their choice, in whatever field, is accredited or not. This could have a significant impact in gaining employment after graduation also in gaining admission to a higher level institution for continuing their studies. It could be particularly important when students must transfer from one educational institution to another, for whatever reason, and even more so when it is to a foreign or overseas institution.

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 2004 is crucial to the progress of this country through its impact on post secondary and tertiary education. It will ensure that as we increase our capacity to train and produce more graduates, and in fact, do so, that quality standards are maintained and improved even beyond international norms. Statistics recently quoted, indicated that less than 10 per cent of our secondary school graduates go on to post

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secondary or tertiary institutions for further education. This is a far cry from 50 to 60 per cent in Europe and 70 to 80 per cent in North America. So there is much room for improvement and some urgency required in addressing the situation.

I am one of those persons who feel that the University of Trinidad and Tobago coming into being is a very good thing for our country. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, in terms of doing my own calculations it is my view that Trinidad and Tobago can have at least three universities, [*Desk thumping*] each, possibly of the order of 20,000 students. [*Desk thumping*] But even with that level of attendance we would still possibly be only in the order of 50 per cent.

I appreciate that the establishment and putting into full operation of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago is a complex exercise and it will take sometime to be fully effective. And how they treat and how they tread their way through this exercise is important, and it was to me comforting to be told by the Minister that they are tapping the expertise and experience of other countries that have gone through this exercise before. There is no point trying to break entirely new ground when it has been done so before already, and in fact, you can gain from other people's errors and mistakes and not make the same mistakes yourself.

I do have some concern, however, with respect to the two-year extension of the period that institutions lawfully performing their functions in Trinidad and Tobago in the spheres of post secondary and tertiary education are authorized to continue to do so without being registered in accordance with the Act. My concern is that during this period there will be institutions not yet accredited functioning alongside institutions which are actually accredited. There will therefore be students graduating with the value of certificates from accredited institutions and those who will not, but the latter institutions may thereafter become accredited. So there is a lot of possibility for mismatching of things and it is one of the things, I think, that they would have to be very careful about in terms of how they proceed.

It is my view that this interim period and the proposal to extend by another two years which makes it then a 4-year period could be shortened and I think that a major effort should be made to shorten it. Because I think, the longer it is the more likely is the possibility that you are going to find you have problems developing. It is my view that a serious attempt be made to complete this exercise in less than that two-year period. [*Desk thumping*]

Much of what I had thought of in terms of this Bill has been already laid on the Table so I do not intend to extend it any further.

I say thank you for the opportunity. [*Desk thumping*]



**The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Thank you, Madam President. Let me congratulate Sen. Sammy on his maiden contribution, who demonstrated that it is possible in five minutes to make a relevant and positive contribution to a debate; I hope Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh takes note of that.

I rise to speak on two issues raised by Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh since it concerns my ministry and that is the question of scholarships. Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh indicated, he wanted to know who decides scholarships; who is getting scholarships; what party group is getting scholarships and went on to say the country does not know who forms this scholarship committee—hidden secret—by implication, suggesting somehow, that this was a party dominated scholarship committee.

For the record, Madam President, the scholarship committee comprises of the following people: The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration and Information as chairman; the Director of Personnel Administration; the Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education; the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education; Prof. Bridget Bereton of UWI; Prof. Denise Thomson of UTT; Mr. Zaffor Ali, whom I believe was a former registrar at UWI; and Miss Roslyn Kanhai-Trotman, former public servant in the Curriculum Development Section of the Ministry of Education. I thought I would place it on record and since Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh is not here, perhaps, when Sen. Mark makes his contribution he will apologize for the inference that Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh made.

The second issue that he raised, Madam President, was that he used to hear so much about countries giving scholarships in Trinidad and Tobago; it used to be advertised in the newspapers, and during the last four or five years there have not been one advertisement—It is either Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh does not read the newspaper or newspapers but that I do not believe as he is often quoting from them—or he has misinformed himself and subsequently misinformed this Senate. For the record all scholarships are advertised. It is done within the public service by means of a circular; [*Interruption*] they are sent to all Missions abroad so that Trinidadians and Tobagonians abroad who wish to avail themselves, and they are published in the three daily newspapers. That is standard practice, and again, I just wanted to put to rest the implication that would flow out of Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh's non-contribution that somehow, there is a cabal of party people awarding scholarships and they are not advertising it.

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

**Sen. Raziah Ahmed:** Madam President, in the Bill before the Senate, “An Act to amend the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, Act 2004”, I wish to recount at this point some of the things that Sen. The Hon. Minister Abdul-Hamid said in trying to justify the need for a two-year extension.

He said that he found institutions quite willing to make the transformation, however, his secretariat having been established in February 2005 had actually failed to quickly and efficiently hire and train staff, to get accommodation, which is rental of property, to develop international relationships, policies and procedures. And he said that one of the problems—in fact, the excuse that he put forward was that accreditation was what he described as an emerging field. I find that difficult to accept, because for as long as I could remember, accreditation was always important, and you wanted to get your children in a university that was accredited and more so, you wanted to know that the accreditation would be recognized in the global marketplace.

Then the hon. Senator said that it also took quite a lot of time because there were few specialists in the Caribbean and to identify and recruit the type of staff that he needed, required a considerable amount of time. I find that also difficult to accept because job advertisements in the newspapers are likely to get rapid response and there are a number of experts throughout the Caribbean who have been working with the universities across the Caribbean to get accreditation for the various programmes in the local jurisdiction.

So he has come to ask us to go to July 2008 for an extension of what was first envisioned to be completed in two years; he has come to ask us to double the time, and I am wondering, Madam President, in the whole 2020 Vision concept, is it by extension going to become 4040? Because, Madam President, as far as I could make out, from everything the Minister has said, the Minister has accounted for why and how he has failed, and I feel sorry for him, but I find it difficult to empathize with him, because we are dealing with the education of our young people; our children. It takes one year or two years to get an associate degree or to get a diploma—a whole diploma; an entire associate degree—and the Minister and his staff of specialists could not complete the mandate in two years.

So let us look at the original piece of legislation, Part II section 8 to see what exactly that mandate was. Part II section 8(2) lists a number of sub subs which run the gamut of almost the entire alphabet and I found that very amusing because the progress of the Accreditation Council is reminiscent of pre-school where we have the young ones, early childhood learning the alphabet and so on.

Nevertheless, the mandate was to list in (a): “to maintain a list”. That is all. Make a list; (c): “to register institutions”. It would appear to me, Madam President, that if the mandate is to register institutions and the time limit for that is two years and the institutions have failed, why are we coming before this Senate to make an excuse for the institutions? The institutions that have failed to do what they were supposed to do ought to suffer the consequences of having failed rather than keeping back the entire country—

**Hon. Senator:** Close them down.

**Sen. R. Ahmed:**—for another two years. There are private enterprise institutions, and as has been said before are for-profit institutions, and I think the point was made before that it is not our job to facilitate and to help them in any way. We cannot use taxpayers’ money; that point was made before.

The more difficult task of the accreditation council would have been to determine the equivalency of programmes and awards in (f) and we could understand if in two years the council failed to reach to (f), (g) and (h) which go on “to develop and advise on a unified credit-based system, and to establish relationships including joint accreditation exercises”. If that part of the exercise had not yet been completed, I would have been able to empathize with the Minister. But he could not even bring a list; could not even say what is recognized and what is not recognized; could not get the institutions under his purview to do a simple registration exercise; that reeks of incompetence at the highest level. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to think, Madam President, that in the private sector this cannot compare, and it may be, that the entire Act has failed. If in two years you were supposed to complete a list and do a little registration, leaving, outside all the others from, (g), (h), (i), (j), (k), (l), (m), (n), (o), (p), (q), (r), (s), (t), (u), (v), (w), to the end of (x) of the alphabet; we could understand if some latter part of the list, but to come and say, well, give me an extension because I could not even get to (a), (b) or (c) of my little alphabet, that is a waste of taxpayers’ money. Because, subclause (x) of that same section 8(2) gives the council without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the functions of the council shall be (2)(x):

“to do or cause to be done such other things as the Council considers expedient or necessary for the performance of its functions under the Act.”

And that is not expedient and that is not in keeping with the goal of bringing under control the numerous institutions that have sprung up like mushrooms in the country, sprung up overnight. It does not do justice to the young people who have

to attend these institutions, and in fact, it is a sad day for the whole construct of accreditation in this country. It would appear that we have put a bunch of incompetents in charge of accreditation. [*Interruption*]

Accreditation is about recognizing the education, diplomas, degrees and the pieces of paper that we get, that we pay for. Accreditation is about that, and we have put a bunch of people who are incompetent. In fact, the Minister traced his progress, and as I sat here, it seems to be some kind of insipid creep. There is no robust desire to get this thing up and running. It is some kind of creeping system, insipidly happening whenever and however.

And so, Madam President, I was forced to go back to the original Act and to see who appointed the council and to question in my mind that if the council was appointed by the President and the council has failed to deliver its mandate after two years, then who is accountable? What do we do when a President of a country, respectable, as his office is, has appointed a council and the council, according to the Act has failed to deliver in the two years mandated in the Act? Do we come to this honourable Senate and say, well, let us try again in two years and bring up all kinds of lame excuses about the few specialists in the Caribbean and about having to facilitate and how it is a developmental process?

Every single thing is a developmental process, but that does not mean that we have to multiply two years by two into four years. What kind of incompetence is that? And we are being asked in this Parliament to endorse it. Madam President, we are being asked to endorse the incompetence. That brings to mind another question; when people are appointed to do a job and the job is not done, how do we, as a country, accept, respond, punish or reward? And I am very concerned about this in the light of the draft Constitution and the concept of the executive President.

Earlier in the debate, Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke to the first function of the Parliament, where he said that it was to give an account of the funds that have been allocated, budgeted and spent to the institutions, in particular, that come under the Accreditation Council. He used the word “crippling”; crippling the country with incompetence and that is where we have a Government that gave its word, because Sen. Prof. Deosaran alluded to the fact that in the original debate when they questioned whether it would be completed in two years, they were assured that it would be. And the Government gave its word that it would be done in two years; and indeed, it is a reasonable period of time and yet we have a situation where they have come to us and they are asking to extend the time for as much as it was designed, originally.

So you see, Madam President, the problem before us causes one to compare and contrast what is happening now; what is happening here and what is happening with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, set up in 2004 with its secretariat, its specialists, its funding and its salaries. Does this happen anywhere else? Is this an isolated event; can we really empathize with the hon. Minister? Can we really forgive him, is this a solitary incident?

And so we are dealing with our children; we are dealing with the quality of programmes that they are paying for and we are dealing with the fact that the Dollar for Dollar programme is paying half of the cost, and in some cases all of the cost. We are dealing with the quality of teaching and so I was reminded of what I read in the Teaching Service Commission Report and I want to speak just about one finding in that report about the inability of the commission in that particular instance of dealing with discipline.

Because at the end of it, the bottom line is indiscipline! Inability to perform a mandate to do the job that you are being paid to do and after two years instead of being told, sorry, you did not do the job, let us get people who could do the job; we are being told, let us give them another two years. In three years you get a degree from the University of the West Indies and these “fellas” want four years. Four years, to get what! Not even a diploma, not even a certificate. [*Interruption*] And the commission reported that the time had come for a complete review of the disciplinary regulations under which it currently operates, together with the establishment of new policies and procedures. So we have an old system, an existing system, an existing teaching service system in the public sector and the reports that are coming to us are saying that they cannot even deal with the indiscipline in their environment and we must come now and sanction the indiscipline on the part of the accreditation council.

Public Service Commission Report, same thing. Indiscipline! No ability of the public service to deal with it. They speak about the number of cases discharged and dismissed because of nonappearance of the police complainants. They speak about the number of cases dismissed and discharged because of no evidence offered by the police complainant. Almost 1,000 cases of indiscipline in the public service and either, nonappearance of the police complainants or the evidence disappeared. This is the kind of incompetence that we are dealing with and we are forced to sit up and compare what is happening in the parallel enterprises because we do not want a repeat, and for too long this country is being subjected to Third World levels of incompetence while we continue to mamaguy and fool the people and tell them that we are fixing it and fixing it and we are robust and we fast track; and I want to ask fast track to where?

Madam President, it appears to me that the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago will take a very long time to get to the end of the alphabet from (g), (h), (i), (j), (k), (l), (m), et cetera; it will take a very long time. However, what they will do is probably establish accreditation for the local UTT and they will probably be able to give everyone a degree or a diploma out of UTT—which is very good; the only problem is that with everybody having a degree and a diploma out of UTT we will be left behind by the global community. We will be left behind by the global community because our degrees and our diplomas may very well be accredited only in Trinidad and Tobago and nowhere else. So yes, we could find jobs in Trinidad and Tobago but this accreditation may never extend into the global market space and these graduates may never get to explore the huge dimensions of opportunity, dreaming and adventure that exist in the global marketplace.

Madam President, time is of the essence! And I thank you.

**5.30 p.m.**

**Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan:** Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to contribute on the Bill before us, an Act to amend the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 2004. First of all, I would like to really commend my colleague, Sen. Wayne Munro, for his spirited defence of the most vulnerable of our students, who are always anxious to access tertiary education and who, because of the ineptitude and the lackadaisical attitude of the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education have to endure all the horrors that he has related for another two years.

Madam President, I know a little about that because I have been speaking to students, and I would just like to add one thing that I think my colleague left out. For example, students who are doing the external London degrees are complaining that the schools at present are demanding the examination fees in pounds, up front, when they register to start these courses in September. The London University does not require these fees until somewhere after January/February. What is happening, is that these schools are putting so much pressure on the students, because in addition to finding the registration fees and the books and so on that are required to do the course, they have to come up with the fees for London which is not necessary and which the schools will take—I do not know if they put it in some interest bearing account or whatever—and then later on they send it off to London. But that is entirely unfair to the students. The students have absolutely no business handing over their examination fees to these schools because these can be sent at the appropriate times straight to the university.

Madam President, this is causing the most vulnerable and poorest students not to be able to access and do the courses because they do not have all this money to put up front to do the courses. So, instead of facilitating tertiary education, some of these schools are actually obstructing tertiary education for the poorest and the most vulnerable among our students and that is a very, very sad situation. I know students personally who are suffering from this. [*Desk thumping*] I know a young girl who was unable to sign up for the London law exams because she had not been able to come up with all these fees that these schools are demanding up front, which is totally a rip-off to the students. So, I just wanted to add that particular horror story to all the woes that Sen. Munro enunciated here today. They will continue to suffer for another two years at least, until this Minister gets his act together and brings the necessary controls over these schools.

The Minister in his presentation gave us ample assessment of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago as being part of an international accreditation institute, both regionally and internationally. He spoke of the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance, and internationally, he spoke to the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies which he says comprises of 73 countries and so on. He boasted that this indicated that we are very far advanced in terms of accreditation, because membership of these organizations is based on governance and policy, having all these things in place. But what is happening here, that these agencies, these international bodies and so on are at present, apparently, fully apprised of the processes, the policies and the procedures that govern the accreditation process in Trinidad and Tobago. Yet, these processes, policies and procedures are after two years, a mystery to this Parliament—[*Interruption*]

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** To the population.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:**—and to the population and to the stakeholders.

In this context, the Parliament is being asked to agree to an extension of another two years to allow these policies, programmes and procedures to be actually made known to the stakeholders and institutions so that they can be in a position to comply. But, I would have thought that the Minister and the Accreditation Council would have moved with much more dispatch in getting this system off the ground. Because when we looked at a document produced by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago and it spoke to the background of the establishment of the ACTT, they spoke to the fact that there were serious problems that we needed to address and the legislation is necessary to address these problems as quickly as possible to deal with urgent situations. And I quote:

"Global trends and the internationalisation of tertiary education have created a situation in which the quality of programmes offered locally is being questioned and in some cases challenged. Students transferring from one institute to another and graduates seeking admission to post-graduate and other programmes, as well as those seeking to be employed or promoted on the basis of advanced qualifications, are those most affected."

Madam President, people's lives, people's ability to earn a living and advance themselves is being challenged and being held back because we did not have that Accreditation Council in place and functioning. This is the background to the establishment of the legislation over two years ago, and two years later we come back to this Parliament asking for another two years. So, I do not know, where did the urgency go?

Madam President, this document gives two examples of the kind of things that were happening without the Accreditation Council. They said and I quote:

"In the first, a local organization seeking to offer a joint degree programme by distance through a partnership between a reputable local tertiary level institute of high standing nationally and a foreign university, failed to progress very far in its negotiations because the local institute could not provide evidence of accreditation by any national body."

This is urgent. This is serious. This is development and skill training. This is 2020 vision going down the drain right there and nobody seems to be concerned on the other side.

Madam President, it continues:

"In the second case, at the regional level Caricom was forced to take a decision to establish a Caribbean Health Education Accreditation Board as an urgent and immediate measure to address a situation that arose when the UWI Medical Faculty was informed that starting this year its programmes would no longer be accredited to the General Medical Council (GMC) of Great Britain. Accreditation status with that organization normally gave graduates the ability to register to practice in most Commonwealth countries without further scrutiny. This situation has developed because of the United Kingdom's membership in the European Union and the need for the GMC to comply with the Union's accreditation regulation regarding academic and professional training programmes."



So, what has happened as they said here, Caricom had to scramble to establish another regional accreditation organization to accredit medical students because they would no longer be accredited in Britain, because of Britain's affiliation with the European Union.

Madam President, this is serious business and people's lives and careers are at stake here and it went on to talk about other issues. This document says that the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago will serve to facilitate the establishment of:

1. A national qualifications framework that provides the basis for the creation of a seamless education and training system.
2. Criteria and guidelines for ensuring programme articulation and student transfers within the system at the national and regional levels, and to facilitate the free movement of skills within the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME).

This is serious business. So what we can deduce from this, is that all these urgent matters have been on the back-burner for the last two years while the Minister is fiddling and Rome is burning.

Madam President, this is disgraceful because if this document says that all these urgent issues were necessary and the establishment of Council was necessary to deal with all these urgent issues, and two years down the road, this Minister is coming to ask us for two more years, what is the basis, what is the criteria that he is using to ask the Parliament for two more years? I want to ask him some questions. I am not sure if the Minister indicated that the stakeholders and the institutions are now actually apprised of all the eligibility requirements for accreditation and they are in the process of upgrading their systems and so on to comply. And I was not sure when this process would have started. Then, I am not sure what is the basis for the two-year period because in order for us to get a fix on this two-year period that the Minister is talking about, certain issues must be made clear.

1. What exactly are the requirements for eligibility and accreditation?
2. What has been the pattern of the emergence of private and public post secondary and tertiary education?
3. How many?

This is the question that everybody is asking this afternoon. How many? What type of institutions have emerged?

Madam President, there are different types of accreditation with respect to the different types of institution. There is programme accreditation and institutional accreditation, and therefore, one has to have an idea of what is happening. What types of institutions and how many institutions? What type of accreditation they require and so on? Then that will give us an idea of whether the two-year period we are talking about is going to be enough or whether it is not going to be enough; whether the Minister will need another five years or whether he needs another six months. We have no information on which to base his request for two years. As my colleague mentioned, there are a whole host of different types of institutions that the Accreditation Council would have to assess and establish programmes for their accreditation because not all these different institutions require different types of investigation and assessment. He spoke of the public and private institutions, the faith-based colleges; all of those he spoke of, I would not go through them. He also spoke of the law schools and the medical schools.

So, the question is, if we do not have this information; if we do not have this profile of what is happening out there and the rate at which they are going because presumably, more and more of these institutions—Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke to the fact that one day it was a meat store or something like that and the next day it is a tertiary education. They are growing at a prolific rate because there is money in it because of the GATE programme and so on and they are walking through this gateway to riches and wealth. So, what is the profile? Because if you do not know the number of institutions, the types of institutions and so on, we cannot assess his analysis. What we do know is that there is a whole plethora of public institutions out there which will require accreditation because in section 8(2) of the parent Act, it says that:

- "(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing the functions of the Council shall be:
- (a) to maintain a list of accredited post secondary and tertiary institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago and a list of accredited programmes and awards offered in Trinidad and Tobago;
  - (b) to accredit post secondary and tertiary institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago and the programmes and awards of such institutions;
  - (c) to register post secondary institutions, foreign and local, which offer programmes in Trinidad and Tobago;"

So, Madam President, when we talk about post secondary, where this Act speaks to post secondary and tertiary institutions and awards and programmes, we know that—and we have spoken about that. There are a whole plethora of awards and programmes in this country, HYPE and MUST, too many to mention and all these programmes will have to come under the Accreditation Council in order to achieve what the Accreditation Council says it wants to achieve, that is, a seamless structure.

In another Accreditation Council document, it says:

"ACTT accredits registered post secondary and tertiary/higher educational institutions or specialized programmes that have been evaluated and found to meet or exceed stated internationally acceptable criteria for educational quality."

So, their purview is to accredit these local institutions and programmes and they must meet the international standards for quality education. That is a huge task because what we have now is a whole set of programmes funded by millions of dollars of taxpayers' money that have not been accredited; that have not been recognized; have not been certified anywhere reputable that we know about locally, far less internationally. And the mandate of the ACTT is to make sure that all these programmes come under one organization and they are properly accredited, they are properly assessed and they also have to come up to international standards.

That is a huge task, and therefore, just the public institutions alone, we know it is a lot of work and that there is a whole lot involved there and the Minister is asking for two years. We do not know on what basis he is asking for these two years because we have not seen the processes, the policies and the guidelines that you have to go through. Simple as that, because if we had seen that, and had the list of the organizations and all these institutions, we would have been able to make an assessment. This is the amount of work, this is what the Minister has to do and we can agree that it will take two years or it may probably take a little more or so.

Madam President, we are in the dark here and while our process is shrouded in secrecy, I was able to get all the relevant information on a National Accreditation Programme from India. I was not able to get this here. There is a website apparently of the ACTT and when you go to the website, all the fields that indicate that you would get some sort of information, they say information pending. You cannot get any information. Look at the type of information that their document says you can get on the website and if we had gotten this

information, we would not have had to come here and talk in this manner. We would talk more concretely about how to assist the Minister to do his job because we know he cannot do the job and he needs our assistance on this side.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Poor thing.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** But, Madam President, it says here that for information on any of the following services, please contact the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Here is the information that they say they would give us: Statements and their accreditation status of tertiary level programmes; list of accredited institutions for main fields of study and disciplines; assessment and equivalencies of accredited foreign qualifications; an evaluation and accreditation of local institutions and other programmes.

Madam President, I do not know if this is 2020. Maybe it is 2020. It is certainly not now because we did not get any of that information; everything was information pending, 2020. But I was able to go and look at the India experience and get a thick document that tells you everything about their accreditation programme, the eligibility criteria. For instance, they had an interesting eligibility criteria. They say to be eligible the institution needs to have at least five years of standing or two batches of students passing out from the institutions. That is interesting.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** UTT does not have one.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Yes. I will come to UTT just now. I think people would probably have to make a jail for UTT the way things are going.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is bad; it is so bad.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** And jail is not nice. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. Yuille-Williams:** [*Inaudible*]

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Yes, because I am a freedom fighter. I have always fought for the interest of my people. [*Desk thumping*] Yes, from the time I was 16 years old, I was a freedom fighter.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are fighting for the poor and the oppressed.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** So, when you see me in this honourable Senate talking, I do not just talk, I have walked the walk. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*].

They went through the whole process which you have to go through to get accreditation. They talked about the preparation of assess, study and report where they require the institutions to do a study on themselves, and present themselves to the Accreditation Council and say what their systems are; what are their

strengths and weaknesses, their potential and limitations and so on. The assessors would have to visit the institution and then the Accreditation Committee would make a final decision, and follow up by having periodic assessments. In order to maintain the accreditation, every five years under the Indian system, you have to apply for re-accreditation and in the sixth year, you have to go through all the processes to make sure that all the systems were up to date; that all your weaknesses and so on from the last accreditation process were fixed and amended, and therefore, at the end of that two-year process they would come again and look at your presentation for re-accreditation and so on.

They have everything on the website. You do not have to guess about anything and come to Parliament and “buss” your head, asking the Minister and tearing your hair out because you cannot understand what is going on here. They spoke about the core values of their accreditation process. I think Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke about that, how they contribute to national development—fostering global competencies, including a value system; promoting the use of technology; and quest for excellence. The Minister has spoken here for 15 or 20 minutes and he has not been able to give us what is the core value systems of the Accreditation Council and so on.

This document spoke about criteria for assessment, which is one of the things that we are asking here because we do not know what the criteria for assessment is, and therefore, we do not know how long it would take in relation to different organizations and different institutions. That is the big talking point here this afternoon, what are the criteria? The criteria that they enumerated here this afternoon are and I quote:

“Curricular Aspects.

Teaching-learning and Evaluation

Research, Consultancy and Extension

Infrastructure and Learning Resources

Student support and progression

Organization and Management and

Healthy Practices”

So, it is not to say that you have to re-invent the wheel. Everything is there. Other developed countries that have more experience have gone through this process and are very au courant with what needs to be done and I do not understand why it must take us two years to set up an Accreditation Council and

then come back to this Parliament and ask for two years. If you look sharp, they would have to ask for another two years. But fortunately as my colleague said, they are not going to be there; they are not going to be there to ask for another two years. They are not going to be there fortunately.

Madam President, when you look at the British system, we were able to get something that I have not been able to get from the Minister. He spoke to 29 members on his Accreditation Council, but what I would have liked to get from the Minister is, how is it set up? How have you organized these members of staff; and how many inspectors comprise those 29 members? Because those are the core people. It is no point having a whole set of administrative staff and you do not have the inspectors who are the ones to actually go out and assess the schools and institutions and come back to the Accreditation Council and write a report. He did not mention and he was very coy about it. He spoke to the fact that there are very few people who are competent and who have the necessary qualifications and so on, but I will very much like to know how many inspectors or assessors we have out there to do the work that we have to do?

This will bring us back to the key question: How long would it take? Because there is a big difference, if out of the 29, you have maybe seven, eight or nine assessors as opposed to having one or two. We do not have a clue, so we do not know how long this process will take, given the challenges with respect to assessors. He has not told us how many he has; how many are out there; how much is necessary; he has not given us an idea of the gap analysis; whether he would like to get more to do the job in two years; or whether it is possible that if he does not get more that it would take a longer time. Give us some information to go with. We cannot just come here and say, bam, two years, without knowing any of these things. This is important information. So, in the absence of this information, what can we say. We just have to send him back to do his homework because he has come to this Parliament unprepared; par for the course for this administration.

Madam President, another interesting issue is that in the American system, which he says that we are patterning ourselves after, there is an agency called the US Department of Education, which oversees the Accreditation Council. They have found it necessary to have this agency to make sure that the Accreditation Council is not a law unto itself; is doing what it is supposed to do; is operating

within the necessary framework, because this is serious business. This is people's lives; this is people's education; and this depends on their performance in the work place and so on. We joke around with these things in Third World countries, but in advanced countries people know the value of people being properly accredited, properly trained and being able to do the job they profess to be able to do.

We do not care about that here. This Government does not care about that, that is probably the last thing on their mind because they have a penchant for putting square pegs in round holes, because it is friend, and belongs to the party group and is a chairman of this and a chairman of that. So they do not care about people's accreditation and professional ability and so on, that is the last thing on their mind. But we on this side care about that because we care about performance and that is why we are so insistent that the Minister must tell us these things. [*Desk thumping*].

So where is this agency, if we are patterning ourselves after the American? There is no mention in the Minister's presentation of what organization is going to oversee and make sure that the Accreditation Council is functioning in the way it is supposed to function.

Apparently, there are a lot more questions than answers forthcoming to the Parliament this afternoon. [*Interruption*]

**Sen. Yuille-Williams:** [*Inaudible*]

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Well, we have become accustomed to that; you never come to this administration and get any of the answers, everything is a big secret.

Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh and Sen. King asked serious questions about the role and function in the accreditation of the University of Trinidad and Tobago and I wanted to bring a document to this Senate's attention, a very interesting document about the problems that are being experienced in the USA with respect to organizations that are set up without proper accreditation.

**6.00 p.m.**

This document is from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia and it is called "Diploma mill". Madam President, it says—and I think many of the issues mentioned here will have a lot of resonance with us in Trinidad and Tobago. You are going to be hearing "ping, ping," every two minutes because they are recognizing what is being said here. It says:

*Accreditation Council (Amdt.) Bill*  
[SEN. DR. KERNAHAN]

*Tuesday, November 21, 2006*

“A diploma mill (also known as a degree mill) is an organization that awards academic degrees and diplomas with very little or no academic study, and without recognition by official accrediting bodies. These degrees are often awarded based on life experience.”

Madam President, I am sure a couple of “pings” went off there already. It continues:

“Compared to legitimately accredited institutions, diploma mills tend to have drastically lowered or practically non-existent requirements for academic coursework, with some even allowing their students to purchase credentials rather than earn them.”

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Internet.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** We do not even have to go to the Internet because I have been speaking to a number of young people, teachers and so forth who are now part of the UTT because they closed the Corinth Teachers’ College and Valsayn Teachers’ College and said that for you to qualify as a teacher now, you have to be part of the UTT. A young teacher told me that there are students without teachers at UTT in that teachers’ programme, and teachers without students. Teachers are coming into the UTT and signing and being paid, having no students to teach.

The second year students who are in Part II of the course are doing over the Part I syllabus because the Part II syllabus is not yet ready for them. So in order for them to keep going, they are just doing over the Part I syllabus. Those who are in Part I, the first term, have no idea what the syllabus is for the second term far less for the second year. It is a shameful scandal that is going on at UTT and the teachers have told me that the whole process was totally rushed. They were not ready to deal with it, but wanted to score all these political points without consulting teachers or the stakeholder organization, so they rushed through the whole system and have people doing nonsense at UTT. People who are going through that process are totally frustrated and fed up.

Madam President, I am sure young teachers out there would have heard a couple of “pings”. When I read that whole issue of institutions having non-existent requirements and not teaching properly and so forth, I hope we do not end up like a certain Texas-based Trinity Southern University, which, in 2004, awarded a Bachelor of Business Administration to a house cat named Colby Nolan. There was an undercover investigation with respect to this school and they awarded this bachelor “due to the cat’s ‘qualifications’ (including work experience in fast-food and as a paperboy)”.



Madam President, this is what is going on in the United States of America where all these regulatory bodies are. Another “ping” went off there, because I do not know if we are going to be awarding degrees and PhDs to house cats in Trinidad and Tobago. With the kind of confusion that is taking place at the University of Trinidad and Tobago; many house cats are going to be very highly trained.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** And “la diablesse”.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** And “douens” and “soucouyants and thing”, yes. Madam President, what is interesting in the context of this whole UTT thing—I do not know, so I am asking questions now. What makes an institution eligible to be called a university in this country? I think other Senators had asked the same question. What are the criteria?

Hear what is happening in Australia, Madam President:

“In Australia, it is a criminal offence to call an institution a university, or issue university degrees, without authorization through an act of federal or state parliament. Thus, the problem is minimal in Australia.”

In India, it says:

“the right of conferring or granting degrees shall be exercised only by a University established or incorporated by or under a Central Act, or a State Act, or an Institution deemed to be University or an institution specially empowered by an Act of the Parliament to confer or grant degrees. Thus, any institution which has not been created by an enactment of Parliament or a State Legislature or has not been granted the status of a Deemed to be University, is not entitled to award a degree.”

Madam President, are “pings” going off?

“In Germany it is a criminal offence to call an institution a university...or issue academic degrees, without authorization through an act of the respective states Ministry of Education. It is also a criminal offence to falsely claim a degree in Germany if it does not meet accredited approval.

In the UK it is illegal to offer something that may be mistaken to be a degree unless the awarding body is on a list maintained by the Department for Education and Skills. This is difficult to enforce on the Internet, where a site may be based abroad. However, UK Trading Standards officers have had notable success in countering a large diploma mill group based abroad that were using British place-names for its ‘universities’.

Madam President, this is serious business here because apart from the house cats, we are going to get so-called graduates who are going to go out there allegedly with knowledge in industrial processes and so forth hoping to burn this country to the ground. This is serious because when we look at what the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), the kinds of professionals it is supposed to train, the kind of people that are supposed to come out from there, and if you are going to have a university which has no accreditation, no legal status, where are we going? What is this Government doing? Who do they think they are fooling? They are fooling no one, the whole country is alert to their manipulation and their destruction and to the fact that they like to play with the truth.

Madam President, we do not dispute the fact that this country can establish six universities if it wants to, but the question is where is the accreditation coming from? Where is the recognition? Where is the international status? Where are the experts and professionals who are going to teach in these universities? It can establish 10, but handle your business. Make sure you know what you are doing. [*Desk thumping*] Make sure that you are not fooling young people telling them that they are university graduates, when the degree is not worth the paper it is written on. That is a criminal act; you are not supposed to fool young people and have them frustrated.

Madam President, in closing I want to share this document with the Parliament and what the Minister said of COSTAATT bursting at its seams and being stretched. I was wondering if the same—

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Stretched too wide and too thin and terribly under resourced.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** I think this description refers to the University of Trinidad and Tobago because when one looks at the purported goals and objectives of the university and what it has evolved into, I am certain that the description refers more to the University of Trinidad and Tobago than to anything COSTAATT was guilty of.

Madam President, I am reading a document here which says: “**ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**”. I do not know if teachers are industrial workers now. I do not know if they have fallen in that class, the Minister can tell me. It says that the aim was to establish—

**Sen. Manning:** Madam President, I would like to respond to the question just asked—the fact that the University of Trinidad and Tobago is an industrial university dealing with teachers now. The reason we have done that is because we

want a clinical approach to the education training of teachers. We would like it to be hands-on, we would like to ensure that they have more time in the classroom which they do not have right now at Valsayn and Corinth. The curriculum has been changed so that it is one that is more hands-on and more clinical supervision is taking place. So it is not a research university like the University of the West Indies. There are two types of universities—

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Excuse me, Madam President.

**Sen. Manning:** I am answering the question that was posed by the other side Madam President, and I am putting all the information on the table.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** But, Madam President—

**Madam President:** Both Members please sit. I think that is enough, continue.

**Sen. Dumas:** You do not want the answer?

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Madam President, the Minister has taken about three minutes of my time and still has not explained to me how teachers are all suddenly industrial workers. The answer she has given me makes no sense. You can have hands-on training, everything she spoke about there within the context of Valsayn and Corinth Teachers' Colleges. You are stretching this University of Trinidad and Tobago into an institution which did not originally cater for the education you want to impart, and there is nothing the Minister can say to convince me otherwise.

**Sen. Manning:** It is a totally different curriculum.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** How can teachers be classed as industrial workers—because you want to give them hands-on training? What does that mean?

**Sen. Manning:** She does not understand Vision 2020.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** The answer makes no sense. By no stretch of the imagination can teachers be classed as industrial workers, which is what they are saying here—the establishment of an industrial university. It says in the abstract:

“Trinidad and Tobago has had the good fortune to be blessed with relatively abundant reserves of oil and gas, which have been the mainstay of the economy...A new, national university has been proposed to cater for the urgent increased demand for industry-ready technical personnel in Trinidad and Tobago.”

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Where do teachers fall into that, Madam President? Could you enlighten me? Industry-ready, technical personnel? And they spoke about this in the context of oil and gas.

It goes on:

“This presents the opportunity to establish an institution that is integrally associated with industry and other institutions from inception, which would satisfy the (extra) demand for operational...industrial research and development and entrepreneurial endeavours to diversify the economy.”

That is in the abstract. This is what the concept of the university was about.

It says:

“UTT will focus initially on Science and Technology, and...based on a philosophy of close partnership with industry, particularly the private sector...”

It goes on to say—

**Madam President:** Senator, I think you are going into too much detail about UTT. As I made a ruling earlier this evening, we are not debating UTT, UWI, or anything else. You may refer to it, but come back to the Bill.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Thank you, Madam President. The fact is, what I want to question in this document is whether the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago will play any part in the accreditation of this university with the programmes.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Yes.

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Because some of the things I see mentioned that we have some of the institutions of this university offering joint and collaborative programmes with other institutions locally and abroad, thus benefiting from the experience, quality standards and the experience of these organizations.

Madam President, I want to know if collaboration is the same as certification, is the same as recognition, or is the same as accreditation. Because a lot of these programmes which they talked about that would be offered at the University of Trinidad and Tobago would be in collaboration with other institutions.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Madam President, this document goes on to tell us that they are talking about integration. There is a headline “INTEGRATION OF EXISTING INSTITUTIONS INTO UTT”.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** On a point of order, and you have just made the point, Madam President. We are not debating the UTT, and I want to assure the hon. Senator that it will fall under the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Can we move on now?

**Sen. Dr. J. Kernahan:** Madam President, I very much fear that the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, based on the Minister’s presentation this evening and his own words that there is a lack of accredited people, trained persons and professionals who are able to do the work—and he has not given us any number—and from what we can see, the list is vast in terms of the number of institutions, organizations and programmes that have to be accredited. I fear that the University of Trinidad and Tobago will not be properly accredited, the students will not be properly assessed, and they will not be properly evaluated to any degree of satisfaction to the citizens of this country. What is happening is a lot of hodge-podge of integration of institutions such as the Institute of Marine Affairs, Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI) and all these other institutions that have their own niche markets, and accreditation processes would be brought into an institution which is totally discredited and without foundation.

It is going to bring them down and they are going to lose their accreditation, their niche markets and their credibility because this Government only wants to rush through these big projects in time for the next general election to say it has done this and it has done that. I am saying it is doing this to the detriment of the young people of this country and to the training and quality of education that is necessary for us to advance as a developing country in this world.

They are doing this to the detriment of global competencies that our people have to acquire to compete out there, young people who will not be able to get any kind of jobs outside of Trinidad and Tobago and Caricom. They are going to be stuck in this “horror house”—unless we remove the PNM—of incompetent Government, one that does not care for its young people and is spending billions of dollars to uphold these institutions that mean nothing to the outside world. This is what this Government is doing.

Madam President, I am very happy that I have come through the system that I have been through the university, and have been able to acquire tertiary education in Cuba, a very prestigious, internationally recognized institution, and I am very

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sorry for the young people who have to go to the UTT and deal with COSTAATT, Community College and all these make-up institutions the Minister has mentioned this afternoon.

Thank you.

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Thank you very much, Madam President. I had no intention of talking but I think I need to put the record straight coming after the contribution made by the hon. Senator on the other side.

Madam President, about two years ago the Ministry of Education set up at its head office a unit called the Teachers Professional Development Unit which spent almost a year doing comprehensive research as to the way forward; what is happening in the sector, and what should be done for teacher quality development so that we can move forward.

That was done because the Ministry of Education at this point in time is reforming and as we do so, we talk about quality, and the fact that we need to put into the system quality to ensure that at the end of the day, the students are well serviced. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, to be able to do that, we put together a Cabinet-approved team which spent a year researching in the first instance, the research identified all the issues and challenges we were having in the teacher sector in the education system and guided us to where we needed to go, and based on that research, I can identify some of the issues we had; one was the quality of teachers, another was the selection of teachers.

How were we selecting teachers? People could have walked off the street, pay \$5.00 and become teachers. That is what was happening in the ministry.

#### PROCEDURAL MOTION

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate continue its sitting until the completion of the debate on this Bill.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (AMDT.) BILL**

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Thank you very much, Madam President. As I was saying, persons could walk off the street, pay \$5.00, and become registered teachers without any pre-service training. That was happening when they were there, Madam President, and they did nothing about it. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. Dumas:** Stop the grumbling.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** We therefore looked at it and spent a whole year doing the research, collecting the data, and taking steps to ensure that we produce teachers of quality because the research also showed us if we could make changes at that level, they would impact the whole system and at the end of the day we would be able to have well-prepared students. So that is what we did.

In the research, we identified the issues and the challenges which we had in place; then we asked Cabinet to approve a move towards ensuring that we have teacher qualification at the tertiary level. This is where we are at this point in time. That same committee has been able to ensure that coming out of the report, that a working committee was set up and for the second year we were able to start having meetings with the assistance of TTUTA, UTT, the principals of the training colleges Corinth and Valsayn on board. And for almost a year we met monthly initially, and then almost weekly as we began the process of handing over the teachers colleges to the Faculty of Education of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, so we are sure that we have put in place quality.

There is a curriculum in place that talks about 40 per cent of the time is hands-on and that is what an industrial university talks to. The University of the West Indies is a research university as they call it, our teachers will still go there because we need many qualified teachers, quality teachers, and, therefore, we would have two types coming into the system; one from the University of the West Indies where we would talk research-based education reading for degrees, and the other from the University of Trinidad and Tobago where we would be talking about hands-on, clinical supervision where 40 per cent of the curriculum at that university will be based on being in the classroom, clinical supervision, monitoring what is going on in the classroom and being guided by master teachers of the craft.

So when the Senator talks of not understanding, I thought I needed to put it on record, and it is a pity they are not listening and they are going to say it again because when we are talking about Vision 2020, when we are talking about a modern education system—

**Sen. Dr. Kernahan:** Madam President, I would like to have some clarification.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Sure.

**Sen. Dr. Kernahan:** Madam President, is the Minister saying that this clinical evaluation and monitoring cannot take place in the Teachers' Training Colleges that have been established and which have trained teachers over the last 30 years? What is the difference? Why does it have to be in that building at O'Meara?

**Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:** Madam President, again as I am saying, the Senator on the other side does not have a clue—[*Desk thumping*] she was not even listening. As I began my contribution, I talked about taking the level to the tertiary level—it is now a four-year degree, it is not a two-year certificate programme. She is not listening, Madam President. She does not have a clue as to what is going on, and it is not at O'Meara. We have used the existing campuses; they are at Corinth and Valsayn, exactly where they were, we have not moved them to O'Meara.

Madam President, if they will do some more research, understand more and listen, then they will be able to say what they have to say well informed, and when we talk accreditation, standards and quality that is what we are talking about, not just stand here and say all kinds of things that have no meaning.

Therefore I thought I needed this five-minute intervention to put the records straight. All that has been said about what is happening at Corinth and Valsayn is imputing improper motives, Standing Order 35(1)—irrelevant, Madam President.

Thank you.

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Before I get into my contribution, may I take this opportunity to extend congratulations to my colleague—who is not here at the moment—on his maiden contribution.

**Sen. Dumas:** “Yuh sure he coming back?” He must be so shame he gone home.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, there is a text I read and which I read over and over, it is called *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, and in that particular text—and it is worthy of you to read it—the question of deception you know, is a component or an element in warfare and I will show you during my contribution where we, in this honourable Senate, have been subjected to a form of deception. We have to get to the root, we have to get to the truth, and we must get to the bottom of this amendment. I do not believe that we have been given all the facts.



Madam President, I want to address the question on consultation. I want to deal with the issue of regulation; I want to look at that element called retroactivity in legislation which is embedded in clause 3 of this piece of legislation. I want to also look at the abuse of public resources by both private and state-driven institutions, and I think that for instance a forensic investigation will be addressed in my contribution.

Let me indicate to my colleagues that when we talk about accreditation, to emphasize the importance in the context of education, which is a weapon for liberation and emancipation in any nation—Madam President, accreditation is a tool used around the world to monitor, to assess, and to evaluate the standards and quality of the education a student receives at a college or university of higher learning.

**6.30 p.m.**

We have to recognize that in Trinidad and Tobago there are steps involved in this process of accreditation. I will not go into details. I will let you be aware of the steps such as preparation like self-examination, a major function and responsibility of this process; peer review; visits and examinations, another element in the arsenal; judgment action by accreditation organizations and continuous review. Accreditation organizations are held accountable for the colleges, universities and other institutions to which they grant accreditation status. They know that students, families, faculty administrators, government, et cetera, rely on them to review thoroughly, an institution's workings before granting accreditation.

I will pose questions because there would come a time I would deal with this emphatically. Today I will ask questions. We have to deal with—what is the truth behind this legislation? Is this legislation designed to facilitate the University of Trinidad and Tobago? Is this a Julien amendment? I ask questions. “I eh come emphatic yet, yuh know. Ah have it. Ah asking questions, Madam President.” Is this amendment designed to accommodate a particular request made by the president and chairman of the University of Trinidad and Tobago? Is it also as a result of the mushrooming of fly-by-night security firms—this time it is not security firms; it is learning institutions, higher—along the corridor or different areas of the country? They have failed to meet the deadline as outlined in section 29 of the legislation of two years. Are these PNM inspired higher learning institutions? I do not know. I ask a question?

We need answers. I hope that the hon. Minister whom I know is a decent individual—[*Interruption*]. “Doh” worry. There will come a time when I would bury him. No, no, no. Madam President, I am sorry. I withdraw that.

I ask the question, through you, to the hon. Minister: Was there any consultation before bringing this legislation to Parliament with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago? I would like him to address that matter to the Senate when he is winding up. My information is that the Accreditation Council never met and they saw this amendment for the first time a couple hours ago. I would like the hon. Minister to tell us in his winding up whether this was a unilateral decision taken by the president and chairman of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. He is just the flag bearer. I just ask the question. If he is saying that this was a decision of the Accreditation Council to support this amendment, I challenge him to bring the record of the Minutes when this decision was taken. The Accreditation Council never saw this amendment to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Bill.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Who is the de facto minister? Is he or Ken Julien?

**Sen. W. Mark:** It could be. *[Interruption]* “I tell him we would talk when I finish. When I done. Leh him take a note.”

Did a meeting take place among the chairman, Dr Janet Stanley-Marcano, the hon. Minister and the czar?

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Who is the czar?

**Sen. W. Mark:** Well, the president, chairman, de facto prime minister. I do not know. I ask the question. *[Interruption]* “You still in China. I in Trinidad.” I ask questions. We need to know whether the entire council met on this matter and I call on the Minister. We want to know if the entire council met on this situation and the Minutes of the meeting. He will tell us that when he proceeds. Remember he told us when he was winding down—

**Sen. Sahadeo:** Winding down.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I see you begging for applause; trying to mislead the people from Couva North and begging “dem to clap yuh. Yuh bring 300 people from Laventille; yuh take over from Waterloo. Begging for clap.” Ay gyul, doh go and fight dey, yuh know; doh go and fight Couva North, yuh know. Doh leh Manning set you up, yuh know.”

We are concerned that when we are dealing with very important matters—a graduation ceremony is supposed to take place or took place, I understand. *[Interruption]* You do not tell me it is repetition. You have to deal with the patrol boats. You have to tell the country how you spend \$12 billion. “Ah waiting on you. Jail eh nice, yuh know. You and the Prime Minister, jail eh nice.” Anyway,

Madam President tell him do not disturb me, please. I am addressing you and he is disturbing me.

**Madam President:** You are being very smart. You are trying to bring other matters into the debate.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am being provoked, Madam President. I seek your protection, please. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Madam President, I ask you to join me in referring to section 26(1) of the parent legislation. I agree that it should be legislation in Trinidad and Tobago. It should be a criminal act for anyone to pose falsely in the eyes of this nation as a president and chairman of a university that is operating unlawfully in Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister quoted and I will quote again.

“No institution shall carry on the business of post secondary or tertiary education or use any of the words...”

They used the word “university”.

When we come with funding, you see that Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. Conrad Enill, he would have to answer. He will have to tell this country why he and the Prime Minister allocated over \$600 million to the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) without any legal framework of accountability to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is jail! You cannot take taxpayers’ money, \$600 million and more and give it to a non-governmental organization! I have all the facts here, where the University of Trinidad and Tobago was registered as a non-governmental non-profit organization and we, the taxpayers pump up out \$600 million through the Minister of Finance for the University of Trinidad and Tobago to operate, and not a cent has been accounted to Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago! They should be sent to the Fraud Squad, the Director of Public Prosecutions! We call for forensic investigation into UTT!

**Madam President:** Let me remind you what I made a ruling of twice this evening and I am making it for the third time. We are not debating UTT, UWI or anything else. We are debating the Accreditation Council.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Thank you very much. Madam President, I go to section 26(1).

“No institution shall carry on the business of...tertiary education or use any of the words ‘university, college,’ ‘tertiary college,’ ‘polytechnic,’ ‘community college,’ ‘technical college,’ ‘technical institute’ or ‘technical university’ in its name unless registered under this Act and any regulations or rules made under this Act.”

It is our information that the University of Trinidad and Tobago is not registered. I am talking about what the Minister told us. The Minister told us that not one of the institutions that he met on Monday, November 13—he said that he met with the management and owners of all the higher educational institutions and they are not registered.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** They are 80 per cent registered.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Eighty per cent registered? It is a step towards it? *[Interruption]* Okay. Why are we trying to make this amendment? What is the purpose of the amendment? Madam President, let me go to section 29(1) so you can understand better why we are doing what we are doing.

“Institutions lawfully performing their functions in Trinidad and Tobago at the commencement of the this Act shall, for the period of two years thereafter, be deemed to be authorized to continue to perform such functions, provided that no such institution shall advertize or offer to the public any new courses or programmes without the prior approval of the Council.”

This legislation is saying that if you are going to supply or provide higher education training to the citizens of this Republic you have a responsibility to register with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what section 26(1) says. You have to register. In addition, we have to talk about accreditation which we would come to. We would like to know. I think my hon. friend Sen. Dr. Saith asked the question earlier. How were these people at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology certified? They were certified by the University of the West Indies in conjunction with some universities in the United States, approved by the University of the West Indies (UWI). In other words, they were properly accredited.

**Sen. Adbul-Hamid:** That is not proper accreditation. I will explain it to you.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Okay. You will tell me. Let the Minister in closing provide us with a list of all the management and owners of educational institutions that he met through the Accreditation Council on Monday, November 13. Let us know the list of institutions that you treated with on that day, or is that a deception as well? We do not know. I want him to provide the information.

**Madam President:** Sometimes I hear words being used in the Senate that can be considered very unparliamentary. I want to refer all Senators to this book in which there is a list of some of the unparliamentary language. You all have a copy and there are others that can be added to this. Even using the word “deception” where the Minister is concerned, you are saying that that Minister is deceiving the Parliament and that is unparliamentary.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Is that a word that has now been introduced in the lexicon? I have been a parliamentarian for so many years. I have never seen in the list of words that are unparliamentary, that “deception” is unparliamentary. If we are now inventing that, let us invent it now. [*Interruption*] No. I am not challenging anybody. I am asking the President if that is an unparliamentary word. That is all I am asking.

**Madam President:** Senator, I am saying that sometimes the way in which words are used, they can be said to be unparliamentary. Other words were used here today and I did not—I want you to be careful. Do not say that a minister was deceiving or being deceptive. That could be considered unparliamentary.

**Sen. W. Mark:** I never accused the Minister of deception. I was very careful. I never accused him. We need to get some hard concrete facts. We need the truth. Do not come here and try to pull wool over our eyes. Our eyes have been open from the day the former President robbed us of office.

**Madam President:** Senator.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Sorry, Madam President, but that is a fact.

**Madam President:** You know very well that that is not parliamentary.

**Sen. W. Mark:** All right. I withdraw. He did not rob us. We were removed by him.

Why must the Parliament agree to clause 3 of this Bill? We are passing legislation in November. We gave through this Senate the various institutions of higher learning two years to put their house in order. If the various private institutions and quasi state/private driven institutions did not put their houses in order, what penalties are we imposing? “Yuh know what he tell us? Yuh eh using de big stick. Yuh eh using de big stick, but when yuh were in charge of social development, yuh close down all the mediation centres. Yuh use de big stick because it was ah UNC initiative.” Wherever it is the UNC’s initiative, big stick; wherever PNM is involved, or institutions related to the PNM, it is the carrot. Nice. One law for the PNM, one law for the UNC. That is how it goes. We are not in support of retroactive legislation. We have no justification as to why clause 3—

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** One law for the PNM, jail for the UNC. Your time would come. All of you would be jailed. “One million in de paper bag. Hush yuh mouth.”

**Sen. Dumas:** It is a different ball game. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, I seek your protection. [*Crosstalk*] Madam President, can I continue?

**Madam President:** Yes. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. W. Mark:** “Stretch, leh meh talk nah. Minister Stretch, leh me talk nah man.”

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** The truth must not offend.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Hon. Minister of Local Government, allow me to speak.

**Sen. Dumas:** Always.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Thank you very much.

Why are we seeking to get Parliament to deem the legislation as being passed on July 08? That was some months ago. We are not supporting that. We want the Minister to be honest and straightforward with us. Let the Minister tell us all the institutions that are involved including UTT and UWI. We want all the institutions on the table of the Parliament. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** You could only do that in the 1990 coup. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam President:** Senators on both sides, Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh, I heard some of the things you said although I did not take note. Please Senators, down at that end. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. W. Mark:** Tim, I am very peaceful today. Again, my friend, hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid—

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** You should be in jail.

**Madam President:** Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sorry. My apologies, Madam President.

**Sen. W. Mark:** We will deal with Abdul at the appropriate time, this is not the time, as we will deal with many of them. Not at this time! [*Desk thumping*] We are dealing with the Bill. We have enough to send them to the slammer except one man, the AG. Let us take our time. “We not rushing dem right now. [*Laughter*] We eh rushing dem at all. We have the evidence on dem. It good.” Madam President, may I continue.

You remember my colleague said that the best operating organization within the Caribbean was ours. That is the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. He boasted. I ask my hon. friend: If that institution of two and a half

years standing, “drawing money, eh wuking, de Members, properly, that is,” how come they were able to meet with these organizations on Monday, November 13 to tell them how they must go about registering; what standards are expected of them and the requirements they need to satisfy, when the regulations under section 27(1)(2) are supposed to come to Parliament so we can debate and approve them to set standards? Can the council without the approval of Parliament go to institutions of higher learning and start to talk about standards of requirements without coming to Parliament with the relevant regulations for approval? Where are the regulations?

After two and a half years you have failed to bring regulations to Parliament. How can this Act be implemented and applied properly and efficiently if the regulations are not in place? You said in this Act that several provisions require regulations for them to become operationalized. We are asking. We love Trinidad and Tobago. This is our country. We love it. We ask these questions because we believe that it is important to get some answers.

My hon. colleague referred to the issue of accreditation and made mention of some institution in America called the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. He said that is the one they are dealing with in Trinidad and Tobago. It is one of six divisions geographically speaking. The body that is responsible for all of them is called the Council on Higher Education Accreditation. Why did not the hon. Minister through the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago approach the Council on Higher Education Accreditation? Why did you choose one out of the six? One out of the six is governed by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation. We raise these questions because education is life. If you mislead the young people, and as my friend, Sen. Prof. Deosaran said, it would be more work for our sleeping Minister of National Security. He is taking a doze, I think. I want to wake you up. I was supporting the point expressed by Sen. Prof. Deosaran when he said that your work would become heavier because if you give people false bundles of papers and tell them that they are qualified and now are degree holders, but in truth and fact these degrees are not properly accredited, you are playing with people's lives.

I agree with Sen. Dr. Kernahan. We can have 10, four or three universities. Let us get it right. How can you have a university operating when it was incorporated since September 12, 2004? We are now in November. *[Interruption]* “No boy. I eh travel as far as you. Ah must be getting a little older.” The reality is that I advise my colleagues that we have to put things in place properly. Just as the Minister of National Security will come before the end of this year to bring

legislation to incorporate legally, the Special Anti-Crime Unit that has been operating illegally in this country for the last three years, it is the same way we believe that the Government through the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education should move post-haste to bring to Parliament the relevant legal framework to properly incorporate the University of Trinidad and Tobago, because they are using taxpayers' money.

**7.00 p.m.**

Madam President, I know you will bring it. I want to indicate again to my colleague—we have to be very careful that we are not setting up our students and those who are desirous of higher learning for a heavy fall, and just as how we have appealed to the Minister of National Security for five years, to bring private security legislation to deal with these overnight security firms, I believe it is important that we take the necessary measures to have the standards and regulations in place and to effect them to protect and safeguard the interest of the ordinary people who are trying to access higher learning. Of course, the Government is providing some limited support in terms of GATE which was the Dollar for Dollar Programme but again, the PNM is so evil in intent that everything the UNC did, it just wants to undo. We have something call COSTAATT; they say they are going to Community College. We had something called the Dollar for Dollar Programme, they changed to GATE. We had a highway plan and they said it was designed like a UNC rising sun. It was never built. They built a pavement instead.

Madam President, I want to ask you—I could only, because I know Dr. Lenny Saith is a very—he is one of the most experienced men on that side and in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago, a very experienced person, and I know that if he had guided my friend who is very youthful—In fact, the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education said he was only born in 1969 so he is a very youthful chap, he is a very young man.

I am asking—I do not know—you cannot make decisions hastily and worse, go and have a press conference and put your two legs in your mouth. Madam President, you just do not do these things. Would you believe there was going to be an almost uprising, rebellion by the students and their parents last Saturday at the Hilton Hotel? When they read this headline in this newspaper, Minister Lenny Saith would never have approved this, and I am saying, even if they misquoted the hon. Minister, the hon. Minister had a responsibility on that said morning to call an emergency press conference.



Madam President, hundreds of people who graduated on Saturday evening at the Trinidad Hilton, their hearts were in their hands because the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education told them he is fed up, this thing is a debacle, he is getting rid of COSTAATT. And their mothers and fathers; the students spent three years learning and a Minister, just by a few words, because he did not think through the thing properly, he brought heartache and pain to people. But I was glad he was able to do some damage control because on that evening he told them without a written speech that: I, Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, who now usurp the authority of the Council of Trinidad and Tobago, am telling you your degree is good. Of course, they felt a little good.

Madam President, there seems to be a disease occurring in this Government that they do things without thinking and it is by “vaps” and at the end of the day they have to apologize to the people for their wrong. Why did the Minister make that statement?

Madam President, do you know what is sad? I saw in an article which was written by Gail Alexander in April 2004—an interview with the then Minister Colm Imbert in the *Trinidad Guardian*, where the Government at that time said:

The present College of Applied Arts and Science (COSTAATT) will eventually be incorporated into UTT but for the time being will operate as a semi-autonomous college.

That is what they said in 2004. It is written here. I am saying, as a semi-autonomous, but ultimately, incorporated into UTT. This is what our hon. friend said. He said he was going to disestablish; he said he was going to almost dismantle. I do not know this “czarism” that we inherited from Russia and is now being exercised by your leader; I do not know if there is a senior czar and a junior czar. But somehow, I get the impression that the same mistakes are being made. How can you come and tell this country—and I must quote for you.

Madam President, my honourable friend said “...it was clear that COSTAATT was ‘badly conceptualized. It was spread too wide, too far, and too thin’.” Explaining that Government did what it could to manage this “debacle” which its UNC predecessor left behind, Abdul-Hamid said the Government will “de-establish” COSTAATT. [Interruption] They said “dis”, and they are saying “de” now, so disestablish. Okay partner, you say they would “dis” it. And, if you see the reasons that have been advanced. It pains me but I know that a person like Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith must be going through trauma, heartache and challenges when you have these kinds of inexperienced people in your Cabinet. These people

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should be working as counsellors. How could you have people like that in your Cabinet embarrassing your country, embarrassing your Prime Minister? The Prime Minister on Saturday had to save the Government from this blundering and bungling, inept, incompetent Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. It hurts me because I have relatives who went to COSTAATT and they went through three years of training; blood, sweat and tears and when they saw this thing they called me and they were crying. They were asking me: What is wrong with the Minister? How can the Minister do this thing? It is hurtful, and that is why I asked the question.

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

*Motion made,* That the speaking time of the hon. Senator be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

*Question put an agreed to.*

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, to show you, for instance, how the bureaucracy has exploded and rebelled—I think it is only a matter of time for you all. Marching orders have been issued, funeral notes have begun to sound; the death knell has been sounded. It is only a matter of time for you. The public officers have revolted against the PNM. This Minister tells you on one day disestablishment, the following day the bureaucracy says, listen: “Applications are invited for the following: Bachelor’s Degree, Associate Degree, Diploma, Certificate Programme commencing January 2007.”

Madam President, that is going on until the year 2010, they are three-year programmes, two-year programmes. So they are telling the inexperienced Minister listen, you only have a matter of time. We only have you there for 10 more months and after that you gone, so we are continuing our programme. It is either he talked too early or too late. Something is wrong.

Madam President, I also want to quote from Gail Alexander, Saturday, April 30, 2005 on page 2 and I quote, because I do not want anyone, including my good friend, Sen. the Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams to say I am misquoting. She said \$700 million, she said I am wrong. I looked in the newspapers and I saw \$700 million. Anyway, I never went back to her; she is my friend.

Madam President, on page 2 of this report, and I quote this for Sen. Dr. Saith and my good friend, Sen. Conrad Enill.

“UTT received additional funding over (and above) the already allocated \$600 million.”

This is in black and white. It was never denied on Saturday, April 30, 2005. So the Government has secretly funded a university; it has no management structure. Madam President, if you have a properly constructed university in Trinidad and Tobago, whether it is UTT or ITT, would you operate from an engineering plant firm? Do you know where the administration centre or headquarters of UTT is? Trintoplan. That is what I saw here. Madam President, do you hear what I am saying? We do not have information. If we had information on where UTT's administration head office is, I would not say so, but this is what I saw in this article.

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Madam President, I suggest the Senator add that to the question he wants the Minister to answer. The Senator has a habit of asking questions and then giving the answers.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, we need to get some information. Could the hon. Minister indicate when he is winding up what it costs to run UTT? What is the cost per student at this institution? Could the Minister indicate that to us?

Madam President, I want to quote from an article from the *Newsday* of Tuesday, November 04, 2005. It is written by Joan Rampersad. It reads:

“Prof. Kenneth Julien, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), yesterday expressed pleasure that President George Maxwell Richards had accepted invitation to be the institution's first chancellor.”

Madam President, I do not believe what I have read, but this is what I have read, and I ask through you, to the hon. Minister, whether that is a fact? If the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is the Chancellor, is he receiving a salary for that position? Madam President, I ask the question, because I would call on the President immediately to relinquish that position and just remain where he is, as President of the Republic.

**Sen. Jeremie:** Madam President, it is a point of order, 35(8).

**Madam President:** It is the second time for the evening [*I had it opened at the page*] that the President's conduct was brought into question. I am warning Senators, please do not bring the President into the debate or question his behaviour or whatever in this Senate, according to the Standing Orders.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, this is an easy matter that we will deal with at next Monday's night meeting. We have no problem with that, but we are not querying the conduct of the gentleman, never. We are querying the conduct of Prof. Ken Julien in asking him to be the chancellor of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the man we are checking out here.

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Madam President, we would like to know whether the recent graduation ceremony hosted by UTT cost this country \$2 million? I would like the Minister to tell us if he can verify \$2 million being organized. I just ask the questions. We are concerned. This is a Bill that is very obnoxious, it is offensive; it is designed for us to almost legalize an illegality. Unlawful actions and activities have taken place in this country. The laws of the land have been violated. The laws of the Act have been trespassed. What they want us to do today is to give them retroactivity to legalize that. The United National Congress as the alternative Government of Trinidad and Tobago will never support criminal activity in this country. We will never support illegality in this country and we will never be party to any arrangement in order to cover up retroactively the illegal misuse and abuse of public resources by either private institutions or quasi state-led institutions in this country. You want us to support this? How could we support that? We could never go down in history supporting that. That is banditry. We are not part of the bandit gang.

Madam President, our position is very firm on this matter. Unless the Government is able to delete clause 3—and you see this four years, we want you to produce several things here this evening including that list that we mentioned. If you cannot, apart from the masses dealing with you on election day, you will not get our support tonight.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

**The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Sen. The Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid):** Madam President, first of all let me congratulate Sen. Sammy who started with a nice pleasant note and I thank him particularly for the brevity of his contribution in the context of what we have had to deal with here today.

I cannot believe for the life of me that a little walk from the Waterloo Community Centre, to the Waterloo High School could create such hysteria, panic and nervousness. I cannot believe that. It was a very pleasant walk I might add. There was so much love that greeted us, so many bright eyes and looks of hope and promise while all the while very quietly, they complained about some of their representation issues. But it was a wonderful walk and I am shocked at the reaction, shocked in a way and to some extent not particularly surprised. They are worried, because while they proclaim to be the alternative government they are, in fact, fighting to be the alternative opposition.

But, be that as it may, we have spoken about a number of terms which have been used today; registration, accreditation of institutions, accreditation of programmes and recognition. I do not think there was a better illustration of ignorance of these terms than when Sen. Ahmed spoke.

Madam President, I could not believe my ears. She said words like “mega list” as if it is a grocery list one is making. Mega list of institutions, and register; a simple registration. It is unbelievable that they do not understand what is required for an institution in the context of accreditation, a tertiary institution or a post-secondary institution to find its name on a register. It is not a question of you sending somebody out, they walk up the street and write down names and bring that list of names back to the Ministry. It is a very complicated and highly scientific process to which any institution would have to subject itself if it is to make its way on that accreditation list. There are criteria which will allow institutions or cause institutions to be deregistered. But in any event, let me try to treat with some of these issues as they relate to what registration is, accreditation of institutions and accreditation of programmes and what is involved and recognition.

Registration as I pointed out because that is essentially what we are doing, we are trying to extend the time during which institutions can continue to operate pending their registration. When we deal with registration all institutions would have to be registered. University of Trinidad and Tobago would have to be registered, SBCS would have to be registered, the University of the West Indies would have to be registered; they would all have to be registered if they are to be deemed to be operating legally in Trinidad. The measure is not intended to protect any one institution or the other. They would all have to subject themselves and the truth is, if we do not extend the period all of them would be operating outside of the legislation, but it is not—I am trying to explain the difficulty is when we anticipated two years in the first instance, that is where I think the mistake was made.

It was an ambitious target to try to do it within two years because it has taken us this long to establish the ACTT in the way that we now have to meet all the international requirements that are necessary and so we now find ourselves in a position to engage institutions so that the institutions can now subject themselves to procedures, policies and processes that we have developed in collaboration with international organizations, in collaboration with international accrediting bodies, and we will go through the process and determine who qualifies for registration and who will not. But as it relates to registration we are talking about the legal and regulatory requirements to make sure that they are established under

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some law; that they are registered somewhere; that they are registered with the Ministry of Legal Affairs; that the institution is, in fact, a legal entity. That has to be made clear. There must be proper governance and administrative structure, which means the ACTT will have to examine the governing structures, the administrative structure and make sure that it is in fact, meeting with the standards that we would have developed in collaboration with international organizations.

There must be a quality management system. We identified earlier a resource management system, an effective teaching learning process, review mechanisms, continuous improvement. There must be provisions made to continuously upgrade, improve and monitor the quality of the institutions. What this really says is that registration connotes that an institution has the capacity to deliver quality based upon evaluation of its quality management system documentation and a basic minimum standards threshold. Registration of an institution is after we have examined all these variables, we will determine that they have the capacity to deliver quality. Not that they are actually delivering quality but they have the capacity to deliver quality and on that basis they will be registered.

Accreditation of an institution is different. Accreditation actually connotes that the institution has the capacity and is delivering, and that is where Sen. Prof. Deosoran's comments come in and have been very valuable. In fact, they do take into account some of the variables he mentioned including the quality of graduates, the role of the alumni, a wider range of—because it is the quality of graduates at the end of the day that will determine whether the institution is, in fact, delivering based on its capacity that we would have determined when we registered an institution.

Let me explain how accreditation of programmes work. It is not that the Accreditation Council will sit and accredit every single programme. If there is a programme to be accredited any particular programme—remember we are part of an international network. We have access to experts from the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance Tertiary Education (CANQUATE), from within INQAAHE, from within the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools in North America and from many of the others, because they are all part of INQAAHE, all of them being part of the international network, we as a member have access to any expertise that might exist within INQAAHE.

How do you accredit a programme? You assemble a team of experts—it is not resident experts within ACTT that will accredit the programme—in a particular field.

If there is an electrical engineering programme to be accredited, we will assemble the team of experts which will, once assembled, have the responsibility; we will take experts in electrical engineering and accreditation of electrical engineering programmes from wherever in the world, the resource will normally find those resources from the INQAAHE network and then they will review the programme and submit a report. Yes, it involves the self-evaluation where the institution will demonstrate to you why this programme is, in fact, meeting the standards that you would have outlined to them and then you would get this situation where this team of accreditation experts will come in and for the specific purpose of accrediting that particular programme, they will work with the institution, subject the institution to whatever rigorous standards might exist and at the end of the day they will make a recommendation to the council and the council will approve or disapprove as the case might be, based on the recommendation of this panel of experts.

If a programme or an institution for that matter, is not satisfied in that it has been refused accreditation it can appeal and what will happen is the president, based on the legislation, will appoint an appeals tribunal. [*Interruption*] I did not say that was contained in the legislation. The president, because the president is the one who would have appointed, will appoint an appeals tribunal and the appeals tribunal will review the case.

If the Accreditation Council is found to be in error then the Accreditation Council will have to pay for the process of the appeal and the accreditation will be granted, and if the refusal is found to be justified then the verdict will stand. [*Interruption*]

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** He is misleading the Parliament.

**Madam President:** You have to say you stood on a point of order. What is your point of order?

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** He is saying that the President will have to form an appeal board. There is nothing in this Act.

**Madam President:** What is your point of order, Senator?

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** The point of order is he is misleading the Senate.

**Madam President:** Senator, there is no point of order that he is misleading the Senate. If you ask for clarification that is different

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** I am saying that is the process that is in place. In order for us now—accreditation is an international network. We must understand—what strikes me as surprising, is every one of them in here seems to

know everything about accreditation, and the only persons who do not seem to know about accreditation seem to be the experts; the people who form part of the International Network of Quality Assurance for Higher Education.

**7.30 p.m.**

INQAAHE is a world network. We have satisfied INQAAHE that we have met the standards that they have set for accreditation internationally. All of these accredited bodies throughout the world have come together and formed this network and we have satisfied them that we are meeting the requirements necessary to conduct accreditation exercises in Trinidad and Tobago. We have met that and that is connected to recognition.

We have spoken about registration, accreditation of institutions, accreditation of programmes and recognition. It is not that if a programme is offered at the University of Cambridge or at the University of Washington we in Trinidad and Tobago would have to accredit that programme if it comes here. That is not how it works. We will recognize the programme. Once any member of INQAAHE accredits a programme, then everyone in INQAAHE will recognize the programme.

That is why INQAAHE makes it its business to make sure that every member is able to achieve the standards required for accreditation. So, they accredit accreditation agencies and then allow those agencies to conduct their business. So every single member of INQAAHE conducts accreditation exercises within its own jurisdiction and everyone else will accept it. So any programme that is accredited by the ACTT will be accepted by the North Central Council or whatever accreditation bodies exist in the UK, in Singapore or wherever it may be. We are all part of the same network. That is how it is supposed to work. It is not that anything anywhere in the world we have to accredit. It would be ridiculous to imagine that the ACTT now has to assemble a team to accredit every programme. There are billions of programmes you might be thinking about—certainly millions. That is why the network works in the way it does.

We have set up an organization which is part of a network and, having set the minimum standards of the network—we were ambitious to expect that we could do that in two years, but we have done it right and that is the important factor. We could have done it wishy-washy, but we have opted not to do it that way. Recognizing the critical importance of accreditation, we have made sure that we have subscribed to the highest standards anywhere in the world.

Putting together an accreditation council is not an easy thing. You do not on July 09 proclaim the Act and expect the following day to have an accreditation council. It does not work like that; it takes time to put it together, especially if you



are going to do it right. Some people may feel that it is taking all this time because people are sleeping. That is not the case. It is a lot of work to get it done. I think the Accreditation Council has done very well. [*Desk thumping*]

On the point made by Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh about the Minister leading the ACTT, one of the criteria established by INQAAHE is autonomy, proper governance structure and ensuring autonomy. If INQAAHE were not satisfied that there was an absence of political interference, it would not accept the ACTT into its membership. It is satisfied that it is properly autonomous and that there is no political interference in the process, which is not what we can say to a number of the things that they were in charge of.

Madam President, I want to talk about the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and the University of the West Indies (UWI). By the way, every institution, including UWI, will have to subject itself to the Accreditation Council. They have to be registered and, I might add, my understanding is, from a message that I got earlier today, that the UWI has applied for registration from the University Council of Jamaica, the accrediting body in Jamaica. Because we have a regional accrediting mechanism and the University Council of Jamaica will subscribe to all the standards we talked about earlier, then we will accept the Jamaican accreditation for UWI as an institution.

We have set for ourselves a target where we want 60 per cent of students leaving the secondary school system moving on to some form of higher education. When we came in, it was about 14 per cent. Right now, it stands at 33 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] That is a significant improvement.

I went to UWI. Many of us would have gone to the University of the West Indies. It has played a valuable role in the development of the human resource in Trinidad and Tobago but, in 2002, the capacity of UWI, the total intake at that time, was just under 8,000. In 2006, we are talking about 14,000. To be able to expand and so on, within the context of what might be available and possible, they would have introduced evening university and they would have used a number of other mechanisms. Madam President, 14,000 higher tertiary education places are simply not enough to meet the development goals of this country. I thank Sen. Walton James for making the point.

On the question of capacity alone, we have need for more universities and so we have introduced the UTT to deal with the capacity question. There are some elitists in this society who are really not interested in seeing the mass of the people educated. They are not interested in opportunities. They are interested in a

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select few rising up, but as we create more opportunities—and some of them even argued against free tertiary education. If we go back to when tertiary education became a privilege in this country, it was in 1988 when CESS was introduced by some who were part of that political party. It was the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) that introduced payment for tertiary education. The PNM has always maintained free tertiary education and it took this Government to re-introduce it in 2006. [*Desk thumping*] We will always do it.

All the poor the Senator talked about poor, I was almost denied a tertiary education for a “scrutiny” \$2,400. That is what they and their colleagues, their political partners of old, did. In any event, we have set the target of 60 per cent of secondary school students moving on to some form of higher education, so capacity is a major factor. So UTT will provide additional capacity.

I will talk about the community college in a short while and the disaster—When conceptualized, the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) was a conceptual disaster. That is the point I will come to in a short while and show how that could never work. What we have today, from what COSTAATT has evolved, has evolved into a success. I will explain that.

With UTT, capacity is a major factor. Relevance is another factor. Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke about the governance structure of the University of the West Indies. There is a university council made up of about 60-plus persons. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has one seat on that council. My voice is equal to the voice of the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering; it is equal to the voice of the Deputy Principal of Mona; it is equal to the voice even of the Guild of Undergraduates. The Trinidad and Tobago Government is putting over \$600 million in UWI and I cannot instruct, guide or tell the university what to do or how to do it.

They are quick to talk about political interference. I understand that. If they are meeting the development needs of the country or not meeting the development needs, that is for them. The question of relevance came up and continues to come up. At a university council meeting, the Deputy Principal of the Mona Campus got up and said that there is a problem in Mona, Jamaica. Do you know what the problem is? It is that too many of Mona’s graduates are unemployed and unemployable. He was complaining to the Council. Do you know the reason? Relevance to the economy. The University of the West Indies, certainly in Jamaica, produces graduates who cannot find jobs in the economy because they are producing 1,000 socialists when perhaps they need 100, and they are

producing 100 engineers when they might need 1,000. If the university is not doing the kinds of analyses, then must the country suffer? So the question of relevance becomes important. It is the kind of graduate you want.

Let us talk about the Faculty of Agriculture. It was mentioned by Professor—not professor. He would love to be a professor with his 45-page resumé. If he gets 46 pages, he is still not a professor. He is Sen. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh. What he does for a living; I suspect he is a little too absorbed in his work. [*Laughter*] Think about it!

**Sen. Dumas:** Go ahead, “nah” man! Just keep going!

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** I did not hide in Patna for two weeks after the coup, you know. I did not—[*Inaudible*]

**Madam President:** Senators, let us not descend into this kind of thing. You should not impute any improper motives to his profession. All right, doctor.

Let us continue like you were continuing. I was enjoying listening to you.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam President, I would love one day for any one of them to say that outside there. You see that BMW he has. I would love one day for him to say that outside.

**Madam President:** Please!

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** He is threatening my personal—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam President:** Senators, both sides, one provoked the other, the other responded and the other one got annoyed. When will we ever reach a solution here? Let us all listen to what the Minister has to say, please, without any comments. And please, no threats!

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam President, the law is a very useful thing. They are protected in here.

The Faculty of Agriculture, three years ago, produced about 19 graduates in agriculture. By 2005, that dropped to six and most of them had no interest in operating farms. They were looking for jobs either back in UWI or in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. So the country was not producing any farm-ready farmers with expert training.

ECIAF, which they had put in COSTAATT, was producing technicians but they were moving on to UWI to do the degree in agriculture and then coming out and not going to the farms. What the Institute of Food and Agriculture, which is what we have established at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, will do is produce farm-ready farmers; people who we can say are hands-on, consistent with what

the Minister of Education was saying about teacher education; people who are specially trained to take 25, 50 or 100 acres and establish and manage a productive farm as a productive business. That is an expertise we need that UWI has not been providing. So UTT will provide that expertise. Can I, one out of 60, twist the arm of the University Council and tell it that is what Trinidad and Tobago needs.

We, fortunately, are in a position to establish UTT to make sure we have an institution that is meeting the development needs of the country. It is the same with the Maritime Campus. It will change ship captains. It will change engineers on ships. It will give us every single expertise that we need to operate in the maritime industry. It is about training people with industry in mind.

There must be an alignment of three variables. For any university, we must look at the needs of the economy and, having examined those needs, determine the places and programmes we have designed and the places available by the university and also keep our eye on the demand of students—what students want to do.

All three must be aligned and the university, being in the middle, must analyze the industry, design its programmes and shape the demand so that you encourage people, through correct guidance, to do certain kinds of programmes because they are relevant to the economy and there will be a smooth transition. That is what we are hoping to achieve with the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

This foolishness about whether he is a pro-vice-chancellor or a president or a principal is a different governance structure. We have established a board. The board has a president. It is simply a case of governance structure. We have a provost. There are different titles. Universities are made up differently throughout the world. If the Senator is so myopic that all he knows is the University of the West Indies, that is his shortcoming. There are other options. There are other models and that is what UWI has done.

In terms of the quality of UTT's programmes, UTT has been partnering with the best universities throughout the world. For our manufacturing programme, we have partnered with the University of Cambridge. For our engineering programmes, we have collaborated and partnered with the University of Akim in Germany, which is the university responsible for many of the innovations in German engineering, including the German motor industry. That is the university that is responsible for many of the innovations for Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Audi, Volkswagen; many of those companies. Many of the engineering innovations come from the University of Akim and they are our partner.

For IT, the world knows the capacity and the propensity for Indian universities to produce expertise in IT and it is the TATTA University out of India that we partnered with in designing our IT programmes at UTT. All of our programmes are carefully and properly designed, in collaboration with the world's expertise. They must understand that establishing a university in 2006 is not the same prospect as establishing a university 40 years ago. We live in a global environment. The expertise that is readily available today would not have been the case 25 and 30 years ago. It is a different world and they have not adjusted to the fact that we live in a different world.

The problem with the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago conceptualized in 2000 is not what it is today. If Sen. Mark would read the story, he would realize that the headline caused the problem with the *Newsday*. It said that failing COSTAATT must go. If he had read the story, he would not have gotten that impression. I did not say that failing COSTAATT must go. I spoke about it being disestablished and about a smooth transition and made a number of other points, which I clarified. There was no panic at the graduation on Saturday. I spoke at the graduation and I know what was there. The headline did cause some unease and it was easily addressed. Everyone was comfortable and clapped. [*Interruption*] Madam President, I never used that word "debacle". I do not know how it got in inverted commas, but it does not matter.

In 2000, we needed a community college. This talk about "our system with A level", it is the British system; it is the system that we have used. However, there are limits and limitations with the British education system. It has been accused around the world of being elitist; of only taking off the cream and leaving people behind. That is why the Americans have opened up their system.

Let us look at the community college and its place. Before it was introduced in Trinidad and Tobago, there was a situation where anyone wishing to pursue tertiary education had to have A levels or you could not go to university to get a tertiary education. The reality is that there are large numbers of citizens of this country who are talented enough and smart enough and who are able to pursue tertiary education but, for whatever reason—they may have gone to Diego Martin Government Secondary where there may not have been an A level class and they could not get into Polytechnic because the space was limited. Whatever the reason, for people with five, six or seven O levels, who did not have access to an A level place and could not go on and as a consequence could not do a tertiary education because they could not pass through the A level route, there are other routes.

Another route has been made popular by the community college concept where you move people directly from secondary school, through the associate degree route, a two-year programme, and you move on to access a tertiary education programme. So, at the end of the day, you do your bachelor degree at the end of four years instead of three years, as the case may be. That is something that was needed. So we endorsed the concept and the associate degree was introduced into Trinidad and Tobago.

The problem is that, with COSTAATT, they created a barrel. They dropped everything in the barrel and stuck a sign on the outside saying “COSTAATT” and no one cared to look at it after. What we have had to do is to go into that barrel and untangle everything. When they say that everything UNC did we have undone, Madam President, it is everything foolish UNC did we have to undo. [*Crosstalk*]

Listen to what they tried with COSTAATT in 2000. They took John Donaldson Technical Institute, San Fernando Technical Institute, ECIAF, Joint Services Staff, a number of institutions and they said you are all together and they passed a bill to establish COSTAATT and they said, all of them belonged to COSTAATT. NIHERST’s School of Nursing, and School of Languages, et cetera, all belonged to COSTAATT. So they mixed a number of institutions, without thinking about whether these institutions—the disciplines, the range of programmes, the levels of programmes, all fit within the community college concept.

Let us deal with the range of the levels. There is an institution offering an associate degree in management, in IT, in economics and purporting to offer degrees as well in management, economics, accounting, engineering and so on. In that same institution, they were doing introduction to air-condition repair and basic welding. What is required for managing an institution that has a philosophical framework of managing skills training, you put all the skills training in one place. We have decided to put all our technical engineering type training in another place and we have taken the other institutions, which I will elaborate on, and created the community college.

They were spread too far and too wide and too thin. The management capacity could not deal with that. They were asking the Port of Spain COSTAATT to manage Point Fortin GVC, where they do skills training, and it was to the detriment of Point Fortin GVC. They are doing skills training down here, while Port of Spain was trying to run degree programmes in management. They had agriculture programmes going on there. ECIAF was burdened under the COSTAATT arrangement because they never invested in the proper management capacity that was necessary to make that kind of project a success.

In any event, there were so many further complications that it is difficult to get to all. Even within engineering—there was an associate degree in engineering—the matriculation requirements for the associate degree in COSTAATT was four O levels in San Fernando Technical Institute and for the same programme in John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, it was five O levels. More than that, in the whole landscape, we had an associate degree in engineering; we had a national technician's diploma, which was being offered by TTIT and there was a National Examinations Council diploma; three programmes being offered by the same institution—a melee; no organization.

We scrapped all and introduced the National Engineering Technicians Diploma, a single diploma bringing together the best of all, properly accredited by the engineering association internationally. So we fixed the engineering programme. Further to that, we must also rationalize and streamline the institution. So we took all the engineering programmes and institutions and assigned them to the UTT, the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and the San Fernando Technical Institute. You take responsibility for NETD, for the diploma programme in engineering and the degree programme in engineering. Everything from diploma up, UTT you deal with that.

The skills training programme, the introduction to air-condition repairs; all the other skills training programmes, the welding and so on, which used to be offered at the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute we assigned them to the Metal Industries Company because they deal with skills training. We took that out and gave it to them and we will establish a band of technology centres, understanding the critical importance of skills training and we never in this country before had adequate capacity to produce technically skilled persons, so we are going to create that capacity by merging the National Energy Skills Centre (NESC) and MIC to bring a single governance structure, a standardized curriculum because all our technology centres must offer skills training in energy-related and industry-related skills.

We want people in Diego Martin to have access to the energy sector. We want people in Sangre Grande to have access to the energy sector. We want people throughout the country to have equal access to what the country has to offer, so we have standardized the curriculum. We will create a single governance structure by merging NESC and MIC and we will build technology centres across this country to ensure that we have the institutional capacity to offer skills training to all of the population's young people who need and desire skills training.

That is what will happen as we migrate the skills training out of former COSTAATT. With what we have we will create a genuine community college. The genuine community college about which I speak is what we have been working on over the last few years. It is an institution that is comprised of five divisions to date: a division of health sciences where they will give all the nurses, the radiography technicians, the pharmacy assistants, all the medical record keepers, a number of disciplines associated with the health sector. We have the division of humanities where we will deal with journalism, computer-aided transcription, criminology; a number of courses that we have designed in collaboration with the members of the security services.

We also have liberal arts and sciences, where we will do our traditional arts and sciences and a number of liberal arts programmes. We also have a faculty of creative arts and performing arts and foreign languages. That will form the core of the community college. I say the core because a community college is a dynamic and evolving institution.

The way any community college anywhere in the world works is that you partner with industry to develop programmes. The Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago needs training for aviation. Should they establish an institution within the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to offer training for aviation skills? No. They partner with the community college and we, using our expertise and experience and institutions within the community college, would design, with the client, the programme, as the case might be. In some countries the community college even trains firemen in the same way we are training nurses. That will form the core of the community college.

There are two things left to be done. One: the legislation will be brought up-to-date because the COSTAATT Act 2000 will be repealed to become consistent with the changes we have made between 2000 and now. Two: we must build permanent facilities for the community college.

We have proposed, so far, three permanent facilities: one campus for south Trinidad; one campus for north and one campus for Tobago. We are moving in the direction of creating permanent facilities for the community college. Cabinet has given us approval to start to do the preliminary designs.

Madam President, the future of the community college is very bright. What I said at the graduation was that the degrees will get the accreditation they deserve. I knew exactly what I was saying. It is the Accreditation Council that now has to come. I never said I would accredit the programme. I cannot. I am very mindful of that. They will get the accreditation they deserve. Look at the tape!



**8.00 p.m.**

I am mindful that it is the ACTT that now has to come and perform that accreditation exercise. The future of the community college is very bright. We are confident, having offered these programmes at government and a public institution, that the programmes will satisfy the requirements of the ACTT. That is as a result of the changes we have made over the last three years; upgrading the institutions.

At the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, they left a programme where the students could not have done the programme, because they did not have computers to do it. They required Apple computers to do the graphic designs. That is the condition in which they left it. We spent \$27 million to upgrade the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and \$25 million to upgrade the San Fernando Technical Institute to allow them to survive from 2000 to now. We have been putting money. The thinking, perhaps, is that we are creating a new streamline to the tertiary education landscape. I hope that the thinking Sen. Prof. Deosaran suggested we have begun.

The University of the West Indies represented the first revolution in tertiary education, but the UTT, the community college and other institutions, in which we are investing, represent the second revolution in tertiary education.

As it relates to medical education, Sen. Prof. Deosaran spoke about educating persons. Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh spoke about medical education. We have been working very hard with UWI to expand the number of students that they will accept. Last year, they accepted 120 students for the first year, which meant that many students with straight As did not get in because of the point-system that they used. We are trying to get them to increase that number. It is not that 120 students was their capacity, but they were taking international students. We said to them: "If we have a place available here and you need to take international students to maintain the international reputation and outlook of the faculty, no problem but if you can keep those down to a minimum, that would satisfy that requirement." What we did not want is their taking international students for economic reasons. Whatever the cost is—[*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. Dr. Saith*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Thank you very much. We have been trying and we said to them: “Set aside the economic cost, whatever it is, we will address that. We want you to expand your intake.” What has happened as a consequence of that is that UWI, Faculty of Medical Sciences, St. Augustine/Mount Hope, would not take 120 students but 168 students—a drastic increase; students with all As. All those students were able to access—  
[*Interruption*]

**Sen. Dumas:** No lowering of any standards, all As. Always coming and preaching thing about lowering of standards.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** What the Senator must understand is that the previous year, they were taking similar numbers. Those students were international students. We have been able to substitute international students with local students.

We have also negotiated with Mona Campus. You may recall in 1988, when they established the Faculty of Medical Sciences here, the Government stopped the subvention to UWI to go towards the Faculty of Medical Sciences in Mona and our students, if they were desirous of going to Mona, had to pay the full economic cost. [*Interruption*]

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** On a point of order. He is misleading the Senate again. The NAR government, in 1988, told the Faculty of Medical Sciences that they are not going to give medical sciences any money and that the faculty had to be self-sufficient. That is the fact. No government gave the Faculty of Medical Sciences, UWI—I was there when we were opening the medical school in 1988.

**Madam President:** All right, Senator. Again, I must tell you that misleading the House is not a point of order. If you want to make clarification that is another matter.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** My time is running out and what the Senator is saying does not make any sense, to say it mildly.

Traditionally, we would send 35 students to Mona. We would pay a subvention and the students would be required to pay the tuition fee. In any event, this year we were able to negotiate where an additional 50 students from Trinidad and Tobago would be able to access the Faculty of Medical Sciences at Mona. This year, the Government came to the agreement, fairly late in the academic year, and we were unable to send all 50 students. Next year, we propose to identify 50 students from Trinidad and Tobago, who will be able to pursue their medical degree programmes at Mona; the full economic cost to be paid by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Sen. Dumas:** They are fully qualified too, Gopeesingh. There is no lowering of standards.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** I agree with Sen. Prof. Deosaran, that the product of tertiary education must match the economy. That is the sense of what I got when he spoke and also that there were needs in the economy. I think that point may have been made and I hope that is what he was trying to say; if not, I apologize.

Discipline—what will happen with the accreditation? As we move forward, we would invite the institutions to become registered. As institutions register and they fall within the ambit of the law, it will put pressure on the others who are not registered, to come and ensure that they are registered, because there is a place for the market forces.

Students will be more eager to pursue an education programme in those institutions that have already demonstrated the capacity to deliver quality, which is what the registration process does. What we have been doing so far is helping private institutions to upgrade. When they apply for registration, they would have to pay a fee, which is intended to cover some of the cost of doing the exercises that are necessary.

Helping them is a facilitative process that is well established in the United States. Many of the accrediting bodies approach institutions that way. If we were to do it otherwise, we may find ourselves having to take an attitude where we are shutting down institutions, where it does not take too much effort on our part, or the institution's part to help them upgrade.

It is a philosophical point of view. We have accepted the way it is done in North America. We think that is a developmental process that actually leads to a better outcome, rather than try to penalize them.

In terms of the MuST Programme, Sen. Prof. Deosaran again raised the issue about certification. There is something called the Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualification (TTNVQ), for a number of disciplines such as masonry, carpentry, plumbing and electrical installation. There already exists a list of competencies. Within masonry, if you want to be certified at level 1, there is a list of competencies that you must have. Similarly, you must be able to identify the specific needs. There is a wide range of disciplines for which we have developed standards. That is already in place. We have already awarded TTNVQ certificates to persons in the MuST Programme.

A University of the Caribbean, as opposed to a University of Trinidad and Tobago—There exists a University of Guyana. In the US, there is the University of Texas, University of Delaware and University of Washington. Should they all be called the University of the United States? We can elect to do it this way or that. The University of Trinidad and Tobago is what we thought was consistent with what we are proposing to do. I do not see that we have lost anything. We already have a University of the West Indies, which is the regional institution. I think a University of Trinidad and Tobago is quite in order.

I have dealt with appeals. The need to expand capacity was raised by Sen. James. Yes, we need to expand capacity. Once they are accredited earlier they would attract—

In spite of 100 years experience of the North Americans in accreditation, there are diploma mills in the United States. Any accrediting body is not a fix-it-all for those kinds of situations. It is the responsibility of the student, at the same time, to find out which programmes are properly accredited. What we are trying to do is to ensure that the institution, the ACTT, is able to offer that kind of advice to our nation's students. It is a reality.

We have been independent for approximately 40 years and we are now in the process of creating some of these institutions. The US has been doing it for 100 years, but they have been independent since 1776. That is the reality of where we are in the context of our history. Yes, we would like to get things done quickly and, yes we are able to get things done quickly because of the international expertise that we can lean on but, at the same time, there are minimum standards that we must meet and meeting them will take some time.

Whether ACTT will accredit UTT? The answer is yes, they will have to. The University of Trinidad and Tobago will have to seek accreditation for its programmes, as will UWI, SBCS, the School of Accounting and Management and a number of others.

They spoke about inspectors. They are not called inspectors. Someone used the word "inspectors". We say "prepare reviewers" or "prepare evaluators". That is the proper term. I think I explained earlier how the process will work.

Much was said during the course of the debate. I thank everyone for the contributions they have made. What we are trying to do is recognize that we anticipated that would have taken us two years originally. As it turns out, we have spent a lot of time ensuring that we have established the ACTT properly and consistent with international standards. All the recognized international accredited

networks have recognized and accepted that we are meeting the standards. We are satisfied that we are meeting the standards because they are satisfied that every requirement that they have laid before us has been met.

Madam President, we are now in a position where we are ready to engage institutions and the institutions must now be given some time. It is not fair to say that the institutions have not gotten their house in order, because we were in the process of establishing the ACTT and developing the policies, procedures and processes. Now that we have done that carefully, painstakingly, scientifically and very importantly, correctly, we are now in a position to engage the institutions.

The recommendation calls for allowing, for a period of time—that is the outside limit. There are many institutions that will be registered well before July 2008. That is the outside date. Beyond that date, there is the penalty, discipline and the big stick, Sen. Prof. Deosaran, which will come in on that day.

Madam President, I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole Senate.*

*Senate in committee.*

*Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 2.*

*Question proposed, That clause 2 stand part of the Bill.*

**Sen. Mark:** We have requested, through you, that the Minister provide a list of all the private institutions and quasi state institutions. He has not given a commitment or provided anything. We have a real difficulty supporting him on that particular basis. We would like to get a commitment from him that he will provide to this Senate, a list of all the private institutions of higher learning, as well as the quasi state/private sector-driven institutions.

**Sen. Jeremie, S.C.:** The Minister said that he is quite prepared to provide an answer, but he does not think that this is the proper forum. If you file a question he would provide the information.

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is strange that it is not the proper forum when you are coming to present a Bill and not giving the information.

**Sen. Mark:** Look at the arrogance. You are getting like Manning and Achong; same attitude.

**Sen. James:** We would like to raise whether this could be reduced to one year or 18 months?

**Sen. Abdul-Hamid:** I hear you but, it is impractical to try to do that. What we actually have is that the Accreditation Council has advised us that it will take 18—24 months to be fair to all the institutions, in terms of dealing with it. We are really working with 18 months, as it is. Six months have already elapsed. We are talking about 18 months.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 3.*

*Question proposed, That clause 3 stand part of the Bill.*

**Sen. Dr. Gopeesingh:** We want that to be deleted. We do not want that to be part of the Bill.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

**Sen. Ahmed:** May I ask a question? I know you have ruled, et cetera.

**Madam Chairman:** Let me hear the question.

**Sen. Ahmed:** Is that not an absolute falsehood?

**Madam Chairman:** What is?

**Sen. Ahmed:** What it says in clause 3; that the Act is deemed to have come into operation on July 08, when it was debated today?

**Hon. Senators:** Deemed!

**Sen. Ahmed:** You cannot deem something in history to have happened when it did not happen. Is that how we falsify history?

**Sen. Abdul-Hamid:** You were never in government.

**Sen. Ahmed:** I want the Parliament to record somewhere that I totally object to this.

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

*Senate resumed.*

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

*[Continuous crosstalk and interruption]*

**Madam President:** Can I have some quiet please? Now, Minister.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, November 28, 2006, at 1.30 p.m. I believe that day is Private Members' Day.

**Madam President:** Before we take the adjournment, I think we have a Motion on the Adjournment.

#### Advance Passenger Information

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Thank you very much, Madam President. This Motion deals with the Memorandum of Intent in respect of advance passenger information entered into between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the United States and the implications for civil liberties and fundamental freedoms of the citizens of the republic.

May I indicate to you that at the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, which was held on July 06, 2006, at Bird Rock, St. Kitts/Nevis, the governments of the region signed a Memorandum of Intent between the Government of the United States of America and Member States of Caricom. It dealt with the system of advance passenger information. It was then signed by all Caricom countries, with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago, being chairman of, or for crime and security, signed the document when the Secretary of State, Homeland Security visited Trinidad and Tobago some time in late October. This MOI has been the most repugnant, oppressive, distasteful, offensive, precocious, outlandish, most vicious and unsanctioned invasion of privacy rights in this country.

When we examined this particular document, the Memorandum of Intent between the Government of the United States and the Member States, there were certain provisions or Articles that were quite revealing. What is important about this document is that it is organized to promote what is called, under Article 3, "long term partnership between the United States and Trinidad and Tobago."

*Advance Passenger Information*  
[SEN. MARK]

*Tuesday, November 21, 2006*

It goes on to say in Article 4 that this Memorandum of Intent would encourage and virtually confirm, in law, and mandate the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's commercial air and sea carriers, which must provide, prior to departure for, or from the Member States, as the case may be, the advance passenger information data in an electronic format.

It promptly forces these countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, to permit the advance passenger information data to be transferred to the Government of the United States. It does not tell us which United States agencies would have access to this information.

It goes on to talk about the establishment or provision of a watch list to facilitate the collaboration, which appears to be one-way.

Under Article it 5 states that the Government of the United States reiterated its intention to review the API data, any watch list information and any other related information that is transferred to it, pursuant to this MOI—If available, practicable and to the extent, authorized by the law of the United States, provide the result of such review to the competent authority.

We are providing API information to the United States Government and the United States Government has no obligation to provide us with the review of the information. It is a one-way arrangement, as far as we are concerned.

This information does not necessarily have to go directly to the United States. They will be coming to the Caribbean. How are they going to come? That would be through what is called, under Article 7, a joint regional communication centre. Under the joint regional communication centre, this particular facility would share information and allow this communication centre to meet the operational requirements of this particular Memorandum of Intent. The participants intend to have this joint regional communication centre staffed by customs, immigration and other competent officers acting on behalf of the Member States and law enforcement representatives from the Government of the United States.

This agreement, or a similar agreement, was entered into by the European Union and the US Government. The European Court of Justice, on September 30, 2006, annulled this agreement between the European Union and the US, as it relates to transfer of passenger reservation data from European carriers.

We have entered into an agreement that is going to impact on the civil liberties and fundamental freedoms of the citizens of this Republic. There will be an invasion of the Constitution, as a result of this transmission of API data, to



the United States Government. It will represent a violation of our constitutional right, under section 4(c), which deals with the right of the individual to respect for his private and family life.

If this information is not provided, you can be stopped from boarding your flight. It violates your freedom of movement, which is under section 4(g). It will also violate freedom of thought and expression. It will violate freedom of conscious and religious belief, because this will be ethnic profiling. They are going to target Muslims in particular, in this invasion of our sovereign right as a nation. It is the most offensive piece of agreement that I have seen entered into between any governments.

I wish to draw to your attention the items of categories that we are told—I was not here last week but, I understand that the Minister gave an undertaking that he intends to come back to this Parliament to complete the job he had started with the API, meaning that subordination to the United States Government, by this Government. He intends to continue the subordination of Trinidad and Tobago and to compromise the sovereignty of this nation to the United States Government.

We are not in support of any legislation that is going to put Trinidad and Tobago in a subordinate situation vis-à-vis the United States. We are a sovereign, independent republic and we are not prepared to allow our citizens' private data to go to the United States for processing purposes.

If you look at Annex A, I intend to make copies of this Memorandum of Intent available to every Member of this Parliament and citizens of this Republic. The Government has entered into this agreement without the consent of the Parliament and the people, and they have refused to publicize in the newspapers and this Parliament the Memorandum of Intent. I got it because I was at the Hilton Hotel that day when they signed this infamous document.

In this document, among 14 items, it lists traveller's name, date of birth, travel document number, travel document country and nationality of citizenship. Do you know what they wanted in Europe? They wanted 60 categories of information. They have now been able to force them to reduce it to 34. They wanted to keep your data for 50 years in Europe. The Europeans forced them to bring it down to 3.5 years. This Government, which is supposed to defend our independence and the sovereign rights of our nation, is prepared to sell out the rights of the people of this country for a mess of pottage.

*Advance Passenger Information*  
[SEN. MARK]

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Here are some of the items that the Americans are going to force us to supply. They want your ticket number, your seat number, the date the ticket was issued, bag tag number, all kind of personal medical history. They want your email address, travel agency address, your travel agent, your travelling itinerary and contact telephone number. These are things that they forced the Europeans to agree to. Whilst they gave us 14 items here, they intend to increase it to 60 items. These are the 34 items that they forced the Europeans to agree to. The European Court of Justice made that agreement illegal. They annulled it.

The recent agreement that was entered into expires on July 07, 2007. Here we have a Minister of National Security coming to this country and Parliament and saying that he is coming back next June, when the sunset legislation expires, to tell us that we must enter into a permanent arrangement to supply private, personal and confidential information to the United States Homeland Security Department. This is unacceptable, indefensible, inexcusable and we serve notice on this Government that the UNC will not stand idly by and allow the PNM to sell out the sovereign rights and independence of this nation. For what?

Why are you afraid of the United States? We are a sovereign nation. We do not want to be re-colonized by anybody. We are prepared to work with the United States to fight global terrorism and international crime. Why must you give them an invasion of our people's fundamental rights and freedoms? Why must we supply the US Homeland Security Department with private, confidential and personal data? It is unacceptable and I call on the Minister of National Security to table this Memorandum of Intent in this Parliament.

We warn this Government, do not bring legislation to this Parliament in the future, to give effect to these measures. The day the Minister does that, I would invoke that call for his full, complete and comprehensive removal from the Cabinet and the country as a whole.

In those circumstances, the only person who we will support to supply API information to, is him. Let him go to the United States and live. We in Trinidad and Tobago, who intend to live here, will defend our sovereign right as a people with no invasion of our privacy and individual freedoms.

Thank you very much.

**The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph):** Madam President, it is unfortunate that Sen. Mark was not here in the Senate last Tuesday where all of the issues—it is the same contribution he made in the debate.

In July 2006, the Conference of Heads of Government of Caricom agreed to a number of recommendations of the Council of Ministers of National Security and Law Enforcement. At the core of these decisions was the creation of a secure, single domestic space, comprising the nine host venue countries for Cricket World Cup 2007, plus Dominica, which has chosen to participate in the arrangements.

In order to secure the space, the conference also agreed, *inter alia*, to some of the following—It is a pity that I have to say some of the same things that I said last Tuesday:

- (1) enhanced border security arrangements with the following components:
  - a secure Caricom visa label to be issued after the prescribed security checks;
  - timely access to advance passenger and cargo information including the introduction of an Advance Passenger Information System;
  - real time connectivity among police, immigration and customs, across borders, utilizing common standardized E/D and customs forms;
- (2) the establishment and operationalization of a Caricom Intelligence Sharing Network (CISNET), strengthened by the establishment of a regional intelligence fusion centre supported by the participation of international partners;
- (3) the execution of a regional security plan involving regional and international support; and
- (4) the establishment of an international security assistance support group.

Member States of the region have come together to put in place a regional security plan, which incorporates a package of security measures to meet this challenge, while at the same time ensuring that our citizens and guests are facilitated to the maximum for the tournament.

The Memorandum of Intent, of which Sen. Mark spoke, as I said on the last occasion and will say again, is an expression of an intention to seek to arrive at an agreement on the manner of delivery of technical assistance in processing of advance passenger information, which Caricom Member States requested from the United States.

*Advance Passenger Information*  
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

*Tuesday, November 21, 2006*

The information of which I speak will remain the property of Caricom Governments. This is the basis upon which discussions are taking place. The United States is not forcing us to establish this system.

The Memorandum of Intent requires agreement on operational protocols, yet to be worked out. Negotiations are currently taking place at the level of the airlines and of governments, in the context of all national and international, legal and regulatory requirements, of which we are well aware. The operational protocol referred to will take these into consideration.

A level of processing of the API can take place without any relationship with the United States, but without such a relationship, we shall be denied access to information that may be vital to our national and regional security. As indicated before, we are not immune from acts of terrorism and the US with its focus on that activity will have more information and intelligence in this respect than other countries.

As I said and I say again: Are we to be the soft target while all those around us are taking the necessary precautionary measures? As others harden, terrorist activity will be displaced to the softer targets. It does not matter who or where these targets are as long as they provide a suitable stage for sending the terrorists' message. Remember, the region, and particularly Trinidad and Tobago, is host to considerable US and UK interests and those countries are major markets for the region's tourism industry.

Expression of an intention to cooperate—and that is all the MOI is. No action will be taken to contravene international, legal or regulatory requirements.

The judgment in the European court does not refer to the information that constitutes advance passenger information, but which is referred to as personal number records PNR. This information covers a wide cross-section of personal data including all ticketing information, seat assignment, et cetera. The API data is separate, different and distinct from the PNR data. The question of the European Union striking out the API information to which Sen. Mark referred is not correct.

As we indicated the last time, the information is to be electronically matched against several databases which we either own or to which we have access. The data remains the property of Caricom Member States. An analysis of the results of this process will determine to what, if any, security or law enforcement agency, the product of the analysis will be delivered.

The purpose of collecting this data is twofold. It is to identify high-risk passengers and crew members who may pose a risk or threat to national and regional security, whilst simultaneously facilitating risk-free passengers and crew at ports of entry resulting in significant time savings.

Yes, the Government has indicated that while the legislation is sunset, we intend, in the future, to extend it because of the Caricom Single Market and Economy, where there will be free movement of goods and personnel. Some security mechanisms must be in place to make sure that as we open up borders for free flow, we must be able to secure our borders.

Madam President, I thank you very much.

*Question put and agreed.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 8.40 p.m.*