

*Leave of Absence**Monday December 12, 2011***SENATE**

Monday, December 12, 2011

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan who is out of the country.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Prof. George Maxwell Richards T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D.

“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: MR. RABINDRA MOONAN

WHEREAS Senator the Honourable Anand Ramlogan 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, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(a) and section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, RABINDRA MOONAN, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 12th December, 2011 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator the Honourable Anand Ramlogan.

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 9th day of December, 2011.”

Oath of Allegiance

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OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Rabindra Moonan took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

WATER IMPROVEMENT RATE

(POINT LISAS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE) (VARIATION) ORDER, 2011

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George):

Whereas it is provided by section 11(1)(b) of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, Chap. 54:41 (hereinafter called “the Act”) that the Minister may, by Order, impose water improvement rates in respect of all or any classes of such lands and to provide for the methods of calculation and the times and manner of payment of such rates;

And whereas it is provided by section 11(1)(c) that the Minister may, by Order, vary from time to time or cancel any water improvement rates imposed as regards all or any classes of land;

And whereas it is desired to vary the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) Order, 1998 from 01 January, 2012;

And whereas it is provided by section 11 of the Act that every Order made under that section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament;

And whereas it is expedient that the Order now be affirmed:

Be it resolved that the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) (Variation) Order, 2011 be approved.

Mr. President, it is a pleasure for me to address this Senate today. I rise to seek to have the water improvement rate made by Order of the Minister, under section 11 of the Waterworks and Conservation Act, Chap. 54:41 which allows the Minister to increase the rate in a water improvement area. According to section 10(1)—I would like to take your leave to read the section of the Act that speaks to that:

“The Minister may, subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament, by Order:

- (a) declare any area in Trinidad and Tobago to be a Water Improvement Area.
- (b) from time to time, vary such Order.
- (c) cancel any such Order. ”

10(2) reads:

“An area shall not be declared to be a Water Improvement Area unless the Minister is satisfied that the area generally has been, or may be expected to be, materially benefited by means of waterworks carried out in the area of serving the area and unless such waterworks are for any of the purposes mentioned in section 4.”

Mr. President, by way of background, this water improvement rate was first made—the Order was first made by a minister in 1998 and that Order made under sections 10 and 11 of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act increased the water improvement—I should not say increased—instituted a water improvement rate of \$4 per cubic metre of water provided to the estate. Since that time—that is sometime in 1998—the water improvement rate has not been changed. So we are coming to the Senate today to seek affirmative resolution to increase that rate from the current \$4 to \$8.50.

First of all, I think I need to speak to the section of the Act that says that the area generally has been or may be expected to be materially benefited by the works that are carried out. So that in the first case, when the desalination plant was put into place in 1999/2000 it was to provide for the Point Lisas Estate to have a dedicated supply of water. Up until that time, Mr. President, the water supplied to the estate came from the Caroni Arena Treatment Plant and the estate started off by consuming about 11 million gallons of water and it increased over time to some 19 million gallons.

That meant that because the Point Lisas Industrial Estate was given priority, those 19 million gallons that were consumed on the estate prevented many of the consumers in central and south from having an adequate water supply. It was to eliminate this problem of the supply of water to the consumers in central and south Trinidad and to provide a dedicated source of water to the estate that the Desal plant was brought into being. In order to ensure that that plant could be put up and run, the Minister at the time instituted the water improvement rate.

That water improvement rate of \$4 was added to the then commercial rate of \$3.50 to make a total of \$7.50 per cubic metre paid by industries in Point Lisas. So that in 1998, the Point Lisas industries were guaranteed their source of water by the agreement that the desalination plant will be established. In accordance with section 10(2) where the area has to materially benefit from the particular facility that you are putting in, the desalination plant having been agreed to be put in, it meant that they would benefit from that plant, have a dedicated supply of water, a dedicated source of water and therefore, there was the argument that the Minister, under the Act, could institute a water improvement rate.

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In the current scenario one might ask, therefore, what new projects are being considered to improve or to secure the supply of water to Point Lisas, Mr. President. I want to tell this Senate that there is consideration being given to the dualling of the Caroni south trunk main. That dualling of the Caronia south trunk main will secure even further the supply of water to the Point Lisas area. I want to underscore this by referring to a recent experience that occurred a couple of weeks ago when the desalination Plant had to be shut down for maintenance work.

When the desalination plant was shut down, it meant that a lot of consumers in central and south Trinidad, Mr. President, suffered because they had no water coming to their homes. But WASA still continued to ensure that the Point Lisas area got the water supplies that it needed by diverting the supply from Caroni, as had been done before the desalination plant was put in, to ensure that Point Lisas received a supply of water. Again here we have the issue, as I said, of people suffering for water because of the Point Lisas industries getting priority. What we are planning to do is to dual the Caroni trunk main which currently supplies the original main areas going to central and south and including Point Lisas when the desalination plant is shut down.

1.45 p.m.

We have some serious problems with that main, as we speak, because that main which was laid in 1985, we are experiencing two problems with that main. One is that there are some leaks that are appearing on it and we are losing a considerable amount of water, and then some time in 1999 that 54-inch main burst. People who were around at the time and who lived in Central would recall the suffering of people during that time when that 54-inch main burst and was being repaired. For about 10 days people in central and south Trinidad suffered for water.

So, as we speak, WASA treats that main very gingerly and does not drive as much water through it as its rated capacity and as it is rated to take, because of that experience in 1999, so not as much water that can go to central and south through that main is being pumped at this particular time. So that the laying of another main that we plan will help to get enough water going to central and south and so assist the Point Lisas companies whenever we have problems on the line.

The other issue that I want to raise regarding the problems with the current Caroni 54-inch main going south is that there are about 224 persons/edifices along that Caroni 54-inch main, and what it does is to compromise not only the safety of the people who have taken to settling and constructing their residences and businesses—I think there is a kindergarten school and a church that are built on the main and which pose a danger, because if that main burst it could result in severe destruction, and it could also be

life-threatening. So this is also to alert those members of the public who have taken up residence on the line, so to speak, that they have exposed themselves to considerable danger. The point I am trying to make is that now WASA has a difficulty accessing the line to repair it.

Those problems suggest that we need to find an alternative line to secure, not only the water going to the people in central and south Trinidad, but also to the Point Lisas companies when their water supply is threatened or is disrupted as has happened recently with the desalination plant being taken out of service in order to do the refurbishing work. So I am arguing here for the imposition and the increasing of the water improvement rate to the Point Lisas industries in the context of what is stipulated in section 10(2) of the Act.

There are other arguments in addition to the fact that the industries in Point Lisas have a secured source of water. I want to refer to the cost to the Water and Sewerage Authority of the purchase of water from the desalination plant in order to supply the Point Lisas industries. When the water improvement rate was first instituted, the cost to the Water and Sewerage Authority of a cubic metre of desalination water was \$3.52, and that was around in 1999/2000 when the first supply of water from the desalination plant was supplied to WASA, and via WASA to Point Lisas.

Since that time, the cost of water has increased, and it was increased this year to \$5.70, and it will increase next year to \$6.72. Now, Mr. President, I should say first that the \$7.50 that was the original price has not changed, so that WASA continues to receive the same \$7.50 that was originally instituted as the total cost of water to the Point Lisas companies, comprising of the \$3.50, which is the commercial island wide rate, plus the \$4 that was instituted in 1998. WASA now pays, this year, \$5.70 per cubic metre, and next year it will pay \$6.72 per cubic metre. If we do not have an increase in the water improvement rate that we are proposing here, WASA will lose an estimated \$26 million on the deal this year, and it will lose approximately \$92 million in 2012 if there is no change in the water improvement rate that we are proposing to this Senate today.

Now, what that effectively means is that WASA is subsidizing the industries at Point Lisas in a situation where those industries are profit-making industries, and it is a bit unfair to WASA to be subsidizing those industries when it is making a loss, not only on the arrangement for the purchase of water from Desalcott, but also overall.

May I remind this honourable Senate that since 1993, the commercial rate that I have referred to as \$3.50 has not been increased. So WASA is at a considerable disadvantage, both in terms of its revenues from the commercial and the domestic consumers and also now from the Point Lisas industries. So, this is another reason we

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are arguing that it makes good sense to increase the water improvement rate to companies in Point Lisas in the context of the fact that WASA is losing money on this arrangement as it currently exists.

The question that one must ask is whether the State—in the final analysis it is the State that subsidizes WASA, and that subsidy has been rising over time. I think this year or in the coming year it will be in the region of about \$1.8 billion that the Government will have to be putting into WASA's coffers to subsidize its operations. So, for those reasons, we are saying that it is important that this water improvement rate be increased by the Minister in this new Order that we are proposing to sign, and which we have come to the Senate to get its affirmation. That Order will now increase the rate by an additional \$4.50 making the water improvement rate a total of \$8.50, and when added to \$3.50 in the island wide commercial rate, will bring the total amount paid per cubic metre by Point Lisas industries to \$12.

Mr. President, we consider that this is a reasonable figure, and we had raised the issue with the Point Lisas companies, and we held a meeting with representatives of some of the major companies on the Point Lisas estate, and they had put forward their views regarding the increase in the water improvement rate. I want to suggest, Mr. President, that if you increase cost to any industry, no industry will welcome it, and so the representatives of those companies that were in attendance at that meeting did not welcome the increase, and they put forward certain suggestions and views and so on having to do with how those costs will affect them.

They did agree that those costs were rather a small proportion of their total cost. They did also admit that after 13 years it did seem to be reasonable to have an increase in the water improvement rate, because the cost to WASA will be increased, and so they understood that after such a long period of no increase that an increase was really warranted and, indeed, it should have been incremental over time.

They also understand the situation of WASA, that it was a loss-making utility, and so it should not really be called upon to subsidize industries like those at Point Lisas. However, they did speak to many of these issues during the course of the meeting, and we agreed that while the imposition of the increased water improvement rate should go forward, that those industries at Point Lisas will sit and discuss among themselves and return to the ministry with certain proposals as to how they saw this entire matter of the supply of water to their estate progressing into the future. We indicated that we are willing to listen and to consider suggestions that they would make.

There is another matter I think I need refer to which has to do with the imposition of this increase of the water improvement rate at Point Lisas. Sen. Basharat Ali approached sometime last week to raise the issue of the jurisdiction of the Regulated

Industries Commission with respect to the increasing of this rate. He did suggest that perhaps it was really the remit of the Regulated Industries Commission to address any matter having to do with the increase of water rates throughout the country, and he did drive me back to the legislation.

What I discovered was that there are two parts to the rate, as I indicated earlier. There is the \$3.50 commercial island wide rate and then there is the existing \$4 that was placed on the Point Lisas companies as the water improvement rate in 1998, but the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act gives the Minister the power to declare an area a water improvement area, and, as I indicated, under section 11 it gives the Minister the power to institute that water improvement rate, so that under that Act, the Minister had the power to do the two things; to declare the water improvement area and to increase or to impose a water improvement rate.

2.00 p.m.

It is on the \$3.50 side, the commercial side, that the Regulated Industries Commission has the authority. It does not have the authority in respect of the Water Improvement Rate. I want to say to Sen. Ali, thanks very much for raising that issue, because if he had not raised it, I would not have considered it and gone back to check the documentation and the legislation. But the legislation under the Public Utilities Commission Act says at section 11(2) of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act:

“For the avoidance of doubt it is hereby declared that—

- (a) the Public Utilities Commission Act shall not apply to Water Improvement Rates imposed by the Minister under section 11(1)(b) in respect of Water Improvement Areas declared by him as such under section 10(1)(a) where such areas are classified as agricultural lands or industrial or commercial sites or estates.

At subsection (b) it says:

“(b) a Water Improvement Rate imposed under this section shall not apply to any residence situated within a Water Improvement Area.”

Again I want to thank Sen. Ali for raising the issue, but we have gone to check the legislation. The Regulated Industries Commission does not have jurisdiction. In fact, section 69 of the Regulated Industries Act repeals the PUC Act of which I spoke earlier. Fundamentally, in the instant situation the RIC has no jurisdiction to set rates for water improvement areas as set out by the Minister.

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Mr. President, I think I have covered the areas concerning the arguments for the increase in the Water Improvement Rate to Point Lisas' companies. I have indicated that the desalination plant is dedicated to supply water to Point Lisas. I have indicated that there are plans in train to dual the Caroni south trunk main to provide additional security to the supply of water to the Point Lisas companies, and those fall under section 10(1)(2), where the Act indicates that the areas designated as water improvement areas should be benefiting from either works that have gone in or works that are planned.

I have also argued that WASA is in dire financial straits and should not be called upon to subsidize the Point Lisas companies, as it has been doing in the present context, because the cost of water to WASA has been increasing over the years, but the amount of money paid to them by the Point Lisas companies has been static, and in those circumstances it means that WASA is subsidizing companies on the Point Lisas Estate that are profitable companies.

I have mentioned also that we have discussed the matter with the representatives of some of the major Point Lisas companies, and even though they are not pleased we are adding to their cost, they understand that it is a reasonable imposition in the context, not only of the time since there has been an increase, but also because of the financial state of WASA and the fact that the Government itself continues to subsidize WASA to the tune this year of \$1.8 billion.

Mr. President, One last thing I would like to say is that when one compares the cost of water to industries throughout the Caribbean or even worldwide, the figure shows that the cost of water at the Point Lisas estate is really competitive. I just want to refer to a 2005/2006 International Water Report and Cost Survey done by the NUS Consulting Group, which compared charges to business customers in several countries. That cost survey noted that some customers in Denmark, for example, paid US \$2.25 per cubic metre, and those in Germany pay the same figure per cubic metre. That is approximately TT \$14.36. In the United Kingdom because of the industrial tariff established by the Welsh Water Company, industries served by the Welsh Water Company paid US \$2.14 per cubic metre or TT \$13.65, which is also above the \$12 we are charging here.

In Jamaica, for the period 2009/2010, the rate paid by commercial customers was US \$2.09 or TT \$13.33 per cubic metre. So the proposed rates are comparable to the rates charged in a number of countries, and in most cases are competitive. I need to point in this regard to the reason I am referring to the cost to these

countries. It is because most, if not all, of the output of the Point Lisas Companies is exported. It is our view that the rates they pay for water here are comparable to rates paid abroad and so it should not inordinately affect the competitiveness of the products that these companies sell abroad.

There is one final point I need to make. Mr. President, WASA's cost of operation also has been increasing over time. It has gone from \$1.620 million in 2000 to \$2.135 million in 2008; of course this requires substantial subsidies from the Government. I need to mention that WASA is taking action to reduce these costs and to make itself much more efficient in terms of how it manages these costs. In that regard, WASA has indicated that it has set its sights on achieving the following goals: to implement urgently needed investments, to improve its efficiency, to raise its standard of customer service and to achieve financial viability. Mr. President, WASA simply cannot continue as a utility, depending more and more on subventions from the Government for its operation and survival.

I conclude by saying it is critical that we place WASA on a much sounder financial footing. In addition to all the arguments presented, that argument is also critical. While the Government is taking a lot of steps to improve WASA's operations, we in the Parliament today should also try to do our bit to ensure that WASA becomes a utility that is less dependent on the Government, and will not be subsidizing the Point Lisas companies to the extent that it has.

I close by saying that the money saved from subsidizing the Point Lisas companies would most likely go towards improving the service, not only to existing WASA customers, but in expanding and extending the service to those members of the community and those communities that hitherto have not had a supply of water. The more we save via this means, the more we will have to extend pipelines and WASA's service to the communities in particular that have never had a supply of water.

With that I hope I would get the support of Members of this Senate so that we could institute this new rate, this increased rate to the Point Lisas water improvement rate and ensure that WASA, at least, has a bit of a lifeline from this Senate.

With that I thank you, Mr. President, and I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds: Mr. President, I join and indeed enjoin the Minister on the matter that is gaining the attention of this honourable House today. It behoves me, to get off running, to indicate a very deep feeling that I must share with you, that this Government is a downright disappointment to me and no doubt to most of the right-thinking citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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This Government promised that it would be people oriented, that it would make decisions from bottom up rather than top down, as they implied other governments did. You heard the Minister; he moved what I regarded to be—he dealt with the issue in substance—but a very airy campaign, an air campaign as it were. He did not speak to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who must understand the rudiments of the thing. I am very, very disappointed in this Government and can say without fear of contradiction that this Government, in a mere 18 or 19 months, has completely lost touch with the people who voted them into office and all Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] They are moving around in an ocean of lies, as one writer described it; floating, bouncing around from here to there, and hurting people in this country as they go along.

Mr. President, the Minister managed to tell us that under his oversight WASA is proposing to double or rather dual the Caroni south trunk main. He told us that Government now subsidizes WASA to the tune of \$1.8 billion annually and if action was not taken it was expected to go higher. He completed, in my view, by saying that we—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: No, Mr. President. I did not say \$1.8 billion annually; I said \$1.8 billion in this fiscal year, because it had been increasing—\$1.4 billion, \$1.6 billion—until it reached \$1.8. I did not say annually.

Sen. F. Hinds: Let me continue.

The Minister also told us that we should do all that we could in this honourable Senate, and I am attempting to quote him, to ensure that WASA becomes less dependent on the Government. I want to assure the Minister that we will do just that. We will do just that.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. President, I quote:

“As the world charts a more sustainable future, the crucial interplay among water, food and energy is one of the most formidable challenges we face. Without water there is no dignity and no escape from poverty. Yet the Millennium Development Goal target for water and sanitation is among those on which many countries lag the most.

Urbanization brings opportunities for more efficient water management and improved access to drinking water and sanitation. At the same time, problems are often magnified in cities, and are currently outpacing our ability to devise solutions.

Over the past decade, the number of urban dwellers who lack access to a water tap in their home or immediate vicinity has risen by an estimated 114 million, and the number of those who lack access to the most basic sanitation facilities has risen by 134 million. This 20per cent increase has had a hugely detrimental impact on human health and on economic productivity: people are sick and unable to work.

Water challenges go beyond questions of access. In many countries, girls are forced to drop out of school owing to a lack of sanitation facilities, and women are harassed or assaulted when carrying water or visiting a public toilet. Moreover, the poorest and most vulnerable members of society often have little choice but to buy water from informal vendors at prices estimated to be 20 to 100 per cent higher than that of their richer neighbours, who receive piped city water in their homes. This is not just unsustainable; it is unacceptable.”

I quoted, Mr. President, the words of the United Nations Secretary General’s message on World Water Day which he delivered on March 22, 2011.

And right here in Trinidad and Tobago there are occasions when people without pipe-borne water must pay truck-borne service providers \$200/\$250 “a load”, as they call it. So, these circumstances here are very real. So as we discuss this matter today, the sociological and the reality background escape the Minister, but we will take note of it. There is no doubt, based on what we had just heard, water is critical to life, in fact water is life, and the world is facing serious challenges in respect of keeping pace for the provision of water.

The United National Congress when they came to office 1995 boasted, they promised first, and boasted to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, industrial consumers, domestic users as well, that they would provide “water for all”. It is in those circumstances, in rather excitable manner, that the Member for Siparia, and the Minister at the time, Ganga Singh, got on a platform in Siparia and scandalized themselves and this country talking about “pipe and pipe and Mr. Bissessar’s pipe” and all of these things. The upshot was, Mr. President, after that shameful display—shameless and shameful, depending on how you look at it—we wound up with them demitting office in 2001 and we were still a long way away from their promise and their boast of “water for all”.

Mr. President, the Minister took us through the rationale for the matter that is before us as he seeks to vary the Order to increase the rate. We are now going to \$12 per cubic metre, as he has indicated. WASA, the main stakeholder, the distributor, the provider for the consumers, is afflicted by low productivity. WASA, some will argue, continues to be overstaffed, and I saw very recently WASA took action to remove a

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group of about 65 to 70 young persons who were engaged under the NSDP programme inside of WASA, and I read happily this morning that the Industrial Court put paid to that, and told them because of their callousness that it would not work, and the youngsters continue to serve the country in WASA as they have. But WASA is afflicted with problems.

Just by way of an example in passing, and I want the Minister to take note of this; I lived in Santa Cruz up until about a year and a half ago, and right outside of my home there was a burst main or pipe. And I saw WASA repair that on no less that about 13 occasions over, I would say, a five-year period. And as they repaired it after a few days, it would go bust again. And it moved me to enquire of the WASA operatives on the scene one day, why is this thing continuing? Why is it a problem? And then they, rather embarrassingly, told me, in their opinion, the joint, the valve that they were given to work with is an inferior valve.

Over the last few years the senior person on their worksite told me that WASA has begun to purchase an inferior valve, and the workers installing these valves know full well that in a short while these inferior quality valves will go again. And this continued over time, and it is still continuing today because I stopped close to a WASA worksite about two weeks ago and I enquired of them again what was the situation, and the new crew of workers there told me the same thing. Do not be surprised, Mr. President, if the choice of supplier for these inferior valves—you are asking me to give way?

Sen. George: Mr. President, on a point of order 35, (1); relevance.

Mr. President: I will allow Sen. Hinds to continue. Of course, we would want him to continue to be relevant as well to the question. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Hinds: I told you they are out of touch. Conducted an air campaign; does not understand the reality of this to the needs of the people, and the reason for the \$1.8 billion of which he spoke, and that is the relevance, Mr. President.

So do not be surprised, as I was saying before I was disturbed by the Minister, if the choice of supplier is intended and focused so that some person or persons could benefit, and Trinidad and Tobago suffers loss as I have described on an ongoing basis. Do not be surprised. And I could have put that differently but I have put it in that way, Mr. President. I will come to it a little later.

Mr. President, recently, and the Minister alluded to it a while ago, the very desal plant, and I am just demonstrating some of WASA's and some of the—not just WASA—but the Desalcott operatives, some of the inefficiencies that afflict us all in Trinidad and Tobago. They had shut down the plant for routine maintenance, and they

told us that it would take about three to four days. The Minister is aware of it. It went on for about near two weeks, I think about eight or nine days, and that is just another example of the kind of inefficiency that the Minister wants to ignore, that he stands here to describe as irrelevant, and this is part of the issue that challenges us.

Mr. President, the government of the United National Congress came up with not a novel because the question of desalination plants was not new when they mooted it in 1995, but they came up with the idea to establish a desal plant in the Point Lisas area, as you heard the Minister say, to provide industrial water for the plants thereat. Prior to that, the industrial plants, they utilized the regular water that consumers would have ordinarily used, and that was really inefficient and it was wasteful so that there was a dedicated supply of water desalinated. And that was not novel as I have said, but a good idea. Point Lisas as you know, another very good idea, and it was novel in 1976 or thereabouts when the PNM established that facility and today that facility is the food basket, the bread basket of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Desk thumping*] very, very novel at the time, very, very novel.

We have boasted of high levels of per capita income, comparable to some of the strongest economies in the world, Trinidad and Tobago, largely as a consequence of what was done at Point Lisas under the guiding hand and the illuminating mind of Dr. Eric Williams and the People's National Movement, but yet this Government would say that for 40 years we did nothing, absolutely nothing.

We can boast of very substantial growth in GDP figures over the last eight to 10 years, largely as a consequence of efforts at Point Lisas, and no doubt savings, savings. This country has been able to accumulate savings largely as a result of that foresight, and I want to stand here proudly today and give praise and respectful tribute to Dr. William and the proud thinkers of the PNM as they embarked on that project which now works to our benefit.

But there are, of course, downsides, the whole question of water use, the question of pollution, the question of industrial accidents, and certainly the very present downside of corruption. As I said corruption, I remember Mr. Basdeo Panday; I remember him once telling me every time I got up to speak in the Lower House, the other place where I was a Member, all I would talk about is corruption, corruption, corruption. Well, today I want to speak a little bit about corruption because that is one of the downsides of all of this. The Minister wants to ignore, but it is a problem. It affects the efficiency of the operation. It affects the work of the Exchequer, it affects houses and medical facilities and all the other things that the State must provide because corruption eats away at the heart of the existence of our democratic and prosperous society.

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Hon. Senator: “You talking from experience, boy.”

Sen. F. Hinds: Oh yes, an experience arising out of the establishment of this desal plant 1998/99 thereabouts.

Mr. President, that desal plant cost this country something like—well the project was estimated at about US\$120 million. And I can quote from the *Trinidad Express* newspaper of September 11, 2010, under the pen or under the hand of Camini Marajh, and I want to commend her—Camini Marajh, yes. Let me quote what she had to say on this matter.

“In his attempt to retain an industry consultant to assist the State’s bid process on the planned US\$120 million desalination project, former permanent secretary and now Minister of Public Utilities in the new coalition government Emmanuel George, in 1998, wrote to a fictitious company, fronting as an affiliate of the United Nations, in the payroll...”

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds, please have your seat.

Sen. F. Hinds: I thank you.

Mr. President: Senator, the tone of—as I understand what you are saying, is that you are bringing into question the conduct of the Minister. You may not be allowed to carry the debate into that arena in terms of reference to the conduct of the Minister.

2.30 p.m.

Sen. F. Hinds: Mr. President, I want to assure you that that is not what I am about. In fact, let me say, to quell your fears and/or your doubts, Mr. President, I have not—I do not ascribe any corrupt practices to the hon. Minister. [*Desk thumping*] And in all of my reading on the matter—and I was just about to enter some of it with your kind leave—I give you an assurance, no one has accused the Minister, and the former Permanent Secretary as he then was, no one has accused him of being corrupt.

Mr. President: The question, Sen. Hinds, is not—please have your seat—whether he is corrupt. You cannot bring his conduct into question under the Standing Orders.

Sen. F. Hinds: Mr. President, with great humility, when I began my presentation today, I brought his conduct into play by suggesting that he made an airy-fairy presentation and did not hit the ground with it, no contact with the grass roots; and he or no one else objected.

So, Mr. President, I am saying to you at some point you must—I commented on his conduct, but not offensively, and I do not propose to do so now. So if you will be patient, let me just continue.

Sen. George: Mr. President, the Senator ought not to be disputing your rulings, and it appears to me that he is disputing the ruling of the President of the Senate.

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds, you referred to two different—I have no question. You may, in fact, seek clarification from the Chair in terms of the rulings, so I do not have a problem with that. On the other hand, you referred to the fact that you described the Senator's contribution as airy-fairy. You are entitled to do that; you are entitled to describe what he has said before this Senate. However, you may not go into questions unless of course you bring a Motion relative to the Senator's conduct. You may not go into his conduct on the question as you have been starting to go. Whether that comes from a quote from a newspaper or whether it comes as a statement by you, neither of those things is permitted in terms of bringing the question of the Minister's conduct into the debate without a special Motion on the issue.

Sen. F. Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, let me proceed. In 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, discussions were undertaken—an action was taken by the then Government of Trinidad and Tobago to establish a desalination plant under a company we call Desalcott. Today the Minister is here wanting to increase the rate charged by WASA to the industrial users who benefit from water produced by that desal company.

We are talking essentially about efficiency, we are talking about cost; cost of production, cost of sale and the Minister raised the question of the kind of subvention, the kind of subsidy that the Government pays as a result. And therefore, if I examine some of the inefficiencies, and I tried to demonstrate a while ago that corruption is a major contributor to inefficient operations of a firm, a business, of a government. That is all I am attempting to do. I give you the assurance, I am not casting any aspersions on the conduct of the Minister.

I also want to say en passant that Barbados was also the beneficiary of a similar desal plant and the records would show that they were able to extract from the producers of the plant a far more favourable deal than Trinidad did at about the same time, so there is a comparison. So clearly as I stand here, speaking as I should, on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago I think it is quite in order for me to reflect on those matters, though not on the conduct of anyone in particular. I might proceed. May I? Thank you.

In attempting to get answers, the journalist to whom I referred approached the now CEO at WASA, one Mr. Ganga Singh, who was at the time the Minister of Public Utilities; and also approached the then Permanent Secretary who happens—not my fault, I did not appoint him—to now be the Minister of Public Utilities. And the

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journalist cried on behalf of all of us, speaking on behalf of the fifth estate and trying to get questions on our behalf as citizens of this Republic, answers to some sharp questions on the matter and found that the then Minister and the then Permanent Secretary were very unwilling to comment and this is what the journalist is addressing here—asked several questions, some of which I will now share with you, and to remind you that no answers were provided to these questions.

The then Permanent Secretary, who only happens to be the Minister now, and if he was not here I would have been saying this. It did not matter. The fact that he is here, I am going to always be courteous and respectful to him, but it really does not make any difference. He refused to answer questions put by Camini Marajh. Refused. In fairness to him, he replied in answer to some of these searching questions, some I will raise with you in a short while. And I am quoting and not reflecting. I am quoting:

“As far as we were concerned”—

Now he is answering a question put to him recently in this article as I told you, published on September 11, 2010. He is answering questions put to him or at least responding to them. He said:

“As far as we were concerned in the ministry...”—

Meaning the Ministry of Public Utilities:

“there was no corruption in the desalination project, and I maintain that even now.”

In fairness to him, he said that. He defended the bid at that time to establish the UDeCott—sorry the Desalcott, [*Laughter*] same thing, but they only want to talk about UDeCott. They must be willing to speak about all, because I have often stood here and said “corruption respects no government”. Corruption is about opportunity and a lot was taken under their term in government and a lot is being taken now as they are in government again. [*Desk thumping*] But they only want to talk about UDeCott. See how he giggled loudly? So he said, he insisted that the entire process was “open and transparent”. He insisted on that and he maintains that up to now.

One of the questions that he responded to was whether the police got it wrong. Because you may recall, Mr. President, that the police got involved in that bid-rigging matter. And the police arrested and charged one of the stakeholders in that arrangement—and he is now dead, Hafeez Karamath and his company, and charged him for serious offences under this bid you know—around the bid-rigging that took place in this whole debacle.

So when the reporter puts to the Minister, who was then the Permanent Secretary, whether the police got it wrong, because the police went to a number of offices and homes and searched and obtained documents and interviewed persons and charged persons. One of them lives in Israel, a country with which we have no extradition arrangements and he has avoided the long clutches of the law enforcement authority, in Trinidad and Tobago in that way. But it is said that if he ventures out of Israel and goes to a place where we have such an arrangement, Interpol can arrest him and bring him here. So that matter remains outstanding. When he was asked whether the police got it wrong he replied and I quote from the very article:

“We operated the whole thing completely above board. I do not know what they were doing.”

He was then asked:

“Did he know Ben-Dak and Hoffman were in the payroll of Mr. Karamath?”

Now, Mr. Karamath, now dead was charged for bid-rigging along with Ben-Dak and Hoffman. When asked whether he knew that they were in the payroll of Mr. Karamath:

“No. How could I know that? I didn’t know that at all.”

In fairness to my colleague—and this is why I respect the article and this why I am quoting from it because there is no aspersion against him. He was further asked:

“Could he identify the point person or agency that recommended Ben-Dak?”

Because, Mr. President, you may or may not recall, Ben-Dak had purported to be the spokesperson or the driver behind a company that was falsely selling itself as a UN affiliate. When it turned out from the police investigations it was not, it was a whole scam and the investigation revealed that the unwitting—and I use that word decidedly, “unwitting”—Permanent Secretary at the time wrote a letter to Ben-Dak’s firm inviting him and thanking him for his interest in the bid for the desal plant. But that letter investigations revealed, signed by the Permanent Secretary, went to Mr. Ben-Dak’s company on the Minister’s letterhead. And I told you a while ago, Mr. President, that the Minister is now the Chief Executive Officer at WASA, acting in that position.

So the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would be rather naive or forgetful like the CEO and like the former Permanent Secretary if we forget these things and, in fact, having to face the same two persons today, having changed role, who was Permanent Secretary is now Minister, and who was Minister is now CEO at WASA, you cannot help but ask yourself things. And let me say going forward about WASA, Mr. President.

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Recently in the other place, in fact on Wednesday, November 24, 2010, the honourable and I insist honourable—I want to repeat that for emphasis—Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley, the Leader of the Opposition, a man who stood and faced all kinds of corruption allegations in Trinidad and Tobago and who came out after several enquiries and investigations unscathed, a man who championed the PNM’s and the country’s cause when this madness was taking place with that desal plant. He led the charge speaking on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago from the Opposition Bench taking them on, demanding answers.

Recently, as I told you, on Wednesday 24 November, 2010, he filed and presented a question in the other place to the Minister of Public Utilities who belongs to this honourable Senate, and let me, for the benefit of the record, run quickly through the question. It was as follows, I quote:

“Could the Minister kindly state:

- a) Is any officer functioning in a position, acting, permanent or temporary at the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) in the post of Chief Executive Officer (CEO)?
- b) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state when the position was advertised and in what media?
- c) Could the Minister also state:
 - i. How many persons applied;
 - ii. Whether interviews took place; and
 - iii. Who conducted the exercise?
- d) Could the Minister further state:
 - i. The person hired to the position of CEO of WASA;
 - ii. The qualification of such person hired;
 - iii. The total monthly emolument, including perquisites, of the person in the post as of October 2010?”

2.45 p.m.

Of course, as the rules of this Parliament demand, my colleague, the hon. Senator sitting opposite to me, responded in that other place. I am quoting:

“Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker the answer to item (a) is, there is an Acting Chief Executive Officer at WASA. The answer to item (b), the position was not advertised in any media”—and since it was not advertised—“the answer to item (c)

of the question does not apply—(c)(i), (ii) and (iii) do not apply. The answer to item (d), the person engaged for the position of Acting CEO of WASA is Mr. Ganga Singh.”

Who, of course, was his Minister, as I have explained to you, and they seem to have had quite a very healthy, professional working relationship, from my observations.

As a matter of fact, I have a beautiful paragraph before me in an article, published on September 16, 2010, again in the *Daily Express*, where the Minister, his yellow tie—reminiscent of the party he supports—flowing lustily in the wind; he and the said Ganga Singh as they toured a desal plant at Trinmar, Point Fortin the day before, that is to say, September 15. They seem to have had a very good relationship.

As I continue, he is answering the questions. He said:

“...it was agreed between the Ministry and Mr. Singh that the issue of Mr. Singh’s monthly remuneration package would be addressed by the Board of Commissioners when appointed.”

He is speaking on Wednesday, November 24, 2010. They came to office in May 2010 and up to that time the board had not yet been appointed. He goes on.

“I did address a letter to the CEO of WASA requesting that Mr. Singh be paid an interim payment. I am informed by the Chief Financial Officer of WASA that Mr. Singh was paid a basic salary of \$43, 000 per month, and allowances totalling \$7,000 per month, which was the same salary paid to the last Trinidad and Tobago CEO to hold the position.”

He went on to say:

“As part of its mandate, the board is expected to pursue arrangements for the recruitment of a CEO using a fair, open and transparent procedure.”

You see the words, “open and transparent” coming from my friend? I take them, I must admit—and I am not calling into question his conduct; I am calling into question mine. I am saying when he uses the words, “open and transparent”, I take it with a large amount of salt.

So it is my conduct. And we are talking desalinated. Mine? “I salinating, I ain’t desalinating” it when I hear “open and transparent”. Because he told us that the same scandal that took place with the establishment of that plant, which the police arrested and charged people for, he insists to this day that it was open, fair and transparent. I must take that “salinated”.

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This is a letter now. He wrote to Mr. Ganga Singh:

“Pending the appointment of a board, your relationship shall be to the Ministry of Public Utilities. Your appointment shall continue to have effect until the new board which is to be installed appoints a Chief Executive Officer.”

He closes off his letter:

“Congratulations and good luck,
Sincerely,
Emmanuel George,
Minister.”

He told the Parliament, a second letter dated November 16—and I am quoting part of that letter. He is telling Mr. Singh:

“In light of the delay in the appointment of a board, and the hardship you may be facing as a result of the absence of remuneration for services rendered,”—

That is the tone—“hardship”:

“I wish to request your organization to take the steps necessary to make an interim payment to you in lieu of salary and benefits in a sum no more than that received by the former local appointed CEO...”

Now, Dr. Rowley, with 27 or so years’ experience in this business, in the Parliament and in public life, he “ain’t” taking that so. He got up and asked a supplemental question.

“Mr. Speaker, could the Minister tell this honourable House who sourced Mr. Singh and placed him in this position? Could you identify the officer who sourced him and placed him in this so-called interim position?”

The Minister replies truthfully, and I call into question his conduct, but favourably. I commend him; he was very forthright. He answered saying:

“I sourced and placed him in this interim position.”

He admitted it. You see, he is not protesting? Dr. Rowley came back again with another supplemental:

“Since that was the position of you, the Minister, in sourcing and appointing Mr. Singh, did you, as Minister, consider for this short interim period, appointing any of the senior officers at WASA to hold on as Acting CEO for that period? Did you consider that at all?”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Yes, I did.

Dr. Rowley: And you found no one at WASA in the senior position that could have acted temporarily for a few weeks or a few days until?"

He replies:

"I felt that Mr. Ganga Singh, given his experience as a former Minister of Public Utilities, was uniquely placed to hold that position and hit the ground running as Acting CEO..."—

So, the board at WASA that the Minister spoke about on September 24, 2010 when he was answering that question, the new WASA board was appointed—my records reflect—on December 15, 2010, and he promised faithfully "in an open and transparent manner", when the board was appointed it would have conducted a proper recruitment process to find a CEO other than to have one in the person of Mr. Ganga Singh, under the Minister's fiat—because he said he sourced him and placed him there, unilaterally. The board came into office in December 2010. Would you believe Mr. Ganga Singh remains as acting CEO at WASA to this day? Would you believe that?

So this supports the view—my view at any rate—that they have a very close relationship, and insofar as their responses to Camini Marajh questions on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, they shared commonality as well, both not remembering pertinent things, not able to answer questions.

So I am asking the Minister today, in the interest of openness, fairness and transparency, to answer the questions that I will shortly raise with him. He has an opportunity today to answer them, and I want to begin by asking: why has not a proper recruitment process been undertaken for a CEO at WASA, when Ganga Singh remains there? [*Desk thumping*] That is one. And I am not casting any aspersions. I would never do that. I have been in this House now for about 18 months. I have acquired friendships; developed relationships with my loving friends on the other side. They love me dearly and I love them too. Who was it said they loved us the other day? Minister Volney, I think. He said he loved us. I remember once I told Mervyn Assam that I loved him and he said, "Yes, I know you love me." I enjoy your love too.

But, this thing is quite a serious and disconcerting experience for me. One Phillip Edward Alexander, under a heading "Taking Responsibility". The source is <http://plainlytalking.blogspot.com/2010/09/>—that is for the benefit of *Hansard*—published on Sunday, September 12, 2010. He is treating with this Government's blunderbuss, clumsy, inefficient management of the problem they, I admit, inherited at Clico, and the failure of the Government, in particular, the Minister of Finance. And Phillip Alexander—

Mr. President: Senator, surely, the question of Clico has nothing to do with this Motion.

Sen. F. Hinds: That was just in passing. I was just identifying what he was dealing with. But through the course of this writing on that Clico matter he asked a very pertinent question which I put before the Members of this honourable Senate. He asked whether, and I am quoting:

“Does past corruption of the UNC Administration be placed at the feet of the PNM also? Or does this UNC/led Partnership have questions to answer here?”

And he went on to quote some pieces from Camini Marajh.

Mr. 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. T. Deyalsingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. F. Hinds: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much. I really sourced this article to make the point. He says:

“One wonders if the current Attorney General has any idea of the true responsibility he now holds, or if he, as the Opposition alleges, only concerned with investigating and prosecuting members of the PNM.”

Mr. President: Senator, you cannot call into question the Attorney General's conduct, whether through reference to an article or otherwise.

Sen. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. The bottom line is, as I proceed, the Attorney General's office was given something like—we have seen \$200 million in order to deal with what he perceives to be corrupt practices, and I am just bringing the Government's attention to that.

I want to continue. In September 1998, a lot of strange things went on; I will call it that, and part of it was that when the letter of which I spoke, signed by the permanent secretary—very usually on a Minister's letterhead, something that no answer has been provided for—when that went to Ben-Dak's firm, a reply came from another firm with another name, and none of those things, it is reported, triggered in the permanent secretary or the Minister red flags or concerns to carry out an investigation, and, as such, the thing went through; the bid-rigging took place; Trinidad and Tobago suffered as a result. Today we face the very shameful international public image.

Recently we fell 17 points down on the corruption index, monitored and maintained by Transparency International—17 points down—and elements of the Government sought to blame past administration’s corruption for it. I am saying that this Government needs to focus. This matter is still unresolved. There are persons for whom there is still interest in this matter, and today we have a desal plant which is producing water in Trinidad and Tobago, unresolved issues around it; very much so; questions not answered.

Why did you use the Minister’s letterhead? How is it you got a reply? You sent to one company; you got a reply from another company and you still saw no problem with that. You went right along and they selected Ben-Dak’s firm to procure that desal plant, and today Trinidad and Tobago is expected simply to forget it and move on as the Prime Minister and the leader of that Government would very often ask us to.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. President, there is another reason why I want answers to some of those questions. The Minister is here, he will speak again at the close of this debate, and he should answer, because all the questions were sent to him. The fact that it was a police investigation, he insisted all the people involved were—and I am quoting him—

“All of the people who were working with me were of impeccable integrity and were acting properly, and I will repeat that publicly because that is what I knew at the time.”

And she asked again:

“And you writing in an official capacity to a non-existent company doesn’t qualify as questionable?”

And the reply was:

‘Ms. Marajh, I told you I do not recall those details. These things are dated, eh. You are talking about years and years ago. Memories go. To be fair, I can’t recall those specific details.’

The minister also had no recall of why he failed to complete and submit a score sheet in the bid evaluation process.

‘You are asking me things that I cannot recall. Specific details that I cannot recall, unless I am shown a paper trail.’

And these matters as you know, and as I come to a conclusion, led to serious charges including falsely pretending that the said process was open, honest and competitive.

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Two: the manipulation of the desalination bid evaluation committee, so that the grant of the water supply contract to the said Desalcott was predetermined; so these were serious matters that afflicted Trinidad and Tobago.

He was asked:

“So nothing in the bid process stands out in your mind?”

“No”

“And you continue to hold the view that the taxpayers of Trinidad got the best deal for their money with Karamath/Ionics joint venture?”

This is the Minister replying:

“If the bid were awarded to him, then that is the reason it was awarded to him.”

“Minister George, do you recall how Mark Austin entered the process?”

“Who? Mark Austin? I don’t even remember the name. ”

She told him:

“He was the man, consultant number one, who provided advice on the design criteria for the bid process.”

“I don’t recall the name at all”.

“You don’t recall the Austin Report?”

“No. I don’t recall.”

And so the story went. So I am simply asking whether now, after sober reflection, the Minister could remember some of those details. And it will do very well, notwithstanding some time has elapsed, especially in a Government that speaks about openness and transparency and corruption busting; especially in a Government that in addition to the \$52 million UDeCott enquiry accords \$200 million to the Attorney General to carry out investigations here, there and everywhere.

I think it behoves of the Minister and his colleagues on the other side to answer some of these questions. The answers are late, long in coming but we would appreciate answers to them, and until we get answers to those, your words of openness and transparency would continue to ring hollow, not only to me but to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who listen and who pay attention to the goings-on in this country.

So, Mr. President, my task here today was to say that I lend wholehearted support to the Minister, as he seeks—[*Crosstalk*—yes, wholehearted support—of course, we support it. Because, obviously, he has logically demonstrated that you need to increase the rates in order that you not find yourself subsidizing WASA more heavily in circumstances where the manufacturers, the plant operators, can easily afford it.

He made a very important point, as well, that most of the products that leave those plants are exported and, therefore, the rates would be competitive in terms of the international suppliers. In addition to that, it does not affect the local consumer. If these goods were produced and consumed and sold, traded locally, then one may have argued against it, because the pain that has been put upon the consumers and the ordinary people of Trinidad and Tobago, since the coming into office of this Government, is too burdensome for me to carry.

I would have objected to it, but I will not object. I will give the Minister my full support on this one, if only because it will not in a direct way affect the people. But this country has been brutalized by corruption, allegations of corruptions and, in a few cases, proof of corruption. And I think it will do well for my colleague and my colleagues on the other side to bring clarity to these searching but yet unanswered questions, if their legitimacy as a Government standing on the principle of transparency and corruption busting must hold good.

Mr. President, with those very few words, again, I reiterate my support for the measure that is before us and I wish to thank you.

Sen. Basharat Ali: Thank you, Mr. President. I am very pleased to be able to make a contribution to this Motion before us and I will not be taking my full time—I do not think.

I must thank the hon. Minister for following up when I spoke to him when this Supplemental Order Paper was first laid and I had my reservations. He indeed did checkup and verify it, but I did my personal verification. I am an Independent, so I worked on it. I did go through a number of things. The first thing I did was to go back to the Waterworks and Conservation Act. The hon. Minister did quote section 11(1) of that which gives the authority or the power of the Minister subject to the affirmative resolution to amend the conditions of supply or the rates. And he did also give the section:

“11(2) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that—

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(a) the Public Utilities Commission Act shall not apply to Water Improvement Rates imposed by the Minister under section 11 (1)(b) in respect of Water Improvement Areas declared by him as such under section 10(1)(a) where such areas are classified as agricultural lands or industrial or commercial sites or estates;”

Subsection (b) is important to in that because it says:

“(b) a Water Improvement Rate imposed under this section shall not apply to any residence situated within a Water Improvement Area. ”

So having read that, I have to say that not too long after that the Public Utilities Commission was dissolved and replaced by the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC). And this is one of the things which prompted me really, I thought they came under the Public Utilities Commission—they did—but this was exempting them from the Public Utilities Commission—they are no longer there. I do not think anything was saved from this into the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) so really, from that point of view it is free. So I did then go into the Regulated Industries Commission Act to determine whether anything there would or should have gone to the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) before coming to Parliament in terms of the same matter of changes in the rate of these so-called water improvement areas.

Examining the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) Act, I found nowhere the Commission had any direct action to take in respect of fixing of a rate, but they do have an oversight role and that is given in section 6(1) of the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) Act. And under 6(1) there are about three paragraphs which apply. The start of that says:

“6(1) The Commission may have and exercise such functions, powers and duties as are imposed on it by” this Act and in particular...”

A series of items going (a) down to (n) I believe, but from the point of view of what we are doing today there are three items which I thought were relevant. And item (h) says:

“(h) establish the principles and methodologies by which service providers determine rates for services;”

And WASA is a service provider, by the way.

“(i) monitor rates charged by service providers to ensure compliance with the principles established under paragraph (h);”

that is the guidelines and methodologies.

(j) carry out periodic reviews of the rating regimes of the service providers;”

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Having looked at the Act, I have not seen any supporting regulations, et cetera, which address this question of setting guidelines and principles. So after looking at it overall I came to the conclusion and I was satisfied that we could indeed debate this Motion, the Water Improvement Rate Motion which we have before us.

So I concur with what the Minister has said, and I therefore proceed to look at what is in the debate itself. Since this Order is quite old—in fact, in terms of time the Order is dated November 10, 1997, the Water Improvement Point Lisas Industrial Estate Order, and there are two items there—and I have a little problem there—more for information and for updating.

As it relates to the schedule, a schedule of that same Order gives the boundaries of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. And it says, on the north by Waterloo Road, on the south by the area designated as reclamation area, on the east by the old Southern Main Road, and on the west by the Gulf of Paria. Well the fourth, I do not think we can question at all the west boundary is easy. That is the Gulf of Paria and that is fixed. But I did have some questions on the first northern boundary, Waterloo Road.

From my little knowledge of the geography of that area—and I did work in that area—Waterloo Road is quite a bit away from the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. I thought more logically we would have been looking at Carli Bay Road, which is the extension from the Southern Main Road through the Couva Main Road right down to Carli Bay. But I am advised that if they did that, then they would exclude one fairly substantial entity and that is what is now called Point Lisas Nitrogen Ltd which at that time was not in existence, I do not think, and if it was it would have been called Farmland Miss Chem ammonia manufacturing company Miss Chem or words to that affect, but today it is called Point Lisas Nitrogen Ltd.

So from that point of view they have gone to Waterloo Road so one has to be very careful as to what entities are coming into it which is deemed to be part of this schedule. There is a map attached to it. I cannot read the map, it is so small, but perhaps we should have gotten a blown up map then come here so we can talk sensibly about what these boundaries are.

So I am advised that that one entity, the ammonia manufacturing facility, would fall outside north of Carli Bay. Having chosen Waterloo Road as the mark, Waterloo Road I think starts in the Freeport area or something like that, straight across—my geography is not very good. So I would like—I am still to look at it to see what facilities come from Waterloo Road down.

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3.15 p.m.

So, I would like still to look at it to see what facilities come from Waterloo Bay or from Waterloo Road down, because this rate matter gives you the ability to change rates or to apply these rates for commercial entities so when you look at it, there are lots of commercial entities, probably north of Cali Bay Road, and one has to then look at it and see whether they really come under the rate also.

Now, I go to the east boundary. They say the east boundary is the old Southern Main Road—I think most of us know that—but there is another facility which is there and which will not be captured by this schedule and that is Trinity Power generation which was called InnCogen at a time. So, I am asking that we look at it because we cannot have PowerGen paying these new rates and InnCogen, which is now called Trinity Power generation, being outside of the area and you cannot really—I do not know how you can then decide whether you can impose a rate on them. So I ask the hon. Minister to look at that one.

Also, by the choice of the Southern Main Road, going down the Southern Main Road with your boundary leaves the eastern side not covered. I believe it has been for some time now the intent to develop sites on the eastern side, on the same side like sugar manufacturing and things like that. So I want to make sure that we act equitably when we do it—that we do not have some entities coming in and some entities not coming in under this new Order which has come to us.

If I go now to the south border in the schedule—that is the one that I say refers to a reclamation area—it would appear to me that there you have a different problem that within that area is PPGPL—which is Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited—I believe they have a lease in fact with Plipdeco Estate, so they are in. But what about further south where the Yara facility is the former Federation Chemical Facility, are they exempted from these Orders? Once again, what you see, equitable arrangements for all, ammonia manufacturing by Tringen and Yara for plants as against the same facilities, methanol ammonia plants further north. So down that end there, we need to look at and see whether we need to do something about it to capture that area.

So that is what I would have liked to see being looked at. I do not think it should deter us from making a decision today but it is worth “re-looking” at this schedule in terms of where the demarcation is, and indeed, we may capture some additional companies which should be paying a higher rate than they are paying. That is what I have to say about all the boundaries.

My question refers to the next item that I wanted to talk about—the Desalcott contract—I am not talking about all that my learned colleague talked about, I just want to know what the Desalcott prices are. But, from my investigation, it would appear that the price for desalinated water should have been about equivalent to 0.70 cents for a cubic metre which comes close to \$4.50. And Desalcott came into operation after that because I believe the Desalcott contract covers a period 2000/2024. So once again, I know you gave us some numbers, hon. Minister, and you gave us \$5.70 as a 2011 figure for Desalcott water and 2012, \$6.72. Well, that is close to what I saw was a start price—\$7 per cubic metre.

I am aware that there are a number of variations that can be brought in within this long contract—all of which will tend to increase the price; prices never go down. So, I would have liked to have some confirmation on what that Desalcott price is because it is not covered [*Interruption*]

Sen. George: The current price is about 0.89 cents per cubic metre.

Sen. B. Ali: So, as I said, it is a contractual arrangement and I think each government has kept with it. So, we will have to decide what the current prices are. I would like to know current prices based on past reviews due to the contract because the contract is now 11 years old. So we need to look at it and compare it to what this rate is going to be.

Mr. President, the proposed price adjustment of \$8.50 per cubic metre is a substantial increase—112 per cent in my calculation based on the \$4 that we have at the moment. I gathered and I expected that that proposed increase will not have gone down well with the current companies which are engaged in manufacturing within the estate. But right now they would not make too much of a fuss because the prices of products like methanol and ammonia are very, very buoyant. My last check on that—and the hon. Minister can correct me—the last ammonia price that I saw was US \$650 to US \$655 per tonne delivered in Tampa, Florida, which is a very good price; high price. And for the month of December, the methanol posted price in the US is as small as US \$459 per metric tonne and this is a posted price and it is delivered.

So buoyant prices, but I always have to ask: what happens when they start falling? I started my life in Point Lisas and I did two projects there and the prices were very good, and by the time the plants were ready to be started, prices were going down, down, down and down to the extent—I remember for the urea plant, I was asked by the then government which came in 1987—I think it was the NAR Government—I was asked to study what should we do with the urea plant, and I could have come to no conclusion but to mothball it because we were losing a lot of money. I said, “Well, the

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only thing that we can do is mothball it”, and that solution was not politically acceptable, and within a couple of years the price started to go up. So that is what the business is about—petrochemical business and other businesses like that—and I am sure the Minister will consider it also when we look at LNG, for example, in the US. It has gone down to below \$4 today, and we have to look for alternative markets for LNG from Atlantic LNG.

So, I would like us to really get down to our brass tacks on this one so that we can justify this increase. As I said, it is not a big thing now. If you are getting \$600-plus a tonne for ammonia, it is not much but there are the smaller people who might be affected by it. And I say that we must not kill the goose that lays the golden egg and this is important. So that when we do impose such a big increase in one fell swoop, then we must be able to look at it again if needs be as we go along. So variations are either up or down so that is where we are.

Mr. President, I do not believe that price increase is going to do very much to solve WASA’s problems. I have said here in my notes, it is only a temporary plaster on a deepwound and I hold to that view because of a number of reasons. If you remember, Mr. President, some of us will certainly remember, there was a proposal by the previous administration to build four desalination plants—east, west, north and south—to cover Trinidad.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Five.

Sen. B. Ali: It is either five or four; my friend here says five.

Sen. Al-Rawi: One in Tobago.

Sen. B. Ali: Well, I did not count Tobago; Tobago will make it the five. I am talking about Trinidad right now; that is why I said four. Tobago is a different matter. I did not look at that one. But I think that is not the problem. Mr. President, it has been there for a long time and with your permission I would like to refer to what I said in the Appropriation Bill 2009 Budget debate, Wednesday, October 08, 2008 and if I may quote part of it, Mr. President, I said:

“Mr. Vice-President, I want to speak briefly to the Ministry of Public Utilities programme. I have a certain unhappiness with the programme of the four desalination plants; the extension Arena Dam, which I know is one of your projects; the new Moruga Dams which are surface water collectors, but the four desalinators which are located in Ortoire, Chaguaramas, Point Fortin and Point Lisas, I do not see how they are going to work when we cannot account for 50 per cent of the water that is being produced. All these contracts are going to be on the basis of design/build/own and sell water to WASA. All I can see is more water being wasted...”

And the reason for the wastage is the condition of the piping. Piping, 50 year-old plus trunk lines, and I believe what we should be spending money there now—I do not think that these desalination plants are on the agenda of the present Government—but what we need to be doing is spending money to repair all those lines—replace a lot of them—some of them are 100 years old. [*Interruption*] And you have to do something about it. We all know how many leakages there are. If you drive with your eyes closed you will not be able to see it—you cannot drive with your eyes closed—but that is the number one problem of WASA—the amount of loss. Even putting a new term on that amount of the loss, et cetera—UFW—if I said, “UFW”, I wonder if anybody will know what that is—that is “Unaccounted For Water”. So that large figure there is taken out of the protection and added to the demand, and therefore you often see a figure. That is why I am speaking of the 40, 50 per cent—that is what we have to get down to, to correct, to fix. We also have to be very inventive and creative, Mr. President.

I know for WASA in the previous administration, the consultant Genivar did a huge plan. It was called water and wastewater management plan for WASA.

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It is a huge document. I do not think it ever saw the light of day in the open, but I have seen it. It is a huge document and gratuitously that finds itself in the desalination plan. There is no explanation. All they did was summary and conclusion at the beginning. They just bring that in and they just mentioned that we have a lot of leaks and things like that—no work on it. I am sure we paid a lot of our funds to Genivar to get that study going. I speak about that quite openly. I said all these things in my contribution. In talking about that, I think at that time they were proposing a national grid for water, based on desalination.

We should get our feet on the ground—this is a quotation in WASA—and repair those trunk mains that are leaking. That was my statement in October 2008. We have the Navet Dam pipeline which was shut down in the whole of south, as far as I read yesterday. I do not even know, when I was writing this. All these leaks we see every day. Who does not see a leak must be driving with his head or eyes closed. We do not want to have desalinators there and the pumps are on and we are just wasting the water. I am staying with that view today. I am very much staying with the view that we have to do that. It is no use getting more production capacity when you are losing it all in the distribution system. Stop thinking about anything like desalinators.

On the same subject, I know that in the previous administration they spent quite a bit of money on the wastewater treatment. That was a large amount of water. I think it was on the Beetham Estate where they erected a plant and they were getting it going. It

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is a commendable project. In fact, providers can take it to where it can be used. Many countries use treated wastewater. Singapore, for example, buys fresh water from Malaysia and uses it. Then they come back and they treat the wastewater and include part of it into their potable water system. I am not saying we need to do that, but we need to have the system from Beetham Estate. I do not know the condition of the plant at the moment, but those are ways to make sure that you can spread and use your water more efficiently, otherwise all we will be doing is spending money, spending money, spending money. As I say, we will be spinning top in mud if we continue like that.

I speak to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities on this matter. We need very much to look at WASA and make sure that they are getting a programme of repairs on trunk lines. That line, which is supposed to go from Beetham to Point Lisas to replace some of the potable water that is being used as industrial water on the estate, I think it is a very important thing. It is wasteful of us not to use that water for—processed water we know. If you are running boilers, you are very careful and whatnot, but general water for cooling, et cetera, could easily be well controlled wastewater from a plant like the Beetham plant. It is what I would like to see happen in this country; that we spend our money wisely, because not every day or not forever will we be in a position of being able to afford it and, while we can, let us do it that way.

I do have these reservations about where we are going, but I will still support the increase in the rate, as provided for in this new Order, but I would like it to be noted that there is a proviso and the proviso is that WASA takes all the steps to improve its distribution system so that whatever water is produced, it can be accounted for and will not go into the deficiency line, so that our supply comes into the negative.

Mr. President, that is about all I wish to say today on this and I thank you very much for your time. Thank you.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine): Thank you, very much, Mr. President, for the opportunity to contribute to this Motion in the name of the Minister of Public Utilities which, basically, has been well explained by the Minister who piloted the Motion. I want to thank Senators Fitzgerald Hinds and Basharat Ali for lending their support to this very important Motion.

Water is very important to mankind. Water is very important to civilization. I said in a previous debate that human civilization rests on three pillars, one being food, one being energy and one being water. You look at all major civilizations in the history of the world and they are built around ports and they are built around rivers because water is, of course, needed for the sustenance of human beings.

Of course, from an historical context, we throw our minds back to 1903, and we see how critical water is in terms of the social and political stability of Trinidad and Tobago. The year 1903, of course, was the year we had the water riots in Trinidad. Those water riots which had to do with an increase in water rates—I believe then the citizens Port of Spain—eventually led to the unfortunate sacking and burning of the then Red House which used to be, up to a few months ago, the seat of this Parliament. That Red House was rebuilt in 1907. Water has played a tremendous role in the history of Trinidad and Tobago and, indeed, in the history of civilization. As we debate this Motion before us, it is important to understand the role that water has played in not only sustaining human beings in Trinidad and Tobago, but in terms of our industrial development.

Mr. President, a lot has been said in this debate about the world famous Point Lisas Industrial Estate. I do not for one moment discount the contribution made by Dr. Eric Williams. [*Desk thumping*] History will recall that he played a tremendous role in the development of Point Lisas. We must also put on record the contribution made by the then Minister of Energy—it may have been called the Ministry of Petroleum and Mines in the 1970s—Mr. Errol Mahabir who distinguished himself as one of the longest serving Ministers of Energy in the history of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I have had the privilege at one point in my life to work for an organization called the South Trinidad Chamber of Industry and Commerce. They evolved eventually into something called the Energy Chamber of Trinidad and Tobago. Sen. Al-Rawi's mother who was a former government Minister and Member of the Lower House served as President of that organization. I think I must put it too on the record that credit must be given to the South Trinidad Chamber of Industry and Commerce for their vision with regard to the establishment of Point Lisas.

We have a habit in this country of forgetting our history and those who have contributed. I want to place on record the contributions that were made in this country with respect to Point Lisas from people like Robert Montano, Bobby Montano who is also a distinguished veteran of World War II; people like Mr. Max Marshall who served as a President of the South Chamber and people like Mr. Sydney Knox who went on to become a distinguished businessman in his own right; and attorney-at-law, Mr. Krishna Narinesingh. All of these people contributed to what is today Point Lisas and indeed Plipdeco. If one were to go to the National Energy Corporation's head office on Rivulet Road, one would see a number of the National Energy Corporation's vessels have been named after people like Robert Montano, Dr. Williams and, indeed, Mr. Errol Mahabir. I put that on the record for the Parliament.

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The Point Lisas Industrial Estate is, of course, a major component of our national economy. The estate in itself houses approximately 25 world-scale petrochemical and plants involved in the manufacture of iron and steel. In total, Point Lisas produces around 12 million tonnes per annum of methanol and ammonia, making Trinidad and Tobago the largest exporter of both commodities in the world. Of course, manufacturing those high volumes of petrochemicals requires critical inputs, and those inputs would, of course, include natural gas and iron ore which are imported into this country, because we do not have deposits of iron ore in that quantity. Of course, the estate would require power which comes from Power Gen, and I would add that we expect to commission phase 1 (a) and phase 1 (b) of Trinidad Generation Unlimited company very early in 2012.

Of course, the Point Lisas estate requires water as a critical component. Those of us who studied chemistry at O level and A level would understand some of the basic chemistry that goes into the production of ammonia and would remember the Haber process, which was a process invented by a German Chemist in the 1930s. He went on to win a Nobel Prize for that. Our estate is based on a lot of that chemistry which requires water.

What we have before us in the form of this Motion is a proposed increase in the Water Improvement Rate from approximately \$4.00 to \$8.50. Sen. Ali has calculated that to be an increase of approximately 112 per cent. However, when one were to consider the present commercial rate, which I understand is somewhere in the region of \$3.50 per cubic metre, plus the water improvement rate, which is \$4.00 per cubic metre, the current rate being paid by the companies at Point Lisas is \$7.50 per cubic metre. What we therefore have is an increase from \$7.50 per cubic metre to \$12.00 per cubic metre, which, according to my calculations, is somewhere in the region of 61 or 62 per cent over what would be a 14-year period, because, as the Minister quite rightly pointed out, there has been no increase in the water rate to the Point Lisas estate since 1997, or a 14-year period. That too converts itself into a 4 per cent increase per annum which, I believe, is way below what the inflation rate for that period between 1997 and 2011 would be.

Therefore, it is not unreasonable that the Minister of Public Utilities would come to Parliament and seek an increase in the water rate for water going into the Point Lisas estate. As Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, I want to say that I have no problem with this. What we did, however, when we were approached by the Minister of Public Utilities is that, being a responsible Government and data-driven Government, we did our research and the National Energy Corporation provided me with some data, which led to our decision.

As was pointed out earlier, water is one of the inputs that is used at Point Lisas. With respect to ammonia, which is one of the major outputs of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, water constitutes approximately 1 per cent to 1.5 per cent of the operating cost per tonne at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. With respect to methanol, water constitutes approximately 1 per cent of operating cost per tonne for methanol. And with respect to direct reduced iron, it is a bit higher. It is about 5 per cent to 6 per cent of the operating cost of producing a tonne of DRI.

The other factor that we looked at is that almost all the plants operating in Trinidad and Tobago at Point Lisas have been fully depreciated or amortized and so capital costs have already been repaid. The major component of cost at Point Lisas would really, at this point in time, be operating cost. As Sen. Ali pointed out and he was very accurate with his quotation of prices, the price of ammonia right now is very good. It is somewhere in the region of US \$650 per tonne and the price of methanol is also pretty good. It is around in excess of US \$400 per tonne. Of course, as he quite rightly pointed out, no one can predict price and price could rise and price could fall. The trend since 2008—and in October 2008 there was a significant price collapse. Of course, that had to do with the slowing down of the world economy and the Lehman Brothers effect.

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Since that time prices have rebounded and we expect that, barring any unforeseen circumstances in the world economy which one can never predict, prices should generally remain in that area in at least the medium term. But prices are simply one of the risks which entrepreneurs have to deal with when they decide to go into business. However, we cannot be in a situation where we have the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on the one hand subsidizing the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), and WASA on the other hand subsidizing what are, of course, very profitable companies at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

So, Mr. President, as I said—and I plan to be very brief in my contribution, because I think I have made the point. The point is very simple that we cannot—we have not had an increase in the water rate to Point Lisas for almost 14 years. We are in a situation where WASA would be subsidizing highly profitable companies at Point Lisas. Therefore, of course, it is not unreasonable to support or to expect that the Minister, after 14 years, would come with a proposed increase in price for the companies at Point Lisas.

So, Mr. President, with those few words, I thank you very much and I lend my support to this Motion. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr. President. May I first of all congratulate the hon. Minister of Public Utilities in piloting this Motion? Because it is the first time I have seen someone pilot a Motion in a very long time on the Government Bench without reading from a script, and I do not mean that in any other way than an open compliment that he knows his material and he had the confidence to speak from it.

I would also like to thank the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine, for his very factual contribution; indeed he addressed some of the concerns which I had in looking to see whether I would support this Motion.

Mr. President, we are dealing with a Motion by the Government and, of course, we know by Standing Order 23 that Motions by the Government can be debated with one day's notice; such is the priority and privilege that any Government can enjoy, because they often deal with matters of serious concern. This is a matter of serious concern. I do have a slight complaint that the papers did arrive late, in fact, I got my papers on Saturday morning and so I did not have the luxury of the best form of preparation as I would usually like to engage in, in coming to this honourable Senate.

I say so because the hon. Minister, in piloting his Motion, reflected upon observations which were contemplated when this Motion was last discussed. You see, Mr. President, in 1998 there was a very significant development in relation to the parent Act that we are dealing with today.

Mr. President, I should remind that we are dealing with the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, Chap. 54:41; and, of course, that is the Act which, in the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, follows just after the Water and Sewerage Act, Chap. 54:40.

We were dealing in 1998 with a very important concept and that was—and this is for the benefit of those listening—the introduction of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate as an area which could fall under the Act, being Chap. 54:41, the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act. That was the first thing that happened.

The second, Mr. President, was the ability to assess rates in respect of an area so defined. I am grateful to my learned colleague, Sen. Basharat Ali, for having taken us through the geography of schedule which delineates, and sets out the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

So 1998 was a very significant point. It represented an ability to charge a rate different from that set out by the Public Utilities Commission, the PUC, which is the entity which sets rates for WASA, which was and which has now been properly replaced by the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) itself. It represented an opportunity for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to assess the Point Lisas Industrial Estate in a manner different from that which prevails under the RIC then PUC in relation to water and that is WASA.

Now, Mr. President, I say that because it represented a very novel way of providing a return on cost to WASA, because the PUC 1993 Order was the last rate set by WASA—if I am not mistaken—in relation to charges, and that was when the PUC, now replaced by the RIC, came up with a rate of \$3.50 per cubic metre. And to break down this cubic metre concept, I just ask the general public to note a cubic metre is 1,000 litres and 1,000 litres are 264 gallons.

So what we are talking about here is the cost which we are proposing to charge in relation to basically 1,000 litres of water or 264 gallons of water. And we are looking at it in a very special context and that is specifically in relation to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, it having been declared to be an area which is covered by the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, so that is the context of it.

The thing in this Motion, Mr. President, which causes me concern, really came about on account of two things. The first thing was the wording of the explanation to the Motion. It is a very important document attached to the Motion. And the second, in fact, lay with some of the particulars addressed by my learned colleague, Sen. The Hon. Ramnarine.

And if I take you to the first point—and I am reading from the explanation attached to the Waterworks and Water Conservation Order which we have on the table today—it reads that:

“The water improvement rate Point Lisas Industrial Estate variation order 2011 and resolution 2011 is”, and I read from the third paragraph, it says:

“As currently obtains WASA charges a rate of \$7.50 per cubic metre for water supplied to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. This rate comprises two components, a water improvement rate of \$4.00 per cubic metre and a commercial rate of \$3.50 per cubic metre. The water improvement rate has not changed since 1997, and over the last 10 years the cost of water purchased from the desalination company to supply the estate”—and here are the words which trouble me—“as well as other industrial estates and large commercial and industrial water users in central and south Trinidad has increased by 62 per cent from \$3.52 in 2001 to \$5.70 in 2011, and will increase by another 18 per cent to \$6.72 per cubic metre in 2012; this water is resold to the estate at \$7.50 and per cubic metre. The increase in the cost of desalination water has eroded the financial position of WASA with respect to the purchase and sale of desalination water. In 2011 WASA will lose \$26 million on the purchase and sale of desalination water, this loss will increase to \$92 million in 2012 if no adjustment is made to the water improvement rate. In the circumstances it was deemed urgent that the water improvement rate be adjusted by to address this deteriorating position.”

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Now, this explanation sets out some very, very, very important concepts, Mr. President. First of all we are dealing with a bifurcation of rate to this estate. On one hand we have the rate which WASA has levied by virtue of the RIC, which is a takeover and a legitimization under the RIC Act of the PUC's rates set in 1993 and that is on the one hand, and that is \$3.50 per cubic metre.

On the other limb, Mr. President, you have the water improvement rate, note the word "improvement", and that relates to a charge of \$4.00. It is that latter charge, the second limb which we are seeking to raise today by some 112 per cent. And I do take and do appreciate the extrapolation of that over a 14-year period, as the hon. Sen. Ramnarine has put it, to be a 4 per cent increase per annum being less than a rate. You cannot complain with that kind of logic, but what concerned me was that we must look to the rate itself in the language of the explanation. Regrettably the hon. Minister of Public Utilities has not taken us through the type of measures which he ought in justifying a rate.

Remember, let us put this in the context of why we are here. We are here looking at a Motion which must be done, an Order which must be done by affirmative resolution. It is not negative resolution, it is affirmative resolution. It means, in very pure terms, to be something so significant that it ought not to pass without the full scrutiny of a Parliament, in both Houses, that is in the Lower House and in the Upper House. That is, there must be full inspection. So one would assume that in this type of inspection which must be had, because it is affirmative resolution, that you would have the necessary particulars to guide you as to, number one the reasonableness of the rate which is being leveled; secondly, the lawfulness of the rate, because you would be looking to see whether it, in fact, passes certain measures in law; and thirdly, you would be looking at the sustainability of the rate; three factors.

I say that, Mr. President, because when I got a short while ago the *Hansard* from Friday, June 12, 1998, when the first water improvement rate for the Point Lisas Industrial Estate was put in, I noted that the hon. Minister then, who is now the CEO of WASA, Ganga Singh as he sat then, was Minister of Public Utilities. He set out actually quite a good but very short presentation, it was debated in the Lower House and in the Upper House and on this day in particular, I am reading from the House of Representatives, Friday, June 12, 1998.

The hon. Minister then was justifying this water improvement rate, similar to what we are doing now, and I found that the heads of items which he reflected upon, I thought first of all that they were essential heads of items, and secondly I noted that we did not reflect upon the same heads of items in this debate, the debate of this Motion. I wish for the benefit of those listening to put that, with your permission, on the record.

Mr. President, I read from page 498 of that *Hansard* report, and I note that the hon. Minister says at the last line of last paragraph on that page:

“Therefore, any rate justification depends on at least three major factors:

1. cost and revenue situation
2. rate setting methodology—very rare I get tongue-tied—utilized;
3. impact of the proposed rates. ”

So that is three points. In relation to the first point “cost and revenue situation”, the hon. Minister, page 499, had this to say:

“WASA’s cost and revenue situation—currently the water rates which were adjusted in 1993 do not allow WASA to recover its cost. ”

Let me pause there for a moment. That is very important because WASA is in a very unusual circumstance unlike T&TEC, for instance, where it cannot recover its cost items, its capital cost put in. In fact, in the T&TEC situation there is a return on rate base provided in the T&TEC charges which allows T&TEC not only to recover its cost but also to have a return on its investment. I believe the last return on rate base there in the rate built in is 15per cent. So WASA stands alone in that it cannot recover its cost, and I note now, this is 1998, but we are in 2011, headed to 2012, nearly 10 years later, 14 years later; that we are looking at the same PUC rate in application, we are looking at the same 1993 rate as the prevailing rate. He said here relative to the method used that:

“—the proposed rate of \$4.00 per cubic metre resulted from a study undertaken by the firm of London Economics, a well-known international firm in the United Kingdom. London Economics was commissioned to investigate tariffs for water and sewerage services in Trinidad and Tobago with a specific aim of bringing revenue in line with the cost of providing the service. Based on the long run average incremental cost methodology, London Economics has proposed a tariff for the Point Lisas Industrial Estate of \$7.50 per cubic metre. ”

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“This price will provide the customers of the estate with the price signal needed to optimize consumption. All the ingredients for calculating the long run costs, incremental costs are unidentifiable. That is, all customers are metered and, therefore, consumption is accurately known; cost can be fully allocated to customers at the industrial estate who are targeted to benefit from the water improvement works; cost of supply, that is construction and operating cost, can be easily determined”.

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Relative to the last point which is the impact of the proposed rates, the Minister had this to say:

“The impact of the proposed rate”—that is the cost—of \$350 per cubic metre the cost of water is a percentage of total operating expenses of the firms at Point Lisas and is only 0.8 per cent. The cost of water as a percentage of the total gross output is only 0.4 per cent. At the proposed rate of \$7.50 per cubic metre, the cost of water as a percentage of total gross output will increase to 0.86 per cent, that is, less than one per cent of their gross output. ”

Now, I have put this on the record, Mr. President, because we are looking at cost and revenue situation. The hon. Minister has dealt with that. If you want to strip it to its barest bones—and I hope that you permit me to paraphrase, WASA is in a bad economic situation. WASA is going to have to subsidize the purchase of desalinated water from the Desalcott and WASA not wanting to suffer a loss is turning to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate in the improvement charge to ask them to pay 112 per cent more than they are currently paying. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister has, in fact, addressed the cost and revenue situation, albeit in bare bones. The hon. Minister has alluded to consultation with the members of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and so has sought to touch on the impact of the proposed rates, but it is the rate setting methodology that I have a concern with. I have a concern because, if you look to the ingredients for calculating the long run incremental costs, if they are to be identified as customers being metred—sure we know that the industrial estate is metred. We are looking at “costs can be fully allocated to customers at the industrial estate”, I stop I stop, Mr. President, because in the wording of this Motion in the Explanatory Note, it is important for us to reflect upon the fact that the estate as well as other industrial estates and large commercial and industrial water users in central and south Trinidad is the area of concern.

Right here on the face of this Motion we are potentially—and I hope that the Minister will correct me if I am on the wrong path—dealing with a situation where we are charging positions to the industrial users at Point Lisas. We are telling them, “Pay for increases at the Desalcott”, but they are being asked to pay for increases which are not to their account solely. [*Desk thumping*]

The problem with that, hon. Senators, is that under our Constitution, under section 4(b), if I am not mistaken, our Constitution prescribes:

“the right of the individual to equality before the law and the protection of the law;”

We could be opening a position of a challenge to the legitimacy of this rate that we are imposing here, because we would not have been treating people similarly. The law is that you must treat people in similar circumstances similarly—simply put. So we are telling the users of the industrial estate: Listen, Desalcott has had increases in its production. We are paying more money than we expected. We know that Desalcott is producing for more than just you, the industrial estate, but we are asking you, the industrial estate, to pay for all of it. ” That, Mr. President, is problematic because we are in this Parliament today, by our affirmative resolution, going to be denying or rather putting through a process of jumping through hoops the right to challenge the reasonableness of the increase. That is to invite long litigation.

The problem is, we do not have in this Chamber, for instance, the ability of persons to approach the RIC, for example, to lay complaints as to why the charge ought not to be implemented. We must rely today in the Parliament only upon the hon. Minister’s statements that, “Look, we had discussions and those discussions were not excellent discussions but—they resisted but it must be done. We as a Senate have an obligation to look to the charge itself to investigate and interrogate whether the rate being imposed is in fact a fair rate, and we must look to the ingredients of how that rate is calculated.

Mr. President, my concern here is that it is on the face of the Motion that we are asking the industrial users to pay for all of the Desalcott increase in costs as opposed to some of them. That cannot be, if I read it the way I do, a healthy or lawful position. So I have concerns and serious concerns, and I am hoping that the hon. Minister will address that, lest we find that it is challenged in a court of law, and this Parliament would have engaged in an exercise of fixing a rate which on the very preliminary level sounds good. Because you are saying, “Look, we cannot subsidize this rate, WASA is in a bad financial situation.” The point is that it must be lawful; and for it to be lawful the drill down data, the core data, must be presented, and regrettably the Minister has not condescended to those particulars on this occasion.

Mr. President, we do need to have an explanation from the hon. Minister as to where he is going. I will say why. If you were to factor the increase in this rate, what we are really seeing is that the rate is to apply— and one would assume with immediate effect upon it being pronounced in the proper way. We are doing it at a time when Trinidad and Tobago and the global economy is in a difficult position.

The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs pointed out, for instance, in the case of the production of DRI, that it was some 5-6 per cent of cost, that is, water was some 5-6 per cent of the operating cost in the production of DRI. Now whilst methanol may be high on this occasion, DRI is not and the steel industry is under pressure globally. So we must be careful that we do not lob and lop everything and everyone

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into one basket because to do so would be dangerous. That is, if we were to appreciate the fact that the implementation of this is to hit all of the rate increase in one go, this is in fact a 60 per cent increase in rate when you look at the overall rate increase from \$11.50 to \$12.00 as we approach.

Mr. President, that is a very important point for us to look to. I hope that the hon. Minister will address the lawfulness of the ability to charge the Point Lisas Industrial Estate users for all of the increases by the Desalcott. Now I say also and I noted with some concern that the hon. Minister in piloting this Motion said that when we last, as a Parliament, looked at this issue in 1998 that the Desalcott was, in fact, in the picture and that the impact of the desalination company as a provider of water was in the picture.

Mr. President, I would invite my learned colleague to reflect upon the *Hansard* debate there because the hon. Minister as he then was, Ganga Singh, in piloting the Motion was at pains to state in reply to the Desalcott issue that he never once mentioned the Desalination Company of Trinidad and Tobago, the Desalcott company, as forming any factor for the imposition of the water improvement rate. So it cannot be that the hon. Minister is correct, if I could put it that way. In piloting the Motion he said that the desalination company issue was factored when the rate was first put in but the *Hansard* record says otherwise. The hon. Minister, Ganga Singh, was at pains in reply to Eric Williams as he sat then for Port of Spain South to say—if you would permit me to quote him. He said at page 514 of the same *Hansard* debate that I referred to:

“Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Member for Port of Spain South for his contribution because nowhere did I mention desalination in this contribution with respect to this part of my contribution.”

Now, Mr. President, it is important to remember that for this improvement rate to be correct, we must achieve the cross of the bar set by section 10(2) of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, Chap. 54:41. Section 10, Part III, deals with water improvement areas. Section 10 deals with the “Declaration of Water Improvement Areas” and section 11 deals with the “Water Improvement Rates”. The water improvement rate is factored upon the area declaration. Section 10 (2) says:

“An area shall not be declared to be a Water Improvement Area unless the Minister is satisfied that the area generally has been, or may be expected to be, materially benefited by means of waterworks carried out in the area or serving the area and unless such waterworks are for the purposes mentioned in section 4”.

Now the definition of waterworks in this Act allows the desalination company as the machinery there to fall within the definition of waterworks, so you could potentially have bite-in there, but when you get to section 11 and you reflect upon section 4, you

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are really looking at the water improvement rate dealing with improvements in the area which are being subjected to analysis and the rate must be extrapolated going forward. We have had none of that here today. So I am very, very cautious to say that the hon. Minister of Public Utilities has provided us with the kind of information which we as a responsible Parliament should reflect upon in looking at the cost issues to the improvements in the area.

I did note that the hon. Minister reflected upon the dualling of the main in the area, and that he did reflect upon some works to be done. But I would like him to reflect upon the debate in 1998, when the debate solidly focused not on desalination as we do today, but it focused on the works to the dams and the works to the watercourses and the costs arising out of those.

You see, we must here, in looking at the reasonableness of the rate, reflect upon what is this rate going to do. If we are to accept the Motion on the face of it by the explanation attached to the Motion, if that is so then what we are saying is, pay for the increases in the desalination company. But we are saying in the explanation that that is wider than just the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

So how can we lawfully accept a rate to subsidize the position or to correct a subsidy which we should not have from the desalination company's production of water, if the desalination company is distributing to more than just the estate? Surely we must disaggregate the elements attributed to Point Lisas Industrial Estate, and make Point Lisas Industrial Estate pay only for what it uses. We cannot say to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate users, "Pay for everyone", because that cannot be lawful. That is my main complaint with the Motion that we have before us today.

It is not, respectfully, the geography of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. That is a very good observation by my learned senior, Sen. Ali, but it does not bite to where the real mischief is. The real mischief that we are dealing with today is: should the Point Lisas Industrial Estate pay for all users of the desalination company? That is in the explanation. It cannot be—and we are inviting difficulties to the lawfulness of the legislation if we agree to this without further particulars.

4.15 p.m.

Hon. Minister, I do note, through you, Mr. President, that this is a matter which has to be debated in the Lower House and in the Upper House, and I wonder aloud, with the view of getting it right for us all, whether we should pause to reflect upon the lawfulness of the rate insofar as we have not disaggregated the charges from the desalination company on one hand, to all users except Point Lisas Industrial Estate and, on the other hand, to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. It cannot be that the Point Lisas

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Industrial Estate must pay for all increases at Desalcott, particularly, when we have not seen the contract. I have not. I am sure it is around, et cetera, but because of the urgency of the Motion, I cannot take complaint with it.

It is an important Motion, and I compliment the Minister for bringing it, but I have alarm bells ringing in my mind that tell me, focus upon the lawfulness of the rate. Be sure that you are applying the rate to only those who ought to pay the rate. I am wondering aloud whether we should, in fact, take some time to look at it. Perhaps you can, in you winding up, address the issue, or perhaps you have the issue now, but I would like the hon. Minister to pay attention to that.

I have no complaint that we cannot look at this Bill and that the RIC should look at it, but I do note that it is important insofar as the Point Lisas industrial users deal with a bifurcated rate; one established by the RIC of \$3.50 per cubic metre and one by the improvement rate. I think it is about time that we look at a review by the RIC, and bringing us forward from 1993 to current positions. I do note that contrary to the statements of the Government that this water improvement rate is, in fact, a new tax.

So, as much as it may be said by the Government time and time again that it is not introducing new taxes, 112 per cent increase of the water improvement rate is a new tax. I have no difficulty with it, because we ought not to demonize the concept of taxation. [*Desk thumping*] I would like the Government to get comfortable with the idea of looking at our transfers and subsidies, because if we want to arrive into the next decade and the next 20 years from now, we have to be responsible in our fiscal management, and this is a step in the right direction.

Mr. President, I would not be much longer, but it is also critical for the hon. Minister to reflect upon a method of reviewing the return on cost, the capital cost put out by WASA. That is a very important point for us as a Parliament to look at. It will involve amendments to existing legislation. If we are to take WASA into the next stage of its development, we must factor an improvement in the laws by allowing WASA to take its capital cost properly onto itself and have it repaid and, similar to the T&TEC Act, allow it, at least, a return on its base, its investment.

Mr. President, I would like to publicly say two things before I close. The first is, the Minister who sat as the Minister of Public Utilities in the previous PNM Government, that is Mr. Abdul-Hamid, as he is now, did an excellent job at bringing WASA into the 21st Century. [*Desk thumping*] It was through hard work and unstinting dedication that an entire survey of the waterlines and the provisions of WASA were done under his hand. It was with that the very Navet main replacement was able to be done, finances were put into place; and the works were identified.

The hon. Minister says that he is better in the work out of it, but I want to put on public record my debt and gratitude to the last minister in the PNM government for the excellent work that he did. He could not perform the work because, unfortunately, he had only two and a half years in his term to do it. I am grateful that the hon. Minister is carrying that baton and taking it forward. [*Desk thumping*]

The second item that I would like to put on the public record is my belief in the integrity and honesty of the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George. I have said it before in the Red House then and in the Senate here, I believe it is my first time saying this, relative to any specter that anyone could possibly consider in the Desalcott issues, I wish to state that I believe the hon. Minister to be a man of moral rectitude and honesty on this issue and otherwise, and I wish to compliment him for the manner in which he has conducted himself.

Mr. President, with those few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to rise and say a few words in relation to this Motion. I should begin by saying that I am glad this has come to our active attention, and I compliment the Minister for so doing. I think a lot has been explained, both in the paper and in his opening talk and, by and large, I do not have too much difficulty with that, but I would say, though, that I am a little concerned about certain aspects of this, and I just wanted to share that and, perhaps, the hon. Minister might clarify in his winding up.

Before I go there, I suppose I should begin at the very beginning which is to say that major water consumers on the Point Lisas Industrial Estate must be shaking their heads at this particular proposal, because when the notion, as I recollect it, of Desalcott was first put forward, there was a considerably strong movement on the estate for companies to develop their own desalination capability. Whatever the Government was at that time, viewed things differently, and we have Desalcott now and a Desalcott arrangement with WASA, and so we are where we are now.

I am going to tell you at the very outset what causes me part of the concern, and I get the sense that the conversation with people between the Government and the folks at the estate might yet be incomplete. If that is so—if I am correct in making so bold an assumption—I would like to respectfully suggest that we close that loop so that everyone is on the same page, and everyone understands what is going on or what has to be done.

Moving very quickly into how I see this, and I would try to finish by the tea break, believe it or not. What do I see of issue here? First is, I had some difficulties with the definition of Point Lisas. Actually my difficulties came from both sides of the coin that

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were expressed by my colleagues, Sen. Ali and also Sen. Al-Rawi, which is to say, where does Point Lisas begin and where does it end for the purposes of this Bill in terms of the definition?

I have a table that outlines usage of water from Desalcott, and in this table it makes an estimate for major industrial water consumers of about 40 million cubic metres per annum, and of that 40 million, Petrotrin accounts for just about 25 per cent, and Petrotrin does not constitute a part of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. It is considered separate and apart, but it is included in terms of major estimations of who is consuming lots of water. For example, YARA consumes 3 million; Methanol 13 million, PCS Nitrogen 5 million and so on, but then along comes Petrotrin, which is, I am able to guess, the second largest consumer or the second largest customer of Desalcott. I do not know if that data is correct or not, but I am putting it forward in saying that I would like to have seen definition of where Point Lisas begins and where it ends, because I used to be the Chairman of Plipdeco and my understanding of the boundaries of Point Lisas are not consonant with what is suggested here.

I think that we should take into account and the country should take into account, in listening to this and in reading this Motion, that Desalcott does not meet the demands of the estate, due in large part to demands from WASA, both for volume of water and also for water quality. That is on the one hand. On the other hand, the other constraint is imposed by significant expansion of residential development, so what you have is the Desalcott capacity that is increasingly being used to support not just industrial customers but domestic household demand which has expanded exponentially over the last 10 or 15 years.

So I sort of had the same question that Sen. Al-Rawi had, and that is, given the definitional inconsistencies regarding where Point Lisas begins and where it ends, is this \$26 million loss on the purchase and sale of water from Desalcott coming from companies on the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, or is it that the companies on the Point Lisas Industrial Estate are being asked to pay the overall deficit that is coming from WASA's purchase of water from Desalcott? I think that is a very important question that I am sure will be clarified, hopefully in the closing remarks.

Well, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs made a point, and I would like to address that now, by saying none of this really speaks to the quality of the water supplied by Desalcott which has deteriorated significantly over the years as domestic demand has increased elsewhere. It is sort of an open secret, well an open suspicion, that Desalcott pumps sea water back into some of the water that they desalinate, and the proof of the pudding is in the eating. All you have to do is go to the downstream and go to the major industrial consumers and see what they have to do to treat their water. So

we are doing something that is cost-based, but if the quality of the output from Desalcott is mediocre or poor, which increasingly it appears to be, then the major industrial consumers have more work to do, and more cost to generate to prepare that water for their industrial processes. That is not recognized by this, so the population should be aware that the costs that are put forward here are not the final cost to major industrial consumers. They still have water treatment to do.

This is why I think it is very dangerous for us to have a logic that says, this accounts for 1 per cent or 1½ per cent of production cost or of revenues and, therefore, they could afford to pay it. I have a great difficulty with the capacity to pay logic. That is the logic used by the labour movement to say that you can pay me more. There is no linkage to productivity, no linkage to competitiveness. Mr. President, you should know that when you are dealing in global markets pennies and cents matter; 1 per cent is a big number. So, changing input cost can have quite significant implications for the cost structure of a major manufacturer.

I think, as well, what would give me pause with all of this is that Desalcott has always captured the imagination of the public where questions of corruption are concerned and, hopefully, those are behind us but, certainly, assuming that they are, inefficiency I suspect is not. To what extent should major industrial users pay for the inefficiency of Desalcott, because Desalcott's cost of production is significantly higher than what would obtain if you build another desalination plant next to it now. Something is wrong in there, and industrial customers are being asked to pay for that. I do not think that is fair and that is the long and short of it. How are they trying to get efficient? How does this price increase affect the competitiveness plan for the estate?

4. 30 p.m.

I will close by saying that if you want to claw back some of these costs, really it is probably better to examine, not just these costs—I have no argument that some adjustments have to be made—but we ought to be looking at changing some of the taxation rules that govern some of these companies, where they pay very little taxes.

Mr. President, in summation, I am not clear on the definition of Point Lisas; I am not clear whether Point Lisas Industrial Estate companies are being asked to pay the entire deficit. I am not clear what exactly this means for the competitiveness of these companies, because I am of the view that the conversation may not be as complete as we want it to be. I think that it is better. Because these are large, large industrial players that account for significant parts of our export revenues, my suggestion would be that we pause, we take a deep breath, we talk to these people and make sure everything is properly squared away before we implement something like this, lest we are perceived to be draconian or say that, “We told you about it, and therefore we consulted.”

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I think perhaps the rules that apply in Chambers like these are not really understood in the wider society, and we should be mindful that we are dealing with significant players who can bring significant advantage to us if we find a way to co-opt them, as opposed to just imposing things on them—not that that is what is being attempted, but I am just waving it as a warning flag to say, “Let us finish the conversation, assuming that it has not already been done.”

Mr. President, I thank you.

Mr. President: Before we move to the next speaker, I perhaps should inform the House that I do not propose to take a break for tea at 4.30, as is customary.

The Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Mr. President, the matter before the Senate, brought here by the hon. Minister responsible for public utilities, is straightforward really, asking for an increase that clearly would have an effect on industry in the industrial estate at Point Lisas, but not such an effect as to affect the ability of these companies to continue to play a significant role in the development of the country or to curb their exports abroad, and to play a genuine role as meaningful corporate citizens of the country.

On the other hand, the complicated relationship between WASA, on the one hand, and the desalination plant on the other, and the way that water is distributed in the country and produced for distribution, creates the conditions in which the Government finds itself as a subsidizer of WASA in the system and therefore, ultimately, the main payer of the bill.

In this particular situation, what this Resolution seeks to do, by ministerial order and then affirmative response by the Senate, is to create the conditions in which WASA would be better able to meet its own obligations as a company, separate and distinct from the subsidies provided by Government, but more than that, it allows WASA to escape from asking Government to pay a bill which industry really should meet, because of its use of water from WASA. It is a simple Motion. On the occasion when it first came to the House in 1998, I believe, it did not engage a long debate, because it was a straightforward Motion and Members supported it, as indeed they are doing now in the Senate, and we are very, very grateful for that.

The matter which comes up here from a planning point of view is with the kind of development strategy that we are engaging in, in the country, and the kind of support infrastructure that we need to meet the development challenges ahead of us, and so the question really arises as to how we are going to support all this. It is an important question. Water, as Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds mentioned, could be a matter of great contention, and all of us are aware that it can be a source of conflict among people in

neighbouring territories, among countries that need the water for their own development and among communities that fight over sources of water supply, because it is so essential for survival. The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs made the point that energy, water and food are really the critical ingredients of any societal requirements in terms of its own development of its society and civilization.

When you think of our own development, when you think, let us say, of the development of one part of our country, for instance, Chaguaramas—to develop Chaguaramas would be very easy. To get the investors to come into Chaguaramas, you have a plan for Chaguaramas, you engage investors in Chaguaramas who might have an interest in Chaguaramas, and you develop that particular part of the country in a certain way. You may have all manner of wonderful things in Chaguaramas for the country and for tourists as well to enjoy.

Even if you want to develop that part of the country in such a way as to create wonderful opportunities for children, wonderful opportunities for adults, night life for both locals and tourists alike and even if you are very sensitive and take into account that some of the most beautiful rain forests exist there, you have flora and fauna that you want to protect, and you do all these things, the development would require basic infrastructure support. To protect those things after you do it, water will be necessary, not only to service the area, not only to keep the area clean, but it will also be necessary if you have to put the infrastructure, for instance, that is necessary to support something negative that might happen. So you might build up plant and capability and you have a fire and you need to have water to be able to address it.

So when you think of Chaguaramas, that is one issue. If you think of the five growth poles we are talking about in Trinidad and Tobago, on the north coast, on the eastern section of Tobago and the centre of Trinidad, when you think of all these areas and the development of industry that would go into that, and you think of the community participation, the infrastructure that would attend other industrial development, again you are talking about demands on the utilities, whether it is electricity, whether it is the energy that drives electricity or whether it is water which is so essential for support of it. So this business of water in the development process is very important to Trinidad and Tobago. How we conserve water, how we capture it, how we save it, how we distribute it and how effectively we are able to manage it are very important parts of the development process in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Basharat Ali in making his contribution said that one of the things he was concerned about was the efficiency of the distribution. I believe that is something on our side we must take into account very seriously. He made a very important point. He said that in a previous administration they talked about the construction of maybe four

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or five desalination plants, and he said that it was not so reasonable to simply spend money to solve a problem, and that what we must be thinking about was how we might be more efficient, how we might be more effective. Sen. Dr. Balgobin in his contribution talked about the need to take into account things such as efficiency and productivity.

I think as we go through the development strategy for Trinidad and Tobago, as we think it through, as we put our plans into motion, as we get the investments in, as we begin to mobilize the population in a certain way to move their society forward, we on the Government side really need to begin to focus on how you get a society to be much more conscious of the need for conservation, of the need for efficiency, of the need for productivity, of the need for competitiveness, of the need for entrepreneurial intervention, of the need for innovative thinking, interventions and capacity, of the need for creativity.

I feel it is important to do this, because somehow, as a society in these matters, we have lost our way, and every time we have a challenge we sort of take the easy way out. My own view is that as we evolve in the world, it is going to be more and more difficult to take the easy way out for the solution of any problems. The problems of tomorrow, some of which are going to be without precedent, are problems that are going to require our highest levels of ingenuity and our highest levels of creativity.

I remember in 1997 that I was at a conference in Washington of the World Future Society. At that conference there was a luncheon speaker who was head of the World Watch Institute in Washington.

4.45 p.m.

That is an institute that looks at the whole business of sustainable development and the challenges, the requirements, the opportunities of sustainable development. He spoke at that luncheon presentation in this conference of two or three days that they have annually, and it was the first time that the issue of the challenge of food and water had been raised in such a potent way in my consciousness, because he asked a simple question in his presentation. The question that he was addressing in his presentation was: who is going to feed China in 2020, and who is going to provide the water for China to drink?

He went through a development plan of China and what it meant in terms of implications for the future, and what it would then mean in terms of the construction of roads, the destruction of rivers, the denudation of agricultural sectors of the country, the increase in the number of automobiles, and he painted the picture of what was likely to happen in China alone with implications for the world.

He then went on to talk about the little skirmishes in the world over water and the challenges for food and raised the spectre of countries buying the land of other countries in order to deal with the issue of food production and food security. This was in 1997. It was a fairly long time ago but it shows you the insight and the foresight that he had, and it also showed you the thinking that was taking place so long ago about such issues.

In our small country of many islands—seven islands—Tobago, Trinidad, five off the coast of Chaguaramas, I think we must be aware that in a country like Antigua, for instance, they have to import a significant part of their water. We have to be aware for instance that Barbados has put down a desalination plant because water is a very, very scarce commodity on that island. We have to be aware that desalination plants are becoming very, very popular now simply because the challenge of producing water from natural sources for all the things that people need to do has become such a challenge and has become so difficult.

So this business of water is a serious matter. Certainly to me, I think water is a serious matter for the Caribbean. If you are going to increase your tourism flows and you are going to increase your population therefore, because every week a thousand people come into your island in terms of tourists, it means an impact on your water resources, it means an impact on your waste resources and waste disposal resources, it means the creation of garbage that has to be dealt with. All of these things become important and therefore, the sustainable approach to development is something that we have got to take very, very seriously in communities such as ours, in islands such as ours, in a country certainly such as Trinidad and Tobago.

So while this Order is simply an Order to raise the cost of water for industrial use in a particular place in Trinidad and Tobago, Point Lisas, involving specific industries that are located there, I think it is important to remind ourselves that this business of water is a very, very critical issue. As we do that, we have to think in terms of the long term and we have to match the development that requires water sources and water capacity to the development strategy that we have, whether such development is in industry or whether it is in the communities.

I do not know how many people are aware that when you take Trinidad as an island and you look at the number of communities that are spread out in the country, there are about 524 communities in Trinidad, and when you look at Tobago there are about 61 communities. When you add them together you get 585 communities, and I want to say that not all of them are adequately serviced in terms of

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water, in terms of electricity, in terms of basic infrastructure, in terms of service support to the communities and in terms of the kind of economic and financial opportunities that people need in order to make a life and a living for themselves and in order to thrive.

I was able to secure through a request to the Minister of Public Utilities some information about communities. I was able to secure some documents from him in which Members of Parliament on both sides of the Senate and of the House Representatives had sent requests to him indicating communities in Trinidad and Tobago that were underserved with water, and there is a large number of communities that are underserved in this country. When you think of the fact that we are soon going to be 50 years old as a country, we have had administrations every five years in the country and you think of 50 years and our country being in a situation in which not all our people in 585 communities in which they live are serviced by something as basic as water, I think that that is something that we should also be concerned about.

So the issues that we need to address have to do not only with our building of industrial capacity, it has to do not only with the building of capacity to support growth and development and geographical distribution of the population and distribution of attractions and activities to make the quality of life worthwhile, but it also has to do with the basic needs of people in the communities in which we live. These are competing interests that must not be allowed to compete in a sustainable strategy of development. We have to address the issue of the basics for ordinary people in their communities, as well as to address the challenges of development that come with industrial growth and come from investment, et cetera.

The Minister of Public Utilities as far as water is concerned, as far as water distribution is concerned, has done remarkably well in the few months of this Government in office. [*Desk thumping*] There are hundreds of communities that are now better served than they were before, and I think he has come to this honourable Senate and indicated that there is, in fact, a very clear plan to provide water by such and such a time for so many days, for so many communities and he has it all mapped out for this country, so his own plan is clear. But I think the real problem for all of us, and certainly for me, is that this is the 21st Century, we are in year 2011, we are going deeper into the 21st Century, and is it reasonable for us to have a country that has been progressing and that continues to progress but in which communities do not have something as basic as water?

Therefore, these kinds of things have to be priority focus for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. All 585 communities in this country must have the basics in order to live, in order to create the conditions for opportunity for themselves, for their children to be schooled, for jobs to be created, for skills to be developed, for entrepreneurial opportunity to be taken advantage of, and that is the kind of development that we must create in Trinidad and Tobago by the context that we create, by the opportunities that we create.

In the industrial sector in Point Lisas we have a situation there in which industries have done well and have been doing well, there has been consultation taking place. As the Minister said, not everybody might be happy with an increase but the consultation is taking place and I am sure that it will continue. I think at the end of the day the cost to industry in that part of country is not going to be so severe as to affect them adversely.

Therefore, I rise to support the hon. Minister in this resolution, in this variation Order which calls for an increase in the water improvement rate for the industrial estate of Point Lisas. But I could not close if I did not take into account, Mr. President, some of the issues raised by Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds, and I am not going to deal with the specific issues, but I want to deal with the tone of the presentation because it is important.

You know, this is a very new Government. It seems like the Government has been here forever because the expectations of the population are very, very high. The Government has not embarked on projects in this country that can be viewed by the population as large projects. Most of the time in the last 18 months has really been spent on trying to deliver basic goods and services to people, whether those people are people who are indigent, communities that are under-serviced, places that do not have water, recreation grounds that do not have lighting, and communities that do not have sporting facilities. It is those basic kinds of things that have occupied the Government's attention over this period.

It is easy to come and criticize the Government and to take the view at a time when the Opposition has declared basically that it is going to launch an election campaign in January; it is easy to come here and try to create the conditions of crisis in the mind of the population—Sen. Hinds I am talking about. It is easy for Sen. Hinds in particular to come and create the conditions of crisis in the minds of the population, and to create the impression that the Government is a group of corrupt people who are involved in all kinds of things—in a population that is always already skeptical about government and in which rumour and fact are almost indistinguishable in this society. My own feeling is that we need to pull away from this kind of politics for the sake of our country.

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We have had situations of, I would say, not so good governance in the country, and we have had situations in which the population has been disappointed, over and over again, by their governments. My own feeling is that we really do have a duty now and a moral obligation to give this country the kind of governance that it deserves. I want to say that governance comes not only from the government; and that the tone of governance comes not only from the government; and that the government, in fact, is Government and Opposition, and certainly in this Senate the Independents are a critical part of the governance process, and by the way we approach the whole business of governance, the way we deal with each other, the way we deal with the issues, are really vital.

If I were to say in this Parliament some of the things, for instance, which happened to the very reporter that he mentioned, whom, during my time at the University of the West Indies was awarded an honorary doctorate; if I am to speak of that time and what happened, when it was noted in the public sphere that she was going to be given that honour, I do not think it would be a pleasant presentation. It would make a lot of people uncomfortable. But I will not say anything about that today because we have to be careful about how we use information and we have to be careful about how we use situations simply to score a point. My own feeling is that we have to, all of us, be a little more responsible.

A government comes into power, it has five years to govern, and it must be given the opportunity to govern, to govern as best as it can, make its own failures and the population must decide. The politics of the moment, of course, requires you to snatch on issues and to make the most that you can politically of those issues. How you make the issues, how you attend to the issues, how you use the facts, how you use the information is important, because the judgment of the country, the culture of the country is affected by the way its leaders create the conversation in the public space. And by the way the dialogue, if you want, by the way the whole business of discourse is conducted in the society in the public sphere, and this kind of thing worries me.

It worried me when the state of emergency came up as an issue and the manner in which that was dealt with. Two years from now when you look at the facts, you will see a lot of it was alarmist and unnecessary. It worried me when the state of emergency came to an end and people were making various statements of a certain kind. Two years from now you are going to look at it and you are going to realize that it was all

huff and puff. Every issue that comes up creates the conditions for that kind of, what can I say—intense, unnecessary in my view, politically expedient discussion or accusations that I do not think really carries us anywhere as a country. We have serious challenges before us as a country in Trinidad and Tobago. The challenges are going to become fiercer in the coming years.

This very water that we are talking about is going to be a major challenge in Trinidad and Tobago. It is going to be a major challenge because we have to address the issue—if we are going to be a serious country—a little country like Bermuda, you know, has a per capita income of US \$60,000; 22 square miles. It can fit into Tobago five times. Bermuda has a per capita income of US \$60,000. A country like the Cayman Islands, which is hardly a piece of land on the water, has a per capita income of nearly US \$55,000.

Trinidad and Tobago must get to the point where it can make a quantum leap in per capita income terms, but also in terms of equity and spread and development strategy that allows the whole country to benefit out of the development process and which reduces the contribution proportionately of the energy sector to the development process because the other sectors of the economy will have grown so significantly. So it is not that energy dissipates; it is that other elements begin to grow.

To do that is not going to be easy and it has never been easy, because if you watch the history of the country, Trinidad and Tobago, you will see how hard the diversification process has been in this country—50 years and the diversification has been very limited. It has been significant in the energy sector. It has been significant in terms of the introduction of some new elements over a long period of time, but we have not achieved the level of diversification that we need in this country. To do that it is not going to be easy. And we have the added additional challenges in Trinidad and Tobago and I want to explain the span, the spread of the challenge.

On the one hand, you have about 20 per cent of this population that is under the poverty line; and on the other hand you have 5,000 people coming out of the university system every year and who need to be absorbed in the economy. So you have, on the one hand, 240,000 people for whom we have a strategy of 2 per cent reduction a year, for poverty. So it means that if you take 2 per cent out of that 240,000 you are talking about in this country when you look at the poverty rate, you are talking about 5,000 to 6,000 people, about 1,500 households and over five years you are talking about helping 30,000 people to rise out of poverty, to reduce it by about half.

At the same time you are talking about 25,000 people with university degrees or higher degrees, who need to be absorbed in an economy over a five-year period that could not possibly absorb these people if it remained as it was, and those kinds of

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challenges are not political challenges. That is the point I am making about the nature of the politics. Those are development challenges which the country has to face as a country, as responsible citizens, and a multi-party national approach to the whole business of development is required.

So politics cannot be the dominant element in the business of development or governance, and we are seeing a very bad example from a country to which we always looked. For example, the United States, for instance, Washington has hopelessly crippled the politics of that country in the United States and made it impossible for Congress and the Senate to govern.

And therefore, we have got to understand that in a small society, if we create the conditions in which when one government comes into office, we will make sure that it achieves nothing or make sure that we help it to fall before the five years or make sure that we make governance impossible and then when the next government comes into power we spend the other five years doing the same thing, the end result of that is zero.

I say that—I probably say it inappropriately because of the nature of the document before us for debate today, but I say it because of the manner in which I saw Sen. Hinds use the article in the newspaper and because of my own knowledge of what has happened in this country over time and what happens in this country.

One of these days I will get a chance, I may choose the opportunity to speak about those things, but I would not speak about them today because I have learnt from the state of emergency and the things that I have seen that this country is not sometimes what it seems. And that there are a lot of things that occur in this country that perhaps need to be made visible so that the country needs—the population, the people, the citizens need to understand a bit so that they will understand better where it is they are really living.

I think that part of our responsibility as leaders is to help them to see more clearly; not to create the conditions for more clouds, more nebulosity, more lack of discernment, more uncertainty about what is true and what is not. And therefore, what we owe the community, what we owe the society more than anything else is that at least a disposition to clarity.

So I will stop at this point I rise to support, I rise to support the hon. Minister. I do not think a price of \$12 for—is it 264 gallons you said?

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. B. Tewarie: Well, we are translating it into gallons which is easy for people to understand, and it really was a service of clarity there. I do not think that the price of \$12 for 264 gallons is a lot for industry to pay. The chance of losing

industry competitiveness on the basis of this price is unlikely and therefore we need to help WASA to reduce its dependency on us and we need to get the corporate sector to pay what is a fairer price.

I want to say this and I say this, with the best intentions and with all good wishes to my colleague, hon. Minister of Public Utilities. We also need to get institutions like WASA and the State Enterprises under our jurisdiction—which have really run away from us over all of these years of several governments. We really have to get them to learn to control themselves because at the end of the day it is the taxpayer, the citizen we are supposed to serve, who pays the bill. We have to make that very clear to the citizens and we have to make that very clear to all who own the opportunity, responsibility in this country and that includes every institution in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Sen. Dr. Lester Henry: Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to contribute to this Motion here today. This Motion appears to be a relatively straightforward, non-controversial bit of matter, but there are some important issues raised by this Motion that I think we need to deal with as an Opposition and as a country. Well, without annoying hon. Minister Tewarie after his heartfelt plea just a few minutes ago, and without incurring the wrath of my long-standing friend, the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, I beg to raise some issues that I consider to be quite important that we should address before the end of this proceeding. I know that the Minister is capable and if I attack him he is quite capable of defending himself—*[Interruption]*

Sen. George: No I am not.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Okay; *[Laughter]* but I will raise issues. There is no attack, I am just teasing. But I will raise issues which I would like the Minister to probably address when he is wrapping up, and I expect to raise some very pointed issues and to come back to some of the real reasons why we need to approve this so that WASA could get some more revenue and the whole issue of the viability of WASA.

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I expect to raise some very pointed issues and to come back to some of the real reasons we need to approve this so that WASA could get some more revenue, and the whole issue of the viability of WASA and the fact that we have alluded to several speakers, not only now, but in previous debates, on utilities and so on, the problem of WASA being a kind of political football and not being allowed to function efficiently as an enterprise.

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First of all, I would like to state that I am one of those people who was inherently against the whole idea of a desalination plant to begin with, when the idea was first floated back in the '90s when the previous UNC government came into power.

Hon. Senator: You so old, boy?

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes, Senator. In fact, that was the period when I had just returned to Trinidad and Tobago to set my bucket back down here. I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Keith Rowley, when he said, back in 1999, Tuesday, October 19:

“We must be the laughing stock of the world. This country has an average rainfall of 80 inches per year, which is described as, wet tropical, a wet tropical country—and I would not go into the floods—but with adequate rainfall across the country, where did desalination come from?”

I stand by those words way back then and I still think those sentiments reflect what our true situation is in Trinidad and Tobago. Needless to say that some in the previous administration had floated the idea of building more desalination plants—I am aware of this—but it does not change my view on the subject matter.

So when this issue came up in the '90s, one of the arguments made by several people—and I believe the hon. Leader of the Opposition raised the issue even as far back as then—that once the desal plant came on stream WASA, as an entity, could not be economically viable because the industrial estate is the main stable revenue source for WASA. It is like nuts already shelled; it is basically money in the bank. They pay the \$7.50 reliably; they do not worry about it; they do not quarrel; they do not quibble about it, so you have a significant revenue stream that was coming into WASA, guaranteed on a monthly basis.

Now, the Minister could correct me if I am wrong, but what I understand is that the cost of producing the water from the Caroni plant at the time, which is our normal supply, without the desalination plant, would have been about \$1.50 per cubic metre. So when we got \$7.50 from the customers at the estate, we got to keep about \$6 of that. Now, we know the limitations in terms of capacity and in terms of servicing the other parts of the country, especially south and central, so I am not ignoring that, but I am just saying, just on a pure revenue calculation that we would have gone—now with the construction of the desal plant we had to pay Desalcott \$3.52, I believe the Minister has in his Motion, and then collect the same \$7.50 from the customers on the estate. So, immediately, instead of keeping \$6 we got to keep \$4. So it was a significant drop to WASA when you had to purchase the water from the desal plant as opposed to supplying it through our normal channels from the Caroni treatment plant.

So what we had was a decision, whether it would make sense to go into this new venture and build a desalination plant, which we then purchase the water from, or the other option would have been to upgrade the pipes and expand the existing plant in order to supply more water to the industrial estate and cater for people in south and central. That was the decision at the time. So, remember, \$3. 50, you basically sign an agreement; that is what you have to pay to Desalcott, so this took away a significant area of revenue from WASA. So, basically, it became economically unviable.

I believe that the people who were involved in some discussion who argued against the desal plant tried to point out that what is going to happen is that you need, without fixing the pipes, the leakage, as many of us or all of us know here—that is no national secret—we lose perhaps as much as 50 per cent of the water we produce due to leakage and so on. So what we have without fixing the pipes—so you could have had a programme of fixing the pipes and increasing the capacity of the existing plant, especially the main plant at Caroni. So what we have, again, is this decision about fixing the pipes, the leakage, which will have to be done, whether you do it now or 10 years ago, at some point, if we want to deal with the issue we have to fix the pipes, and I will come back to that.

The hon. Minister of Public Utilities at the time in 1999 and the current CEO, as my friend and colleague, the hon. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds pointed out, in 1999 said:

“At 1997 prices WASA estimates that it would cost approximately \$950 million over a 10-year period to replace 100 kilometres of pipeline per year.”

This is his quote from the *Hansard*.

“So you see, Mr. Speaker, pipe replacement is not an option.”

That is the quote from the current CEO:

“Pipeline replacement is not an option. Therefore, how are you going to find a coherent programme? We have embarked upon it, but in terms of meeting the deficit it is not an option. ”

This is the quote.

Sen. Hinds: From whom?

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: The hon. Minister of Public Utilities at the time, the hon. Ganga Singh, the current CEO of WASA.

So at some point you have to fix the pipes and that is the serious alternative to engaging in desalination plants. And notice, I am not questioning the method or the operation of how the plant came into existence, I am just arguing strictly based on the necessity for the plant and the economic viability of WASA as an entity.

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Now, we know that in terms of the actual operation of the plant the people in south and central, to some extent, have gotten a more reliable water supply and we must be grateful for that, but those issues will not go away in terms of the viability, and the Motion we have before us today, in terms of raising the revenue in order to make WASA a little better off, has to deal with the fact of the origin of this desalination plant and what it implied for WASA from the very beginning.

I want to switch gears somewhat; I will get back to WASA directly before I conclude, but I want to raise an issue that has troubled me for a bit, and that is the issue I raised earlier this year in this honourable Senate, of the \$1.3 billion bond issue that is underwritten by Citibank at an interest rate of 6.95 per cent. I raised the issue at the time and said there was something strange about that entire bond issue, in the fact that it contained a \$300 million sinking fund and that the interest rate seemed to be unusually high given the liquidity conditions in the market that were existing and still exist at this time; that the liquidity and the interest rates prevailing in the market seem to be significantly above.

Now, the hon. Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs, Vasant Bharath, stepped in later on and responded to me and said, “Well, the yield on the bond really was 5.65 or something like that, so the Government was not really paying 6.95.” For the record and the *Hansard*, I wish to state that I am not convinced by that argument. [*Desk thumping*] I was not convinced then and I am still not convinced now, because the bond was underwritten completely by Citibank.

There was no auction and, furthermore, even if the response given to me at the time of 5.65 per cent—even if that is true, the problem by some magic—even if I agree and accept the Minister’s response as accurate by some magic which I am admitting I do not understand, and I am yet to be convinced of—even if I agree and say, “Okay, you have won”, the problem that comes in for the entity, the utility that we are discussing here today, is that even if we take that, there are still two problems; one, the sinking fund, which you have to subtract from the \$1.3 billion.

So what is actually available to WASA to carry out projects is just over \$900 million, not \$1.3 billion, and you are paying interest on the \$1.3 billion. [*Desk thumping*] So even at the lower interest rate, if it is true and if I accept it—what I could contrast that to is the recent auction done by the same Government for raising funds. I believe the purpose of this particular auction was to raise funds to pay off some of the Clico depositors. This is the Central Bank’s results of the auction of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago: TT \$1.0—\$1.5 billion; 6 per cent fixed rate bond due 2031.

I quote from the document:

“The auction of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago...20-year bond, 6.00 % issued November 22...has been oversubscribed, with the total bids received amounting to”—just over \$3 billion.

Three billion dollars for \$1 billion; that is how much liquidity we have in the system; oversubscribed by almost \$2 billion. So in that case what they did—and no problem with that—they raised the bond from—that is why the title of the page says: “\$1.0 to \$1.5 billion.”

So they decided, “Well, since you had so much interest in it, we raise the value from \$1.0 to 1.5 billion” Nothing is wrong with that; we could live with that. That is not necessarily a problem. So the bond was allotted at a premium, with a clearing price of \$107 per \$100 face value and offering investors a yield to maturity of 5.4.

So unless anyone wants to accuse me of not understanding how a bond works, you have it right here. [*Desk thumping*] “Yield to maturity offer, 5.4.” So, you had over \$3 billion rushing to pick up this \$1 billion excess liquidity like mad, and this is an auction; this is how it works with an auction.

5.30 p.m.

So my question as I did back then, why did Government not use the option for the 1.3 billion? But that is not even my punchline. [*Desk thumping*] The point is, I go back to the sinking fund, if you had raised money this way, the \$1.5 billion would have available to WASA not \$900 million—\$1.5 billion. So when you look at what happened what was the money supposed to be used for at WASA?

Next big question, what was it supposed to be used for—all this money—nice healthy sum, a billion? So, it was supposed to be used for water improvement, upgrade of the Caroni treatment plant, and to upgrade and replace pipes. [*Crosstalk*] That is what some of it was for. But then what happened? What has happened since? This was one year ago, almost, that this money was negotiated—this bond for WASA. What has happened since? And as usual, I encourage the Minister or anyone from the other side to correct me if I give false information to the public.

What has happened since? Apparently, when these things went out to tender they got two bids for the work that was supposed to be undertaken with this money. One company called IBI the other one called OAS—sounds familiar, that is the Point Fortin Highway people. [*Crosstalk*] Now, I am not casting any aspersions, I am not accusing anyone of anything, I am just saying.

Sen. Hinds: Present the facts.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: My information is that both of these bids came in way over \$1.5 billion. Both of them when they looked at what was supposed to be done, said—I could be corrected, it might be off by a point something of a billion—\$1.6 billion, \$1.8 billion.

So WASA now has \$900 million to finance the project, but the two bids \$1.6, \$1.8 or thereabout—do not hold me if I am off by a point something. Part of what I understood happened is that people heard that WASA was getting \$1.3 billion and everybody jumped into high gear and organized their bids based on one point something billion dollars. So after this now, when they got these bids they had to scrap the whole process and go back and change the scope of works. So that, in effect nothing has happened in the past year.

Sen. Hinds: Under the watch of that Minister.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: You have this money allocated and nothing concrete has actually been done because the whole tendering process had to be started over again. Scope of works had to be changed and we do not know— maybe the Minister or whoever could tell us what is the current state of affairs with that situation. So you are paying interest on this whole amount but you have available the smaller amount, which is still a significant sum, as I said close to a billion, but you are paying interest on it and nothing has happened yet. [*Crosstalk*]

There are some disturbing issues that I would like to raise in my few minutes that I will take additionally. So we have some issues in terms of the other contracts, I understand, that were meant to upgrade and treat in terms of some of maintenance of the Caroni plant. Some of these things have not gone through, have not been implemented because again of problems in the scope of works and reaching an agreement on who the successful bidder will be. So there is a kind of stagnation, in terms of actual implementation of projects despite the large sums being appropriated.

Also, a lot of the contractors, and the people who—the spin-off effects of these things, just as we talked about in the budget presentation and in fact, earlier this year on many of the finance related bills, the Government seemed to have had a significant problem with implementing projects. A lot of it has to do with some very strange decisions that are being made and some very—what I would call mismanagement. Mismanagement is the best way to describe it.

So, scope of works; for example, there was a tendering bypass for a band screen for the Caroni treatment plant. Apparently, individuals went to the board and said, “Well we need this band screening immediately, so we cannot put it out to tender, we will use a sole selection contract.” They gave it to a company called TOSL. Four months now—it was an emergency, so they could not go through the normal proceedings. So they just say “No, we are in a rush, so just give it to this company.” Four months later nothing has been done. What was the emergency? And as far as I am aware the thing is not in place as of yet—so the emergency. [*Crosstalk*] Some of the Senators on the opposite side would know what TOSL means. [*Crosstalk*]

Now, I will come close to my conclusion—[*Crosstalk*—and who are the involved participants?

Sen. Hinds: Tell us, tell us.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: They know. Now we have a situation with questions for the Minister. I would like to ask the Minister—the Minister says that they would rationalize and make WASA efficient. These are very, very humble and at some level they sound so economical and so non-threatening. But what does it really mean in practice, when you have a Government saying it would make something more efficient and more economically viable? What I would like to ask is, if there is a plan for a major VSEP package at WASA to reduce the workforce by 1500 sometime early in the next year. If—like I said, I am looking for answers here, I do not know, I am not in the Government, I am just asking. So if there is a plan to create this VSEP package based on the International Development Bank (IDB) loan, not the WASA bond, we do have conditionalities attached to our borrowing from ourselves—the International Development Bank (IDB) US \$50 million loan, that particular one, is there any conditionality attached to that loan, and is that going to happen? Has any money been allocated for the VSEP packages of the workers? If so, how much?

And one other point: is the Minister willing to say whether the Government plans to instruct WASA to outsource the maintenance of the major plant, that is the Caroni plant, plus the other two main plants? Are there plans to outsource that? And is that part of making WASA more efficient and so-called economically viable?

So these things, I raise as a matter of public interest and I would like, if possible, to get clarification on them. We know that in terms of making WASA a viable entity, it is difficult, we are not simplistic. We know the history and the successive governments getting involved and not allowing the entity to run independently, and our rates generally for water are very, very low by international standards, we know all of that. So we know at some point there will be a rate adjustment. In this case, it happens to be

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for the customers at the industrial estate, which I agree they could probably afford without too much damage to them. We still have to deal with the long-term viability of the entity and we also have to come to grips with what is different in terms of what this Government is doing at WASA in terms of its operations, in terms of making it viable. Is it causing WASA to become plunged into rigor mortis as some of the other institutions in the country, like—I see, Sen. Abdulah is not here—like the Industrial Court where it has been gutted and severely undermined?

Mr. President: Senator, I cannot allow you to make remarks relative to the Industrial Court.

Sen. L. Henry: Sorry, I accept your intervention, hon. President, and with these few words, I thank you very much.

Sen. Helen Drayton: Thank you, Mr. President. I will be very, very brief in this debate on the Motion. I want to start at a point mentioned by hon. Sen. Dr. Tewarie, and that is the high expectations of our citizens. It is why I want to ask, if I may, is it in keeping with such high expectations that the Government presents this Motion to vary the water improvement rate at Point Lisas without mention of the major corporate governance issue of a lack of audited financial reports since 2008?

You see, WASA cannot and will not become a viable entity unless it gets the basics in corporate governance right. Now such accounts would, of course, include some form of management discussion and analysis that informs us of the financial position of the utility. We do not know what the current cost of inefficiency both at WASA and Desalcott is at present. We do not know to what extent this increase will be going to finance inefficiency. We do not know the terms of the contract with Desalcott, and given all the water that is under the bridge, including issues of alleged corruption with that company, we are asked to accept that the business community in Point Lisas should be paying more, without any information, whatsoever, to substantiate a need.

5.45 p.m.

And, of course, this is a season of goodwill and we are asked to accept the Motion that increased cost of desalination water has eroded WASA's financial position to the tune of \$26 million on the purchase and sale of such a commodity; that this loss will increase to \$92 million in 2012, but of course, we have not seen any financial information whatsoever that would inform such a decision, apart from a very superficial structure that this is what it is costing now, this is what it should cost, otherwise this is what the loss would be.

I am certainly not challenging the Government's word. Let it be recorded that this Motion may very well have a great deal of merit, but it has not been substantiated in any way. I accept that there is a need for WASA to reduce its burden on the taxpayers, and I take no issue with the price increase based on some sound, strategic and financial planning structure. What I take issue with—and I want that to be recorded—is the lack of information that can only add to continued public skepticism. [*Desk thumping*]

For the New Year, I would suggest that the Government address the need to share with the public a reasonable level of coherent and factual communication which I think would go a long way in changing the level of negative responses it has received over the past 18 months. I too hope that 2012 will be a year when we experience greater harmony, and I do hope that each and every one of us would certainly make a commitment to contribute in a meaningful way to that type of environment which would only help move us forward. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development (Sen. The Hon. Verna St. Rose Greaves): Mr. President, I thank you once again for the opportunity to stand in the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am sitting here this afternoon and trying not to laugh out loud, because I am having so many flashbacks and remembering so many stories and reminiscing in some ways that are painful, but yet moving me to laughter.

Stories about people who had several children and, because of the shortage of water, they would bathe the baby first and go down the line in terms of their oldest would have to bathe in the last water, which, by that time, would not be the best water. Stories of people washing rice in the water and then washing wares, and then washing the children's feet in the evening before they come in to go to their beds. So many stories about people having difficulties for water in Trinidad and Tobago—stories of fierce fights by standpipes because people used to have to line up with buckets and pans and whatever else, and if you jump the line, then you are pushed to fight. So that over the years, for many years in this country, water has been a sore spot for so many of us.

Mr. President, in three months I will be 62 years old. [*Desk thumping*] I live in the community where I was born, where I grew up and where I pray that I can spend my last days—Covigne in Diego Martin. I have never had water 24/7 for any extended period. The closest that I came to getting water was during the time of the NAR when they tried their best to give us water, but the poor pipes were so dry from a lack of water, they burst, so those of us who were fortunate enough to have pipes in our houses, we almost drowned—it flooded the houses. Poor people's little piece of carpets, you had to throw away because we were so not accustomed to getting water.

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To add insult to injury, some of those areas where we had problems for water would normally have a spring—which we would call a river—but it is really a spring where you had clean water that you could use for all your domestic chores and so on. To make matters worse, we found ourselves where the authorities came in and started to tap that water now and paved the little stream or the river with concrete, not recognizing that in areas such as ours, that source of water was a very important resource to community well-being—I like to call it a power spot. Because we are a community who sometimes never vote as people expect, and as a result of that, we often get punished.

So many times, this time of the year is very significant for us because we have been deprived of water over the Christmas holidays where you cannot clean, you cannot wash down, you cannot do anything, but that little source of water is what kept us independent and strong and together because we could go there, we could bathe our children, wash our locks, bathe our dogs—do whatever.

So this thing about water in Trinidad and Tobago is very dear to my heart because I continue to experience difficulty with getting water. It is recently that we are now seeing new pipes being laid, the old pipes were leaking—they are in bad condition—and we are now seeing that new pipes are being laid. So that the people who live higher up on the hills can now see themselves getting some water coming to their homes, and a lot of them are older people.

I want to take the time to make the point that this is an area when you look up, you see huge houses up on the hills and every time I see that, I have to say congratulations to people who built those houses. Because in the days when they built those houses, there was no running water, there were no roads, they had to tote the bricks, the concrete, the galvanize—everything—through a track up to the hill and then take water up on the hill to help them get their houses going. And very often in this country, we look at people and say, “dey lazy”. Nobody who is lazy could do that kind of thing.

Mr. President, I do not know, but having a barrel of water time gone by, we knew how to store water. We knew how to cover the water so that we would not have mosquito larva and all the problems of dengue and so on. And we saw water as something so essential for our well-being that people found ways of ensuring that the little that they got went as far as it could go. So when you had to wash, you had one tub of water, you washed the white clothes, you take out the white; in the same water, you wash the pastels, you take out the pastels; and in the same water, you wash the dark colours. And then you still do not throw away that water because you had to scrub the gym boots, you had to scrub down the yard, and you had to do whatever else you had to do.

It is too long; it is too long; it is too painful for a country such as ours to not have a proper system of delivery where people do not have to be punished, people do not have to be discriminated against in terms of their supply of water because, again, right next to my house, we have two super huge tanks but I do not get water from then. It bypasses my house and goes to an area where the supposedly more privileged people live and we have to suffer for water and wait for it to come from Four Roads several miles away. I am saying all of that to say that we have to understand that the right to safe and accessible water is a human right. We can talk development as much as we want, we can talk sustainability, unless we understand the importance of safe water, good quality water, we would be “spinning top in mud.”

Mr. President, worldwide 1.5 million children under five years of age die because of waterborne diseases—because of a lack of water. We still have situations in Trinidad where children die from things like gastro; where you turn on your tap and what comes out smells, it is brown, it is black, it is discoloured—all kinds of things are coming out of there—and we have to try to treat with this situation.

I have seen nothing more disturbing than the water tanks that are now so much a part of our landscape and we have to ask ourselves: was this by mistake or was it by design? Have we over the years decided to make sure that our water supply is so bad so that people can benefit? There is the saying that poverty has been organized in such a way that people can get rich off the poor. And we have to ask ourselves, every yard you turn, everywhere you look, some huge, ugly water tanks.

Is that absolutely necessary? They fall on children; they harbour mosquitoes; they get sedimentation; there is no proper system of maintenance and cleaning—all kinds of things come out of that. I think probably the thing that is uglier than that is our criss-cross of overhead electricity wires which sometimes make me wonder if that has anything to do with the way that we think—“cross-up, cross-up” and all kinds of things are happening to us.

I am suggesting that the time has not only come but the time has long gone for us to pay some attention to our water supply, to our water system and to the support services in terms of that. We know that we do not have a regular water supply so we know that “on Monday, the turncock—that is what they call them—supposed to come.” But if he has gone to a little party this evening and is in a good mood and decides, “Well, I am not going to turn on”, we do not have any water for several days and it is nobody’s business.

It is just too painful sometimes because things that some people take for granted—that they go home and they turn on their taps and they have water so that they can cook and they can bathe and they can do all kinds of things—they just do not

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happen for so many of us. Sometimes you bathe and as you soap and you lather, there is no water so you are “in a monkey pants”. So this is nothing that we can take for granted and we talk about it and we make all kinds of comments without understanding what it means for so many of us.

Somebody talked about the water riots in 1903, and I am saying, well, I do not know how we do not have water riots all over the place. Because it is very disturbing when you talk productivity and you talk about people coming to work late or when they come, they are too tired, it is because so many people have difficulties in terms of water—getting things done, being on time, bathing children, doing whatever because it really slows you down.

We have to reach to a stage where we understand how important environmental education is. So, apart from having to increase fees, because all of that needs to be done, we need money so it stands to reason that fees have to be increased; but there is so much more that we need to do. Education is important because we have been talking about leakage and wastage and all kinds of things.

How, therefore, do we ensure that our environmental education programmes involve issues of water and sustainability, how we treat with our environment, how we treat with our water supply? What are the things that we need to do? How do we as a people understand that when we turn on a tap and we leave it running for how long, that villages are going without water? When there is a leak in the road and hundreds of thousands of gallons of water are running down the road, there are people who do not have any.

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Paramin, right here, next to town, people used to be suffering for water up there. How many poor people can afford to call a WASA truck or any private contractor and be able to pay money for a truckload of water? Poor people need to use more water than people who do not have a lot, because if you do not have a lot of clothes it means you have to do much more washing. If you have a lot of children, it means you have to do a lot more washing. The things that we have to do in our spaces require a lot of water and we have to reach to a point where we treat with issues of cultural and environmental literacy, so people understand about water harvesting, about saving water, about using it wisely and what is the cost of not just the tank.

Certainly, when you have a tank you have to get a pump, so it is more business for somebody. Getting the tank is one thing, getting the pump is another and then you have to get all the other things that go with that and there is a

constant cost to that. We have a situation with dengue in this country where people have to store water in buckets, bottles, barrels and dustbins and anything that they can get, and we know what happens in that context.

Mr. President, I want to spend a little time focusing on some of the rural areas because, very often, when we talk we do not think about the rural areas. I can remember not too long ago looking at the television and the newspapers and seeing people dipping water out of a little pond in a rural area to get water to drink. I do not know how comfortable some of us feel when we see that, or people having to dig a well and pull up a bucket and the water that is coming up can have all kinds of things inside of it. We just turn on our taps and we get fresh water. We have filters. We have everything that we need. We have to really understand that the rural areas, the forgotten areas, need particular kinds of attention. In 2011 going to 2012, would it not be a wonderful thing that someone can just get up and know that they have water right there that they can use?

We have also seen over the years where standpipes have been removed because there is a presumption and an assumption that everybody in an area has water in their house. Standpipes were the places where a lot of people would go to get their water. A lot of the work that has to be done in the community is from the standpipe, but we took them away. Why? I do not know. I still do not understand why, because there are so many people who do not have water in their homes.

You go to the hospital; you cannot have a proper bath. There is a trickle of water, sometimes no water. You go to St. Ann's Hospital, the nurses have to be toting water—"I eh" saying carrying or bringing—up the hill in buckets and bottles so that the patients can have a bath. There are so many places. You go to the prisons and they are bathing with Jaliter bottles. There is something that is fundamentally wrong in terms of how we treat with the issue of a good supply of water for our citizens.

As the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development, this is particularly dear to me, because the areas where we use a lot of water are the areas where women function, in the household and in the care sector. They are the nurses. They are the ones taking care of children. If you are talking about somebody who is pregnant, the first thing—baby ready "tuh" born, we need water to boil. You are breastfeeding—I know in my time, before you breastfeed, your mother would insist that you drink a glass of water, because they said that is the way to keep your body giving milk. We want to go to the birth clinics. We want to start centres in the pattern of Mamatoto, where we want people to be able to have water births. We want water to be something that is so much a part of our lives, we do not have

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to be in pain, we do not have to worry, we do not have to think whether we will have water or not. Water and electricity are inextricably linked. We know that in many of the same areas we do not get water, we have problems with electricity, particularly where our water is pumped to us.

Women are among the poor. They live in the poor areas. We have women who are farmers. We have women in catering. We have all kinds of work in the care industries where we require water and it is the women, and when there is no water it is the children who must bring the water.

It is particularly painful for me sometimes to think about 62 years in oil-rich Trinidad and Tobago, multi-store buildings, people going to the moon, all kinds of things happening and something like water, a regular supply, any time of night and day you can get it, it is just not happening for us.

I am saying, and I am standing to support, yes, we need to do something drastic. I am always concerned when there is a cost, because very often we find that the cost is to be borne by those who have the least. I think those are areas that we can speak to, but I am very, very happy and strong in my support for any programme that will help us to bring Trinidad and Tobago to a standard where water would be something, when you talk about it flippantly it is so painful for me because I know that at age 62 I have never had a regular supply of water, and I think it is ridiculous that my grandchildren must now come into this place and still have to go through the kinds of problems, in terms of getting some water. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: What about St. Joseph's Convent, do they have water there?

Sen. The Hon. V. St Rose Greaves: I beg your pardon, Sir? [*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: St. Joseph's Convent.

Sen. The Hon. V. St Rose Greaves: Mr. President, I am trying very hard—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Deyalsingh: Do not let him distract you.

Sen. The Hon. V. St Rose Greaves: I also want to say I know somebody talked about WASA and the workers. We have to come to a place where we hold people accountable. We have to come to a place where we understand that there has to be a ratio of workers to the tasks that we have at hand, that it just does not work for us to have a number of people doing little or nothing, or doing the same work over and over. We have to come up with a plan that would see about the leaks, that would see that we do not put down pipes today and we have to dig up tomorrow and repave today and

take down tomorrow. We also need to give assurance. We need to give people an assurance and reassurance, because if people are being asked to pay more money, then they want some assurance that they will get value for their money, because too often over the years in this place you pay more and you get less.

I am suggesting that it is not just about getting the work done, raising the money, it is about the education. It is about the support programmes. It is about the awareness. It is about communities and how we see them. What are our priorities, in terms of where we do the work first? It is about the idea and the issue of corruption, because, for a lot of us, we do not see corruption when it happens right in our houses and right in our faces, when people come to us and ask us to pay exorbitant sums for water, which we are not really supposed to pay that kind of money for.

I am suggesting that this is not just something for a few of us, this must be a national issue, a national campaign and a national effort. Let us please understand the importance of safe water and of a good quality water supply not just in national development but certainly to how we are located in the world. Mr. President, I thank you.

Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh: Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute this evening. I must admit, I am thoroughly enjoying the debate this evening. I think all speakers have spoken from their hearts. First of all, I want to congratulate the hon. Minister of Public Utilities for piloting this Motion, which we support.

I want to thank secondly, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine, for his very forthright contribution and admission that good things have been done in this country over the past. It is not something you hear often, and I think being the youngest person, he has not been so dazed as yet to become cynical.

I thank Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, the Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring. His contribution was more of a plea for Government and Opposition working together. I hope wherever he is he may be listening to what I am going to say, because I will be referring a lot to his contribution later down in my contribution, so that we could move away from politics being this zero-sum game. He is right; we do not advance the cause of national development when the Opposition bashes the Government and vice versa. It should not be one of one-upmanship.

Sen. The Hon. Verna St. Rose Greaves, Ma'am, you threw me back to my childhood and I had—I am not as mature as you, Ma'am. I am 55 years old but I grew up in Caroni, which I will always say and I grew up with stories where my parents

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would say our clothes had to be taken down to Caroni River on the banks to be washed, but the problem with washing your clothes on the banks of the Caroni River was that the Caroni River had alligators, so that was a problem to get your clothes washed in those days. Ma'am, I thank you for your contribution.

As I move into the actual contribution about water, this is a very important Motion. We need to secure our water supplies. As you know, wars have been fought, won and lost on water, especially fresh water. The United Nations has actually coined the term "water conflicts". In the future, wars are going to be fought over water, whether they are the fresh water pools in Africa, where not only men will fight, but beasts will fight, lions, tigers and so on, over dwindling water supplies. This is a very important Motion. The Motion, to put things in a different context, is about water being produced by Desalcott, which then goes to WASA, which then goes to Point Lisas. I think WASA is more an intermediate in the whole thing.

The first question I want to ask the hon. Minister when he is responding—because I am not sure because Sen. Al-Rawi said we have not seen the contract. The original contract, I believe it was a 20-year contract, between Desalcott and WASA. My question is: does that contract have an escalation clause, and are we dealing with this Motion on the basis of an escalation clause?

Mr. President, if we look at WASA's current water tariff, we would see that there are about 16 classes of water users, from domestic, standpipe and A1. Sen. The Hon. Verna St. Rose Greaves, one of the problems with standpipes—you mentioned that and I know this for sure, when we used to live in Caroni and Curepe—and one of the reasons we may have had to move away from standpipes was that the very users of standpipe water used to vandalize the standpipes and you would see water gushing. The very users of that water would vandalize the standpipes, and that has nothing to with me or you. It is just human nature. Why would you vandalize your own standpipe in our own road from which you get water? It just makes no sense, and I agree with you.

We have domestic standpipes, A1, internally serviced and charitable institutions, and these institutions pay about \$1.75 for the first 150 cubic metres. You have non-domestic industrial B3—and the relevance of this will come soon—commercial C3, paying \$3.50 per cubic metre; cottage D3; agricultural E3, agricultural, as you would suspect would pay a lower rate of \$2.25 per cubic metre. That is 15 classes.

6. 15 p.m.

Then you have Point Lisas which is in a class by itself paying \$7.50 per cubic metre of which there are two components; the \$3.50 which goes through the RIC, and the \$4.00 which goes through the water improvement charge, which is what we are dealing with today.

Sen. Basharat Ali raised a very important point when he spoke about the boundaries of Point Lisas, and if we go to the boundaries which arise from the schedule, water improvement, Point Lisas Industrial Estate area order and he called out the different boundaries; on the north by Waterloo Road and so on. The concern I have, and I am hoping that the hon. Minister would attend to it in his wrapping up, is that this increased water rate to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, is it only payable to the large businesses, the ammonia plants, the urea plants? Does it also apply to the residential users within that area, or non-residential like small business, and commercial? So does it apply to like commercial, small businesses. I am asking? Because the difficulty with that is that you may have a bit of—no, I am just asking—

Sen. George: But the law is very clear.

Hon. Senator: The law only excludes residential.

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: The law, as I understand it, excludes residential. I am simply asking Minister. You do not have to get hot under the collar. I am simply asking, does it apply to—[*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]*—the other users? Because that would mean that these small persons would be paying a higher rate as opposed to other users in other parts of the country; \$3.50.*

For example, Minister, you may have a soft drink plant outside of Point Lisas classified under non-domestic, industrial or commercial, and they would be paying \$3.50 for the first cubic metre. I am simply asking whether all users within that area: industrial; residential; non-commercial; commercial; everybody except residential, what would be the differential in rates between the Point Lisas as described and other areas? [*Desk thumping*] So it is just a point I am raising and when you are wrapping up you can address it.

Mr. President, Sen. Tewarie—yes, I am glad Sen. Tewarie is back. Sen. Tewarie, in your absence I spoke highly of your contribution. Sen. Tewarie spoke about the development challenges and that politics should not be this zero-sum game, and that as we move along from government to government I think we should learn from the mistakes of the past and move forward.

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Mr. President, much weather has been made of acting appointments in the past. I am standing here today saying that I agree with many of the criticisms which have been leveled against acting appointments in the past. I am saying that outright. Am saying that, following from Sen. The Hon. Tewarie's excellent contribution today which was a more patriotic style contribution than a political contribution. Sen. Drayton spoke about alleged corruption in Desalcott. Sen. Tewarie spoke about these agencies having to learn to control themselves.

I want to pose some questions which I hope—

Sen. George: Senator, would you give way?

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Sure.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George): Mr. President, I beg to move, under Standing Order 9(8), that the Senate continue in session until the debate on this Motion is completed.

Question put and agreed to.

WATER IMPROVEMENT RATE

(POINT LISAS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE) (VARIATION) ORDER, 2011

Sen. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. President. I was making the point accepting the baton from persons like Sen. Drayton who spoke about alleged corruption at Desalcott, speaking about Sen. Tewarie's contribution. If we are to learn—and I said, I stand here and I accept the criticism of the past about acting appointments, it does us little good. But if we are to move forward, how do we explain the fact that you have an acting CEO of WASA for 15 months? The fact is that he is not only an acting CEO, he is an acting CEO who was a major actor, a major player, in the same corruption allegations which we are speaking about with Desalcott.

It was then Attorney General, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, who invited Bob Lindquist to do a forensic audit of that whole thing. Nothing has been proven either way. The thing has not been concluded. Question marks hang over the acting CEO of WASA. [*Desk thumping*] How do we as a country then learn from the mistakes of the past? How do we stand, criticize the past administration, rightly so, for maybe acting appointments, rightly so; but then now we justify it, we accept it? Where is learning, where is the political development, where is the development of the institutions?

Because you see if Bob Lindquist is coming to follow the bread crumbs, but the person who is installed as the acting CEO of WASA knows where the breadcrumbs are, you know what he is going to do? He is going to backtrack and eat all the breadcrumbs

so there is no forensic trail. So I am asking the question following from Sen. The Hon. Tewarie's excellent contribution: how does the Government justify an acting CEO for 15 months, an acting CEO who was a major player in the Desalcott affair which has not yet been examined and audited and brought to any conclusion? Where is the political learning? That is what I think Sen. Tewarie and myself agree upon: politics should not be a zero-sum game where we bash each other to death.

Politics should be: let us learn from the past, make sure we do not commit the same errors again so we develop as a society. And this issue with an acting CEO of WASA is just symbolic of the type of change which is not happening; because what is happening with an acting CEO, it flies in the face of accountability, it flies in the face of transparency, it flies in the face of good corporate governance. Governance was one of the themes of Sen. Tewarie's contribution today, and I concur with everything which Sen. Tewarie said here today. But in concurring, Mr. President, how do we put—oh, Mr. President, I have stopped using the word which I cannot pronounce again.

Let me make an admission: I was born with a stutter. This has plagued me all my life, so I am now going to say "put into operation" from now. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] I would no longer try to say the word which I cannot say. That word would not be said. Like Sen. Al-Rawi has a problem with "methodology", but I have no such problem. It is a speech impediment which I have and I learned to live with it over the years.

Coming back to the acting CEO, as I said, an acting CEO, but of the nature of a man whose conduct in the whole Desalcott affair has not sit well with Trinidad and Tobago. There is no accountability, there is no transparency, and issues like these, Mr. President, are what would lead us to having our corruption rating fall even further, and this is quite, quite in order in debating this Motion today. Because how can we sit here in this Parliament, debate a Bill about water and we have this untenable situation with an acting CEO? "Why is this CEO still there," is the question which was posed in the *Sunday Express*, December 11, 2011:

"Ganga still acting CEO at WASA."

And the Union at WASA is very disturbed about this. Mr. Lambert:

"It is highly irregular and unusual to have a CEO acting for so long without being appointed in the position."

So, Mr. President, I want an answer today, if possible, about this acting position. It does the reputation of WASA no good; it does the reputation of Trinidad and Tobago no good. [*Desk thumping*] The original excuse was that they were waiting to appoint a

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board, a board has been appointed since, I believe, December 15, 2010. What is the date today? A year later, somebody has to explain to this country why Mr. Ganga Singh is still acting, because we have not learned the lessons from the past. How are we going to recruit the best talent? Why is an ad not being placed locally, regionally, internationally to get the best person to be the CEO of WASA? Why? Somebody has to explain that to me today, and I do not want to see an ad coming out tomorrow with a closing date of Thursday.

Mr. President, on the issue of water and WASA, Point Lisas, I turn to the Budget Statement of 2012, “From Steady Foundation to Economic Transformation”. On page 19 of the budget under the heading: “Improving Physical Infrastructure: Water”, and if I may quote, Mr. President:

“Mr. Speaker, the country’s water supply system suffers from major deficiencies related to high overhead, inadequate tariffs...”

We are here today to discuss redressing some of that “inadequacy of tariffs”, which we have no problem with. My question is—and we heard earlier that the subsidy to WASA for this fiscal year is, I believe, \$1.8 billion. I think that is a correct figure. What this statement in the budget signals to me, “inadequate tariffs”, is that maybe we need to look at the tariffs for all the classes alluded to earlier.

For instance, as I said earlier, within the confines of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, I think this new rate is going to apply to all users except residential. My question was the non-residential users, which include small business, are they to pay the higher rates? So the mom and pop shops, little businesses are they to pay the higher rates as opposed to similar businesses outside of Point Lisas? That is the simple question I was asking.

It seems inequitable to me to have a small business within the Point Lisas Industrial Estate paying a higher rate, and a soft drink factory in Macoya paying a lower rate. That, to me, is a disconnect, it does not make sense. You have big business, water factories in Trincity and Diego Martin, persons making detergents on the Eastern Main Road, they are heavy consumers of water. My simple question is: are those heavy industrial users to pay a lower rate than small businesses in Point Lisas? That is the simple question being asked, and I would appreciate an answer today.

6.30 p.m.

Coming back to the issue of inadequate tariffs, the question then becomes, are we looking at some time in the future increasing these metre charges rates from A1 to F for all users including standpipe, charitable institutions, cottage, agricultural, domestic and so on? The budget statement seems to imply that water rates may have to be looked at some time in the future.

Not only that, Mr. President. When we tie in the issue of water to agriculture—because in the medium term policy framework—excellent document that the Government has articulated through the Minister of Planning—it says in that document on page 39 that the food import bill is to be decreased by 10 per cent, the GDP attributable to agriculture should increase to 3 per cent by 2014. Agriculture is going to be a heavy user of water. The current contribution of agriculture to GDP I think is .5 per cent. If we intend to increase from .5 to 3 per cent that is a 600 per cent which is laudable goal, but hon. Minister, we are going to need water.

Currently, agricultural users pay \$2.25 per cubic metre. How is this rate to be adjusted in the future together with domestic users? The issue of inequity between the Point Lisas users and the non-Point Lisas users is something that needs to be addressed. So Mr. President, those are my few comments I have today. I do not intend to be long. I do not intend to detain the Senate. I simply want to put on record my concurrence with Sen. Tewarie, but in concurring with Sen. Tewarie, there is a disconnect between the contribution, the intent of his contribution and the action in still having Mr. Ganga Singh as acting CEO of WASA after 15 months, after one year of the appointment of a board and his still unexplained unresolved issue in desalcott. [*Desk thumping*] I also look forward to a conclusive statement on the issue I have raised between the inequity of rates between Point Lisas, the non-residential users, the small businesses, they will be paying a higher rate. How does that match with the similar businesses outside of the Point Lisas Estate? Mr. President, I will be closing, but before I close I just want to say what a pleasure it was to be in your company last night for the function of Mr. Neil Jaggassar, and I hope that Mr. Neil Jaggassar is looking on us with some approval today. Mr. President, I thank you.

Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks for the opportunity to make a contribution to this Motion. I did not plan on entering this debate—[*Interruption*]—anyway I will let that slide. [*Crosstalk*]—but I am going to throw in my 2 cents for about 5 minutes or so or even less.

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I decided to speak today when, earlier in the sitting, I went to the rest room and I saw the colour of water in the restroom. It is not the first time I have come to the Parliament and the water coming through the faucet and in the toilet bowl and so forth is brown.

Sen. George: Point of order. Mr. President, just by way of explanation of that brown water in the building, yesterday WASA had to do some refurbishing work at the water treatment plant in Caroni which is the plant that services Port of Spain. The plant was down for maybe from about eight o'clock to until about two o'clock in the afternoon, and they turned the water back on at around two o'clock. What really should have happened was that they should have allowed the system to flush itself out a bit more so that the muddy water would have got out of the system, but they put the system back on and released water into the pipes prior to completing the flushing, hence we have the brown water and WASA has put out a statement on it.

What people need to do is to allow the pipes—leave the pipes open and let them run so that the dirty water gets out and the clean water will eventually come. Essentially, that is what happened and this happens from time to time. Thank you very much.

Sen. Hinds: The Minister should be fired.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: Thank you for the intervention. Mr. President, I only decided to contribute today when I went to the restroom earlier and saw that. It is not the first time I have come to the Parliament and we had that problem. That is a problem that we encounter in different places, because I remember going to school, and there are some days that the water coming through the faucet will be brown. I too experienced that at my home.

Sen. St. Rose Greaves brought back some memories with her contribution of not having enough water and so forth in her childhood, and I would have experienced that in my days. In my days also, Mr. President, in my high school days, I remember at my household we had to keep water in a barrel, and one afternoon we came home and met two younger children from the village playing a game in the barrel of water, ducking their heads under the water for who could stay under the water the longest. My father came home and saw them. When we came home from school and work we saw them and my father gave them a “licking”, but those were the days when you could beat your neighbours’ children. You cannot do that anymore.

Anyway, Mr. President, I remember us having to make the decision as to whether or not to throw away the water or to keep it, and we ended up keeping the water and just telling everybody in the family, “Do not drink the water. You could use it to do everything else”. That is to tell you how scarce water was in those days.

We have moved from—I live in Bethel village—having water one day a week to now having water three days a week, and we do not get it all day. We get it for about four to six hours. We were lucky when we get it six hours of those days. And that is not under the jurisdiction of the Tobago House of Assembly, if you know anything about Tobago, public utilities handled by the ministries in Trinidad. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. President, I really want to concentrate not just on the quantity of water, the number of days you get water, but also on the quality of water. Before I go onto that, we too in Bethel Village have that problem of the villages next to you have water, the villages next to us have water 24/7, but there is some form of discrimination or something that I do not understand. If somebody else has the explanation, I would like to know, and I am sure the other people in my village would like to know also. Why does Carnbee, which is the village right before us, have water 24/7 and Patience Hill and those villages after us have water 24/7, but Bethel Village has water only three days a week for about four hours on those days? It affects your lifestyle, how you plan your day, how you plan your week.

Because I know in Tobago, around CXC time, teachers will try not to have classes on a Saturday morning because that is the day most people get water. That is the day we do our laundry. I even find myself trying to duck or outsmart somebody who likes to take my clothes off the line on a Saturday. I say, only if I could wash on a different day to try to duck that person, but, until we start getting water on a different day or getting water more often I could duck that person. That person is enjoying wearing my clothes, I hope they wear it with sass and style like I would have if I could still keep it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, back to the quality of water; we are asking companies and we are asking other people in Point Lisas, the client of that desal plant area, to pay more money for water. All that is well and good. It is about time, as you said it has not been since 1998 or so we would have had an increase in the amount of money they would have paid per cubic metre.

Now, Sen. Balgobin also would have raised that concern as to the quality of water coming through the faucets. When the clients receive the water, they have to incur an additional amount of expenses, spend more money to treat that water for it to be usable. I feel like if we are talking about increasing the price, we need to be talking also about improving the quality of water coming from the desalination plant and so forth.

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We would have spent a lot of money on the project to have that Point Lisas desalination plant. In doing a little browsing around I saw Ionics, I think it is GE Ionics. They were contracted to do that work along with Karamath Engineering. Now, Mr. President, I came across Monday, October 04, 1999, an issue in the *New York Times*, an issue rated by one Roberta Holland and this little article spoke glowingly about Ionics getting this opportunity to build the largest desalination plant in the western hemisphere and how much relief they would bring to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the kind of money that GE Ionics was making on this project.

I feel that if we are going to spend this kind of money, then we need to be getting some kind of quality. Mr. President, here in the article it says that it is going to be the largest one in the western hemisphere and later on in the article it speaks about, it says:

“Ionics will enjoy a \$6 million annual revenue stream during the 23-year contract”.

So, for 23 years we would be paying Ionics TT \$36 million. And I did the little math, 36 by 23 is somewhere in the vicinity of TT \$720 million that Ionics would be receiving over these years. And it is not for the initial works, it is also for maintenance of the equipment and so forth as stated in this article.

So, Mr. President, we have to ensure we get quality for our money. We also need to look at the point of how we manage contracts. This whole issue with Desalcott and Mr. Ganga Singh the other people, the whole shindig that is in the papers that Sen. Hinds and the other Senators would have raised, as much as we want to put it behind us, we are speaking more and more about having at least four or five more desalination plants throughout the country.

Mr. President, there is the newspaper article that Sen. Hinds would have shown us earlier where there was a walk with the Minister of Public Utilities and the now acting CEO in Point Fortin to establish a new desalination plant in Point Fortin. Here it is:

“Desal plant coming soon
...to bring relief to thousands in South-west”

And this was written by Trevor Watson from the south bureau of the *Trinidad Express*. So we are speaking about setting up more desal plants, and, Mr. President, this Government likes to remind us, every time they come here and they talk about the high-rise building and so forth, that you have to learn from your past in order to move on.

6.45 p.m.

Mr. President, it is critical that we learn from this past experience to ensure that kind of thing does not happen again, because we do not just cause embarrassment to ourselves as a country. I came across Volume 7 of the Global Water Intelligence, dated April 04, 2006 and they highlighted, “Misery continues for GE Ionics in Trinidad”. Mr. President, when you read this article, you see where GE Ionics is now concerned about their reputation as it relates to the whole corruption scandal.

They would have been in operation for 50 years, and GE Ionics went all over the US boasting and saying that they are going to build the largest plant, and “We are going to make this amount of money”, and “This is good stuff”, and now they are tied up, and it says, “Misery continues for GE Ionics in Trinidad”. So it is not just about our country’s reputation, it is about the reputation of the companies and the multinational corporations that we are engaged in business with.

So, if we cannot manage our own business at home as it relates to corruption and so on and upholding our own integrity and the integrity of the multinational corporations that we do business with, when we are talking about establishing more desalination plants—another four or five desalination plants—it is going to be difficult to find a partner that will do business with us, and when we find one it is going to be more costly. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. President, we have to ensure that we learn from that experience.

This takes me back to the quality of water and enhancing and improving this whole reverse osmosis process that is used in the desalination process. When these companies do not receive quality water, the transitional cost to process it and get it ready for use, I think that expense would trickle down towards the end users.

Now, Mr. President, desalination is not an environmentally friendly process. These desalination plants contribute to wastewater discharges that affect coastal water quality. So, in fact, the whole process itself affects the resource that it depends on, hence the reason Sen. Dr. Balgobin would have been concerned about the quality of the water, and I am also raising this concern.

When we contract these companies, we have to ensure that they are readily equipped, they have the facilities and they employ the right technology in the desalination process. Now, due to the highly polluted water that is emitted back into the sea, it is of a higher temperature and it contains residual chemicals from the pre-treatment process, and there are heavy metals in this water.

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Mr. President, I came across an article from the Trinidad and Tobago *Express* where the Mayor of Point Fortin is asking the Government to hold off on these talks about the desalination plants. They are asking for the EMA and all the other bodies that deal with environmental management in Point Fortin and in Trinidad and Tobago to be involved in the consultation process, because this desalination process has a negative impact on the environment.

What you find over time if the right measures are not implemented, companies find themselves having a good quality of water in the initial stages of desalination and later on that quality depletes. Mr. President, I do not know if that is the reason to this day the desalination customers are having problems with the quality of the water after the different processes in the desalination process.

Mr. President, I want to raise a couple of red flags for the future establishment of the desalination plant, and we need to find ways since we are already experiencing problems with having dirty or polluted water in the current desalination plant at Point Lisas. We are asking for more money, so we need to improve the quality of the product.

We need to look into issues of residual chlorine which cause cancer for the fishes and the different organisms in the sea. We have to make sure that when these international corporations come to Trinidad and Tobago and set up these plants that they are using quality machinery, because there is the problem where metal copper and hard metals are being found in the discharge that is being emitted into the sea. I think that the Environmental Management Agency and the other environmental organizations need to be a part of the consultation process in ensuring that we have quality water.

Now, we need to have the boards to keep the necessary checks and balances on these multinationals in check. This whole issue of desalination is becoming more and more important around the world, and we would like to look at desalinated water as an endless renewable resource.

In countries throughout the region and also in developed countries, there is a significant amount of attention being placed on improving and enhancing desalination technologies. We are about to set up at least four more new desalination plants which mean, that we are going to be contracting services from international bodies. Mr. President, I would like us to ensure this time around that locals are being trained in these technologies and that somewhere in the contract we find a way to improve our local desalination technology capability to train these young people in these technologies.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie would have raised the issue of China, and who is going to provide all this water for China's increasing population. We recognize that we are also in high demand for desalinated water, so we need to train our people on the ground to ensure that they have the skills and we need to invest in improving that technology so we would not have to continue to look abroad for this kind of resource.

I recognize that China is now undergoing a scheme, a process and a plan to improve their desalination processes, and they are encouraging small business people to get into that kind of business. I recognize that this kind Government has been doing more business with China, and I hope that we would negotiate some kind of agreement so that we could also benefit from desalination technology which is now very popular in China.

We need to get things right at our local desalination plant and with our local desalination process, because the WTO is now considering its approach to treating desalination services, and the machinery used in desalination under the GATT and GATT agreements of the World Trade Organization. They are looking into issues as they relate to most favoured nation and national treatment. So, we need to improve our local capability and our capacity to treat with this or else other countries would put us out of business.

Finally, I want to highlight the importance of improving our groundwater supply systems for fixing the pipes that need to be fixed. There is also need for sound public education, because, as much as many people enjoy a greater supply of water today, we are not being precautious in dealing with water. Too often you find people taking too long to repair their pipes and their water systems at home, because we still have this very old system—if I am wrong maybe the Minister could correct me in his wrapping up.

I think our system is still where we pay water rate according to the number of taps you have in the building, and not according to the amount of water we use. I hope that we do some research and invest in having something like water meters so that people can pay for the amount of water they use and we could be more responsible in using water.

I really do not think it makes sense for, let us say, an old person with a big house and a large number taps, who is not using that amount of water, but “sponging off or cleaning off” or whatever you want to call it, with a basin of water each day—I really think that we need to look into having water meters, some way of paying for water according to what we use.

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This whole business of desalination and using sea water for fresh water is serious business. Developed countries and countries in the United Nations and the WTO are now talking about ownership of sea water. I do not know how that is going to work out in the end of it—from which line to what line this water belongs to who—but it is something that is being considered on the Internet when I was doing my research and browsing.

So, with those few words, Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, it is now 6.56 p.m. and I propose to take a break and recommence at 7.30 p.m. This Senate now stands suspended until 7.30 p.m.

7.00 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

7.30p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Penelope Beckles: Mr. President, I join this Motion on the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) Order, 2011 filed under the hand of the hon. Minister of Public Utilities. I start my contribution just to probably talk a bit of a point that the Minister of Gender, Youth Affairs and Child Development made, where she spoke about the importance of environmental literacy and the whole issue of educating the population about water harvesting and a number of other things in relation to water. I thought that was very important.

I do not intend to focus on much else that the Minister said. The question there really is who is responsible for fulfilling that task of environmental literacy and the issue of education, as it relates to other issues affecting water distribution and harvesting. I know that the RIC over the years has been doing quite a good job as it relates to educating the population, and I know WASA from time to time, but certainly I do not think it is sufficient.

Concerning the point that Sen. Cudjoe raised as it relates to the water problem in the Parliament building, I know the Minister gave us an explanation about the situation. That problem actually has been going on maybe for a day or two, and it still exists as far as Woodbrook, St. James, Cocorite, and Westmoorings to a large extent, and a number of the customers in Port of Spain who are still receiving a brown supply of water.

I decided just to make the point that even as we attend the Parliament today—and a simple thing to me, and I do not think it is the Minister's responsibility really, but you have this problem of the brown water throughout the

entire Parliament building. I do not know if, Mr. President, you have had the experience, but the fact of the matter you would think that there would be some notice or some indication to the staff and other users of the Parliament that there would be a problem with the water and the discoloration.

That is why the issue that Sen. St. Rose-Greaves raised was so important. The Minister indicated that it was a situation where WASA actually did not flush out the system properly, but turned on the water, so that members of the public had to subject themselves—as some people have said to me in the West—to literally muddy water yesterday and today, and maybe it would continue. Normally it could take as much as two or three days, depending on where you live in the extremities.

If we look at the water from Hildon, which is the clear bottle, and we look at—and I actually collected some from the water in our tap in the Parliament right now—you would see the serious discoloration of the water in the Parliament and this water that we are drinking.

[Sen. Beckles displays two bottles of water]

Some people assume that they do not drink water from WASA, but a lot of people drink water directly from the tap. If WASA was aware that people were receiving coloured and muddy water, then you would think they would ensure that the population was aware. I know the Minister indicated they would advise—*[Interruption]* well if they did, we in the Parliament were not advised. So when they say, “WASA did”, I do not know which person in the Parliament was aware today that the water would be discoloured. I suppose the fact is that people just assume you are not going to drink it. The staff here probably all have clear water so that they do not need to know.

I am just making the point that it is so unfortunate, and Sen. Dr. Tewarie said it a while ago, that the minute you raise a criticism or you have a suggestion, it causes a lot of discomfort, and immediately you hear a lot of unnecessarily rumblings, but it is not going to stop me from making my point about the importance of ensuring that the population is aware of what has transpired.

Even more importantly would be the issue relating to why, as the Minister said, WASA decided to embark on releasing the water, not waiting until you had the proper exercise being completed, before the water was turned on. That is also a separate issue. So whether they did it or they did not do it is one issue, but the fact is, why was it not done in a particular way to avoid what is happening today? As I said, the minute you raise these issues, it is viewed as criticism.

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The Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring in his discourse spoke about the fact that the expectations of the population in relation to this Government had been extremely high, that people have been expecting the Government to deliver on all sorts of things, and that the Government had been focusing on delivering the basics. The Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring went on to say that very often there are issues, and the discussions and accusations do not carry the country any further. He spoke about the fact that we all had a duty to ensure that there was a particular type of governance, both Opposition and Government. As a matter of fact, he said we had a moral responsibility and duty and that some of these accusations do not carry the country any further.

The truth is that is what democracy is all about. Democracy means, in essence, that people have the right to criticize constructively. Even on some occasions there are people who may not criticize constructively, because they may have their own agendas or what have you. As you criticize you have the right also to give solutions. But to suggest from time to time that the right to criticize should not exist, that is when we move from being a democracy to being a totalitarian state. We see even countries like Russia today that thought they would never have criticisms or probably even demonstrations, the President himself is in for a rude awakening, and cannot even seem to handle the demonstrations taking place in his country.

So the bottom line is, while I agree with a lot of what Sen. Dr. Tewartie, the Minister of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring, said, that is the ideal world where you have that kind of agreement between Opposition and Government, or you have that kind of discourse which, at the end of the day, allows you to move forward in a way where the population is of the view that it is a different kind of politics they are seeing, a different level of maturity. But whenever criticisms are raised, constructively or otherwise, you are met with a certain kind of hysteria that does not always encourage you to take that approach.

At the end of the day, we all agree that we have a responsibility to assist in developing the best Trinidad and Tobago that we would like. We all recognize that if the Government has come into office, and in coming they have made a number of promises, and based on those promises they have caused high expectation, they have to live with that. They have to understand that if you make those promises and raise the expectations, then people are going to complain from time to time, and it is the extent to which you are able to deliver on those promises.

If you have people reacting because you are not delivering on those promises, whether it is the unions or the private sector complaining, then that is something the Government has to live with. If the unions decide to march and express their dissatisfaction, that is part of the collective bargaining process, and therefore that is a matter they have to treat with, if you decided that you wanted to govern.

Sen. St. Rose-Greaves wondered about the issue of whether or not some people benefited from time to time, when you have these problems relating to the distribution of water, whether it was not a coincidence; in other words whether there were some people benefiting. I would say to the hon. Minister that I am sure that from time to time if the research was done and provided to you, the answer to that would be “Yes”.

We had the recent situation with Desalcott where they indicated that they would be down for something like three days. The plant normally provides and supplies some 30 million gallons of water daily. The hon. Minister indicated that he did not know the cause of the delay in getting the plant operation back on stream.

7.45 p.m.

As matter of fact, it is quoted here in quotation marks and I am reading from the *Newsday* article, where it is stated on the 12th—sometime I think it would have been last month or earlier this month, where it is stated that:

“‘We would not know of the details, However we have deployed more than 60 water trucks. This is affecting a large area.’

Public Utilities”—Minister—“Emmanuel George, whose ministry has line responsibility for WASA, also said he did not know the cause of the delay in getting the plant back in operation.

‘I don’t know what is the cause. They say it is an electrical problem. I have not had time to deal with this.

We are doing our best to get water to the people who are affected’, ‘We know it is not the best situation. This delay was not anticipated.’”

Because you see I have sat here so often and you would hear, of course, that in the past everything that has gone wrong, it is because of poor management on the part of the last administration and on not having the political will. This was a situation that should have taken only three days to remedy, and it took some eight days and more which resulted in a truck-borne water supply. So whilst one would not want to draw the inference that this has been done so somebody is going to benefit, those are questions that people ask.

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Sen. Verna St. Rose Greaves spoke about the challenges in the rural communities, and again during the dry season that is a matter of great concern for a lot of the corporations over the years, that there are only certain companies which would benefit during the dry season for water-trucking in those rural communities, and the cost and the charges are normally very exorbitant. As a matter of fact, sometimes the claims that they submit for trucking water in some of those communities are extremely high and some of the communities would tell you that whilst people submit claims they do not receive the water. And this is not something that I speak about out of reading, this is something I speak about from personal knowledge and experience, as well as investigations as a Minister.

It is not something that you could deal with very easily because, whilst we live in a society, Sen. Dr. Tewarie, where you expect people to be honest in terms of submitting claims for delivering something as important as water to communities, you do not expect people to come and file and submit an invoice for delivering water to the extremities of Cedros or Barrackpore or Marac and they have not done it. But the truth is they have been doing it.

I have had experience as a child growing up, going through the cane fields and you see a truck emptying the entire tank of water that they should have been distributing to the communities, including where I lived. And they would go to the side—they would enter one of the roads in Usine Ste. Madeleine or Barrackpore and I am sure Sen. Karim knows what I am speaking about, right. And that is not the Minister's fault.

We have some people in our society who are extremely dishonest. The extent to which we are going to be able to stop that is a serious challenge. But every government, in my view, that comes into office tries its best to change it, and I am sure this Minister tries his best to change it because, as you would know, we come to the crop season by next month and there are some areas in Tabaquite, in Barrackpore, in Moruga, in Cedros, sometimes parts of Rio Claro, where people still depend on that service and the Minister has to find funds to pay those people who claim to have delivered water; and they do not do it, all right.

So we grapple with it, Sen. St. Rose Greaves, we grapple with it; and granted—I do not think any of us sitting in the Senate here is happy that there are still communities without water, not one single one of us here is happy. There are some of us who have grown up in areas—Sen. Karim, Sen. Bharrath, Sen. Moonan and others who have had the experience of having to depend on barrels of water, tanks of water for their entire lives.

So as we grow older and we all have the opportunity as you have said, to improve on our governance, I mean the less we spend time blaming each other for who did not get and who did not give and see if we can, as we discuss these matters today, recognize that—I mean the majority of us in most instances are pretty honest and genuine about our attempts to improve it, but you cannot monitor every single situation.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Thank you for giving way. I just want to make a comment on something you said earlier, I was not here in the Senate but I was listening to you, and you made a point about democracy, and Senator, I wanted to say that the comments I made had nothing to do with curbing the democratic right of people to present their case. I made a point about the tone of dealing with issues and what that tone implied in terms of the population.

And the second point I made was the fact that sometimes there was tendency to mix fact with rumour, and therefore, that led to further confusion.

Sen. P. Beckles: Well, you know some of us have different tones but it does not mean that we are any less genuine or truthful. [*Desk thumping*] Some people—I mean, you have a totally different style of presenting but your sting could be equally dangerous as the sting of my friend, Sen. Hinds to whom people often refer.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: No, Sen. Hinds I admire.

Sen. P. Beckles: No, but you talk about tone, I mean ideally, you know, we are all made up differently, we all speak differently, we argue differently and sometimes people would like the tone to be not as aggressive but that sometimes adds to the variation and the excitement in the debate. But I think a more important thing, even as we have different tones, is that we do not disrespect each other. I think that to me is the more significant point. [*Desk thumping*] And because you can be very gentle and you can have a very mild tone but you could be very disrespectful, and you could have a very aggressive tone and you do not have to be disrespectful.

Sen. Hinds: My problem is that that Government is getting me vex. [*Interruption*]

Sen. P. Beckles: Sen. The Hon. Brig Sandy was enquiring from me as to why they would empty the water. They would empty the water because in essence you would be able to claim quickly, in other words, Sen. Bharath he knows exactly what I am talking about. In other words, you are really claiming depending on the number of trucks, the amount of loads—trips, sorry, that is the correct word, the number of trips

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you deliver. So that if you have—let us say you want to make six trips per day then, in other words, because if you understood—I mean, I lived, for example, in Bois Neuf Village in San Fernando, and you started taking the water from Retrench which is miles away, and you have to give a rim of water or two rims to persons which is taking you some five miles, that really is going to take you probably, what, A couple of hours, right? *[Interruption]*

Hon. Senator: Especially in hilly areas.

Sen. P. Beckles: Especially in hilly areas. But if when you left Retrench and you went through Ste. Madeleine or one of those places and you went into a lonely side road, where people are not likely to see you, and you emptied that entire truck of water—emptying the truck may take you half an hour but distributing the truck will take you five hours; that is really the difference.

And of course, the way the system works is that the persons who are there—because you are not going to submit the invoice the same day. So you submit it maybe three weeks later and there is no system in place to really check and see if when you logged in you logged in at 9.30 and then when you returned you returned at 10.00; and I dare suggest to you, it has not changed.

Sen. Hinds: They have a few truck emptiers around here, you know.

Sen. P. Beckles: I am just saying that sometimes we are—and Sen. Karim, you are aware of that yourself. Sometimes we as politicians, you know, in the effort to score points so hard on each other we do not even realize that a lot of us have passed through the system, have understood the system, have tried to improve the system, and we have not gotten to where we would like to get as yet.

So, Mr. President—I was almost going to drink the wrong one. *[Interruption]* Yes, Mr. President, *[Interruption]* pay for my sins?

Sen. Hinds: That one came from England.

Sen. P. Beckles: Mr. President, so that the efforts at the desalination—and the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs spoke about it which is in essence, to ensure what you call a regular and consistent supply of water—would have been one of the reasons that the Government would have entered this arrangement, and I am sure the customers in Point Lisas would have been quite satisfied that more or less they have been able to get a regular supply because in truth and in fact, they cannot afford to get anything other than a regular supply because of the

complexity of the industrial activity and the absolute necessity that you cannot not have consistent and regular supply of water. So that when you have a situation where you promised and said that, okay, we would only be down for three days and it goes to eight days and two weeks, it is really an extremely difficult situation.

The issue of desalination has not been an easy one to convince a lot of people because, as you know, there is this view that Trinidad and Tobago has enough fresh water, and surface water and as well water underground that we could comfortably supply our entire country with water. But we know that whilst the majority of the planet is covered with water, only a small portion of that water is drinkable, and that is why desalination has sought to resolve that problem of course by doing the transformation of sea water and other sources of salt water to water that is drinkable.

The environmentalists we would never be able to convince that going in the direction of desalination is the right way but we are not going into that debate today, but the reality is, it is a matter that is discussed continuously whenever these matters come up. People say that in the extremities of Cedros and other places where there are real challenges for water, and then the irony is sometimes even people on the north coast where you have a lot of fresh water and rivers, even in those areas they have challenges for water, but it all really has to do with whether the infrastructure is put in place.

I must say, Mr. President, that whilst WASA has not been perfect, I mean we have seen over the years that in a number of areas there have been quite a lot of improvements in terms of water supply, and Sen. Cudjoe who was talking about Tobago and talked about the fact that there are places in Tobago where you have a regular water supply of 24 hours—and there are a number of parts in Trinidad and Tobago which have had that 24/7, and there are others who you know, may be on one side of the street and you have 24/7 and you are on the other side of the street and may have probably two days or three days, but I am sure those are matters that WASA continues to work at.

8.00 p.m.

Hopefully the concerns raised by Sen. Verna St. Rose Greaves, and the stories, and I am sure if we all had an opportunity to talk we will all have similar stories. But at the end of the day we strive to improve that situation.

But I would just like to say that I join with the others in expressing some concern as it relates to the providing of a little more data to assist in relation to the decision that we make today. Most people would argue that this is just a routine Motion and we should probably, very quickly, dispose of it. But it is having regard to the length of time the

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Minister indicated that there has been no increase, I mean, I cannot estimate when this Minister or any other Minister may come again, but we do know that the likelihood probably of—if it took us —Minister how many years did you say?

Hon. Senator: Fourteen years.

Sen. P. Beckles: Fourteen years, right. If it took us 14 years to do an increase, one does not know when would be the next increase. Therefore, my point is that, we have the opportunity to raise some concerns and raise some issues and I am of the view that if your concerns are genuine and valid, I think that you should do just that and therefore, I raise those concerns.

I know that there is an agreement and that agreement clearly speaks to a formula. There is a criteria and most people of course are fascinated by the entire concept of the desalination plants, and the fact that all the customers in the Point Lisas area are metered, and that metering therefore allows the Government with some sort of mathematical calculation to be able to determine the cost clearly as distinct from your other residential users who may be using, in some instances, a lot of water but pay your residential rate and have to wait for the RIC determination to decide whether there will or will not be an increase.

At the end of the day, we also must be mindful of the fact that this is an increase in some form of taxes, and I was reminded by someone when I was coming into Parliament today, who was listening to the debate, that in the budget statement that the Government very proudly stated, that there would be no new taxes. I suppose this is after the budget and therefore maybe that does not qualify as “no new taxes”. You like that one, Sen. Tewarie. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

But you know, I also wanted to say that I am aware that in addition to this particular tax increase that this Government is proposing and no doubt will take effect soon, there was another tax increase that WASA supposedly has put into effect from July 01, 2011. That tax increase came from the new services department and I do not know, and I assumed that the Minister must have given his blessings for the increases that they have submitted to various members of the public.

There have been new charges for building development, for plumbing inspectorate, because we are rescheduling—sewer connections now cost some \$2, 500, and there are also increases for other rates.

There is an application fee now for residential that is increased, commercial, industrial, increases for swimming pool, commercial and industrial institutions and several other rates that have gone up very quietly and if I am wrong, I certainly would

be happy to be corrected on this matter. There are increases for pressure testing, inspection of small buildings development of manhole inspection, medium development buildings, percolation tests, chemical and bacterial analysis, so that when the Government indicated that there was no new taxes that was quite far from the truth. I do not think that anyone could argue a 14-year increase is not justified.

It may very well be that if there was some over data that was provided, some people may even argue that the increase maybe —could have been more, some people may argue that. But certainly we have not been provided with the data that justifies that. But at the end of the day 14 years before you have an increase is quite a long time, especially if one were to do the calculations these days of the kind of moneys that desalination companies are making.

Now when you look at particularly Europe and areas of China and other places where desalination companies are actually making a substantial profit; some countries have taken policy decisions that that is the way to go. China is saying that they do not even have enough companies to supply them with the amount of water that they need, desalination or otherwise. But the bottom line, it is a very lucrative business. And clearly over the years in terms of—a lot of the customers would have benefited substantially because of the subsidy.

One must not think that there is no substantial profit to be made in the desalination industry if the companies are not well managed. It is because of how our system existed over the years and the fact that you have these complexities in terms of the water agreement and the fact that we may not have had sufficient water to distribute, so therefore you have had to make some compromises that have put us in the situation that we are today.

So, Mr. President, I would just like to say, as we close for the fiscal year, we have been very, very fortunate in that over the last two years, we have not really had a dry season as such; and not having that dry season means that WASA has not had the challenges that it faced, let us say, in a period like 2002, where we really had an extremely rough dry season. As a matter of fact, in the 2002 period water had to be taken to Tobago from Trinidad, it was that bad. So that we do not only pray for improved management and infrastructure and other things, but we know that in some countries of the world with the challenges as it relates to climate change and so, some people are not fortunate as we are to have had two good years of rain.

We see what has happened in Ethiopia and other countries in the world where, you know, any water at all would have helped. We, to a large extent, have not really had that challenge and I think when Sen. Verna St Rose Greaves spoke about education as

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it relates to water harvesting, I imagine it would have been in that direction in which she was speaking because you know some of us feel that it is a crime to think about water harvesting, when so many of us here grew up on water harvesting.

I mean, God forbid, Mr. President, if we have a natural disaster or some sort of challenge, and we have had the coup and we have had—where WASA may not function in the way in which it should function for a multiplicity of reasons, and some of us do not even have a clue as to how it is to probably—as we would have said in rural communities—catch water, to have a barrel of water. I mean, we have not really thought about it. But that is just the reality.

As we talk about planning for disasters and so, sometimes in a real sense we have to address those issues so people do not become totally helpless. If you cannot get your normal supply of water, everything just shuts down. So, I, like others, join with my colleagues, we did say we would support the Motion, but raised the concerns that we have. Thank you kindly, Mr. President.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George): Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, let me thank all the Senators who contributed to this debate today and I want to particularly thank the Senators on this side who contributed, and also the independent Senators who contributed; and for the other Independent Senators who stayed the course, we are grateful that you are here. [*Crosstalk*] I will refer to some of the statements made and I will respond, not to all of them because if I am to respond to all of them, we will be here until very late tonight, and I know that a lot of you do not want us to be very late tonight.

Let me start by referring to my colleague, the goodly Sen. Basharat Ali, where he indicated that we agreed on the issues of the designating of the water improvement area and the fact that the RIC had no jurisdiction in the designation of a water improvement area and therefore, the institution or increase of the water improvement rate. He then went on to enquire whether there would be any consideration of a change in the boundaries of the Point Lisas Water Improvement area. That issue was also referred to, I think, by Sen. Deyalsingh.

I want to say that there would be no change, so far as I can see from where I stand here now, in the boundaries of the water improvement area. In fact, I should say that the outside of the boundaries of the water improvement area the RIC holds jurisdiction. As we speak, I am aware that the RIC is reviewing the tariffs and the rate structure and so on, and including the reclassification of customer classes of which Sen. Deyalsingh identified 15, and the water improvement rate will apply only to

industrial customers and not to commercial customers within the Point Lisas area. For example, there is a KFC which operates in the Atlantic Plaza and there are some other smaller businesses that operate in the Atlantic Plaza, they will not fall under the increase in the water improvement rate.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister, would you give way just to clarify, perhaps? I am very grateful for the commentary; it does a lot to allay fears. As I have read the law, the water improvement rate applies to everybody in the area regardless of categories. In fact, the water improvement rate for Point Lisas is two components, the RIC charge on the one hand, the \$3.50 and then the \$4 now moving to \$8. I do not understand that the law has any exceptions to anyone other than residential users.

Is it hon. Minister, that the RIC amendment is going to accept out the application of the \$8 to all members in that geography? The schedule to the Act says, “anybody in this geography is in the water improvement area”, and therefore the class is everybody in that physical area. The Act only excepts the residential users, so how can the RIC actually take them out of that? Thank you, hon. Minister.

8.15 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: So far as I am advised, the water improvement rate which operates in the water improvement area will apply only to the industrial customers and not to smaller commercial customers and the mom-and-pops.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Could you check it, hon. Minister? Not now, but I think it is something that, if you undertook to check, we will—

Sen. The Hon. E. George: I will undertake to check, but that is the information I have, as we speak.

Sen. Ali continued that there was a lot of water loss; that 50 per cent of the water was unaccounted for water, and he recommended that the big thrust should be to fix these leaks and to change out a lot of the old mains that are leaking. I simply want to respond by saying that if one checks with the *Hansard* in my budget statement in 2010 and again my budget statement in 2011, the entire matter of the focus on the change out of leaking pipes is spelt out very clearly as a significant pillar upon which we build WASA; going forward and supplying people with a proper and dependable supply of water. So that both in 2010 and in 2011 in my budget contributions, I went into detail about what the proposals were to address that particular matter of the change out.

In fact, the testimony to the fact that we had embarked on this particular exercise was the change out of the Navet trunk main, where we have changed the main. Not only have we changed it, but that we have put a dual main with a 32-inch pipe on top

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and a 36-inch below, running in the same trench that was dug to lay that main for 29 kilometres. So we have built some redundancy into the system, and we propose also to address the issue of the Hollis, which is the other main that is leaking profusely and which was put down since 1936. That comes from the Hollis reservoir in Valencia and supplies some of Port of Spain's needs for water.

But nonetheless, I want to thank Sen. Basharat Ali for his perspective on this matter. Sen. Ali also spoke about the Beetham Wastewater Plant and what we plan to do with the treated effluent that comes out of that plant. I want to respond to Sen. Ali by saying again that that is something that is under active consideration and we have been thinking about trying to convince Point Lisas, or to consider piping the effluent that is treated and comes out of the Beetham plant for use either in agriculture or at Point Lisas.

I want to say, too, that the Beetham Wastewater Plant is operating very, very efficiently. It is one of the better run plants, and, if anyone wishes, we could arrange, through WASA, for a visit to that plant. We will be very proud to show it off. It is more than we can say about a lot of the other plants, and I did refer to the condition of those other plants in earlier statements in this Senate. So that to Sen. Ali, WASA is taking steps to improve its operations in all these regards.

Sen. Al-Rawi did refer, too, in his excellent contribution, to the identification of the argument presented in the 1998 debate that argued the reasonableness of the rate, the lawfulness of the rate and the sustainability of the rate. He assumed that the rate was reasonable; did not pursue the sustainability issue, but focussed on the lawfulness, and I think that it is a matter that we will, as I indicated to him, pay attention to as we go along.

Sen. Al-Rawi, like Sen. Beckles more recently, referred to the issue of the increase in this water improvement rate as a new tax, and I thought that I do not want to take issue with it too much, except to say that taxes end up in the Consolidated Fund, and by no stretch of the imagination will this water improvement rate end up in the Consolidated Fund. So it is not at all a new tax.

Sen. Al-Rawi concluded by singing the praises of the former Minister, Mustapha Abdul-Hamid, and hon. Members in this Senate would have heard me criticize the previous administration for their approach to matters involving WASA and the supply of water to the population, but on no occasion in any of my discourses here have I singled out any Minister for mention or for ridicule or for criticism. I have focused my attention on the previous government and ignored trying to zero in on any individual and their performance.

But I want to ask in that context, because the goodly Sen. Faris Al-Rawi—and I think his contribution, as I said, was admirable. I want to ask just a couple of questions; that if former Minister Mustapha Abdul-Hamid’s performance was such an excellent one, how come the Caroni Arena and the El Socorro treatment facilities were in such a dilapidated state when this Government came into office? I had to raise the issue in the Parliament earlier this year after visiting these facilities. I mean, you have to go into these facilities to see the deplorable condition in which they were allowed to deteriorate.

I want to ask again—and I am just asking the question—how come the workforce in WASA was increased from 2,033 in 2000/2001 and in May of 2010 when this Government came into office the numbers had increased to 4,800? I say that to say that in the 1999/2000 period there was a restructuring of WASA that benchmarked WASA internationally and so on, and there was a VSEP done that reduced the numbers to what was an acceptable figure of 2,033. But in comes the former PNM government and increased the numbers in WASA by more than double, up to over 4,800, and the remarkable thing about all of that—and I have said this before in this Parliament—is that the service to the people did not improve. The proportion of the population that receives a 24-hour supply remained at around 19 per cent.

So what are these 2,800 people doing in WASA—that is the question—if Minister Mustapha Abdul-Hamid did such an excellent job? I mean, I am just putting the question forward and in another time we will deal with it, because I do not want to deal with it. [*Interruption*] Just now, because if I do that we will stay here all night and I know you do not want to stay here all night. But other than that, your contribution was a good one.

Sen. Al-Rawi: I promise you it is very important. Just two seconds, please? It affects the Motion substantially. Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, just to assist you to make sure that we do the right thing tonight, Chap. 54:41 Workworks and Water Conservation; the Motion itself is to vary this Motion. Paragraph 2, the water improvement rate, the legal notice that establishes this is to be varied by deleting the word “four dollars” and substituting the words “eight dollars and fifty cents”, that is what we are doing. The Act sets it out in subsidiary legislation as:

“This Order may be cited as the Water Improvement Rate Order, the rate of four dollars per cubic metre.”

That is what we are replacing.

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It says here that the rate is to be applied to industrial and commercial sites. So if we want to keep to what you say it is going to be, it cannot be the RIC that is going to change it. We have one opportunity now to fix it as a Senate. So if you want to put it only for industrial sites, we would have to move an amendment to this particular point to exclude out commercial sites because the RIC cannot do it. So I am just putting it out to you that the Order that we are amending does include commercial sites; it is not exclusive to industrial and the only point, we would have to amend it now, as you are wrapping up, if you wanted to put it to the Senate.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: No. It will stay as it is. Thank you very much, Sen. Al-Rawi, for your usual elucidation.

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin also raised the issue of the definition of Point Lisas. He did not refer to the issue of the discourse with the Point Lisas companies. I want to refer to the fact that before this discussion here in this Senate today, and when the decision by Cabinet was taken regarding the increase in the water improvement rate, we did meet with the representatives of the Point Lisas companies and we listened to them, as I indicated when I presented the Motion, and listened to their concerns, and it was agreed at the end of that discussion with representatives of the Point Lisas companies on a way forward.

I just want to quote from a letter dated October 18, 2011 and which was addressed by me to Mr. Ian Welch, the Chief Executive Officer of PCS Nitrogen and who is the chairman of the Point Lisas group of CEOs. That letter confirmed our discussions of October 14. In the discussions on that day, my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Sen. Kevin Ramnarine, was present and so was I, together with representatives of the Point Lisas companies, and in this letter confirming those discussions there is a paragraph that reads, and I quote:

It was agreed that in going forward consideration should be given to proposals that would help to reduce the cost of water to industries at Point Lisas with the specific purpose to improve the country's competitiveness. It was agreed also that the CEOs would submit proposals on how this could be achieved, including proposals to produce their own desal water to meet their needs. These proposals would be submitted to the Ministry for further discussion and action that would accommodate their representation and improve the competitiveness of Trinidad and Tobago to attract foreign investments.

So what I am saying to Sen. Dr. Balgobin is that the discourse between the Ministry and the Point Lisas CEOs is, indeed, incomplete and we will continue those discussions upon receipt of a response from them regarding the matters as I have just made reference.

8.30 p.m.

Dr. Balgobin also referred to the matter of Desalcott and the water quality. What he said was the quality of the water supplied by Desalcott to the Point Lisas companies was getting poorer; the companies had the additional expense of doing extra treating of that water before, through putting it into their processes. And I want to inform Sen. Balgobin, Mr. President through you and this honourable Senate, that WASA is aware of this and is monitoring Desalcott to ensure that the standards are raised and returned to the original high quality that Desalcott was noted for.

Dr. Henry, in his opening statements, referred to WASA as a political football. I just asked a couple of questions of Sen. Al-Rawi, in a kind of a way that highlights the whole issue of the political football that Dr. Henry was referring to. Dr. Henry then went on to suggest that he is totally against the establishment of desalination plants in Trinidad and Tobago. Sen. Dr. Henry was suggesting that at the time when the desalination plant was being established he had just returned to Trinidad to let his bucket down. And I want to say that he has made a wonderful decision and I think the country would be richer for it.

However, he like his leader, Dr. Rowley, does not agree with the establishment of desalination plants in Trinidad and Tobago and I want to make mention to Sen. Dr. Henry that that position was held by many, many people in the wider society. I think it came from the fact that the circumstances leading to the establishment of the desal plant and the rationale for the establishment of the desal plant was lost by persons like Sen. Dr. Henry. Let me paint the picture at the time.

The Point Lisas companies were consuming a considerable amount of water, somewhere in the region of 18 million gallons per day. And what this meant in the absence of a desal plant was that the water from the Caroni Arena treatment plant, which was piped—by that 54 inch main that I referred to earlier on—to central and south, was given to the Point Lisas companies before it went to the consumer; in other words they were given preference in the water supply. So the ordinary consumer was suffering to a considerable extent in central and south Trinidad; because the priority for water supply was given to the Point Lisas area.

The thinking and the policy decision that was taken subsequent to that thinking was that, if you could find a source of supply for Point Lisas then that 18 million gallons would be able to go to ordinary consumers in the central and southern areas and one would be about to relieve the pain and suffering of people in those areas.

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We must bear in mind all the time that the water produced in Trinidad comes largely from the Northern Range areas, whether it is wells or dams or like the Caroni water treatment facilities via a man-made Caroni/Arena retention facility, and the water is then piped to the southern area. This is so generally, except in the case of the Navet Dam. So that persons in the central and south areas are always at a disadvantage in respect of an adequate supply of water; and, indeed, the further south you go the more problems you have.

So the desal plant was not set up as the first of many that would be set up. It was set up with a specific purpose and that was to address the demands of the Point Lisas industries to give them a dedicated supply that would satisfy their needs and release the water that was being consumed by the Point Lisas companies to be used by ordinary consumers. So that is one.

Two. If one were to do the research, one would see that Trinidad has a lot of water and he is right in that sense that we need to entrap this water and so avoid having to use desal water. But in the pressing circumstance at the time, and that is the context in which the issue of the hundred kilometer pipeline for \$950 million came up, the first thing was where you would get that \$950 million to do it because the finances were tight at the time. And two, to change 100 kilometres of pipeline would have taken quite some time but the people's needs were pressing. Therefore, the most effective way at the time was to get the desal plant in place to supply the Point Lisas area and that is the reason and the context for the desal plant being put in place.

I want to make a further comment on the issue of desalination. While Sen. Dr. Henry and his leader are against the establishment of desal plants, there seems to be a contradiction. Because when this Government came into power in May of last year, we found on the books and in the files an intention to do four desalination plants.

One to supply the south west area to be established close to Point Fortin—I think I visited that area some time ago and there has been a lot of trouble to establish that plant or to get it up and running. But that one, because the contract with Seven Seas, which was the contractor contracted to set up that plant, was already signed and so on, and because the south west area, between La Brea in Point Fortin and going down to Cedros is particularly challenged, this Government had no objection to that project continuing. That project, may I say, Mr. President, involves a plant that would produce 4.6 million gallons a day. So it is a comparatively very small plant.

But there were other plants that were mooted at the time: one was a plant in Mayaro, a 20-million gallon desal plant; one in La Brea, another 20-million gallon; one to be set up as nearby as the Beetham, another 20-million gallon, and there was a

5-million gallon desal plant to be established in the Cove in Tobago. So despite all of the criticisms and so on of the desalination concept and that kind of thing, here was a Government who, when the dry season problems of 2010 hit them, ran very quickly to establish desalination plants.

Secondly, I want to refer to the fact that if one looks at the data as to what is happening around the world with desalination and desalination technology, one would find that it is not so far-fetched to be putting up desalination plants. It is quite a regular feature around the world and so in situations like these one needs very often to reserve judgment as to whether one will support or not support the putting in place of a desal plant. One never knows what the future will bring.

In respect of the issue raised by the goodly Sen. Dr. Henry—and I want to thank him also for his contribution, excellent contribution, very thoughtful—. Sen. Henry spoke about the \$1.5 billion bond issue, and the issue, first of all, of the interest rate that was negotiated and so on. And I simply want to deal with that in one sentence—or two. This Government met a negotiation when we came in May of last year. We met a negotiation that was initiated by the then Government for the borrowing of \$1.3 billion under the aegis of Citibank—same Citibank—to do projects, which fell under a rubric called the MAP.

All we did, because we had a focus to try to bring two days' water to the population who were linked to the system within a year, we changed a lot of the projects in order to achieve that two days' water to those people who were linked to the system but up until that time were not receiving two days of water: they were receiving one day's water or less than one day of water per week. We changed some of the projects to get that focus that would ensure that we could deliver on that promise. So that the goodly Senator is a little disingenuous to suggest that we had come and borrowed this money and had negotiated poorly and so on, when all we did was change the projects and nothing else. So I want to say to my good friend, and the goodly Sen. Dr. Henry, that he needs to do some proper checking again.

I want to say to Sen. Helen Drayton that your indication that we need to accelerate the auditing of the accounts of WASA has been taken due note of and we shall pursue that exercise as quickly as we can.

Sen. Deyalsingh asked a question regarding: "Does the water sale agreement have an escalation clause?" I tried to find out, but as of this time I have not been able to determine whether the water sale agreement has an escalation clause. He spoke to the issue, and spent some considerable time on the issue of the acting CEO of

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WASA—before I go to him, let me continue to deal with Sen. Henry, because he did speak to another issue here about the sole selective tender that went out to TOSL Engineering.

This entire issue of the band screen: the band screen is a part of the process of filtration at the Caroni/Arena Treatment Plant. The sole select was to Siemens who are the manufacturers of the particular piece of equipment. And so, the sole select was to Siemens who were the manufacturers of the original equipment. Siemens identified TOSL Engineering as the local agent, hence the reason for the sole select to TOSL. So, I just want to say to Dr. Henry, I hope that he is satisfied with that.

The maintenance issue—now currently the maintenance is divided into two segments. The maintenance is currently broken down—maintenance and corrective maintenance, and what we really should be doing at WASA is having more preventative maintenance.

8.45 p.m.

We need that in order to introduce some more reliability into the system and WASA has undertaken to the use of preventive maintenance approach and to address the issues using contracted services for the larger plants, for example, for Caroni, Navet and Hollis; and for smaller plants and so on to use in-house services. Sen. Dr. Henry seems to suggest that we were going to be laying off people and I want to disabuse his mind of the fact that we were not laying off anybody in these circumstances.

Sen. Dr. Henry, also indicated that, Mr. President, the Citibank loan had been obtained since early this year and that, up until this time, he is unaware that anything has started under that programme. He did suggest that bids went out for the undertaking of the one-year programme for projects that were to be financed by that \$1.3 million loan. Yes, he is correct that bids were received from two potential contractors, and WASA found, in assessing the bids, that they were too expensive, and WASA decided that they would try to do a lot of these things using their own resources from within WASA and by employing necessary private companies and doing the supervision themselves.

The decision so to do only came after the bids were assessed sometime I think in June or July of this year, so since that time, tenders have gone out for a lot of the other works that have been identified under that one-year programme—12-month plan. And I want to say to the Senate today, and in response to Sen. Dr. Henry, that there are projects due to start in the first quarter of 2012 and to be funded under the Citibank loan. Those projects include installation of the Navet low dam pumps which are to replace pumps and to transfer water from the low dam in Navet to the high dam. There

is another project that will replace the sewer mains at Scott Street in San Fernando and Scott Street in San Fernando experienced in late May—I think May 28 of last year—a collapse of the sewer main and that main we need to replace.

Also to start in the first quarter of next year is the Vistabella trunk sewer rehabilitation. Then there is the project, the rehabilitation of waste water treatment plants at Mountain View and Bon Air. There will be a project for the drilling of wells at Chatham and Cap de Ville, again, to deal with the challenge of water in the southwest of Trinidad. We plan—and Sen. Basharat Ali will be interested in this one—replacement of the leaking Hollis main in Cunupia, so that is to be done in the first quarter. Another project will be the refurbishment of the water treatment plants at Techier in Point Fortin, Trinity in Moruga and there is another in Las Lomas and in Penal.

Then there is another project for the refurbishment of the Navet and Hollis water treatment plants, and there is another—this is not an exhaustive list of the projects that will commence in the first quarter under the funding available from the Citibank loan—the installation of pipes in Diego Martin, Cumuto, Tamana, Cunapo Southern Main Road, Biche and also in Tobago.

I now return to Sen. Deyalsingh and he referred—I want to deal with the issue where he referred to the CEO in WASA.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Acting CEO.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: And there is a question on the Senate Order Paper which is Question No. 19 and it is posed by Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds and it speaks to this issue, and it, in fact, qualifies for answer on the December 13, 2011. I have the answer to that already prepared but since it qualifies for answer on the December 13 and refers to the entire matter of the issue of the acting CEO at WASA, I will answer that when I answer that question as posed by Sen. Hinds, and that will cover Sen. Terrence Deyalsingh.

He is also asking a question and I believe that it might have been sorted out regarding the non-industrial customers in the water improvement areas.

Sen. Deyalsingh: Not really.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Sen. Cudjoe referred to the issue of paying according to the number of taps in the home rather than the amount of water that you use. I mean, Mr. President, all of us who pay water rates will be aware that we pay our water rates—our water tariffs—on the basis of the assessment rate for our homes. And that assessment rate, you pay virtually on the basis of the value of your home, and this has

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been how we have met it, it has been like that for decades. So that I do not know that it was based on the number of taps although it may have been based on the number of taps in Tobago, I do not know, but in Trinidad, it was based on the assessment value of your home.

So, I want to say to the goodly Sen. Cudjoe, through you, Mr. President, that we all agree that you should pay only for the water that you use; and so metering is something that we all will agree should be a project that we should get engaged in so that everyone in the country is metered. As we speak, I would like to indicate that that is a matter that has been engaging the Ministry and also the Water and Sewerage Authority over some considerable time. It is not new because if you go back as far as the 1970s I think it was, there had been proposals by the Public Utilities Commission for metering of the population, but somehow, we in Trinidad and Tobago have not got around to it.

As we speak, there is a proposal that has been drafted. It is now being considered by the Board and management of WASA, and we expect in the next couple of weeks—because it is already in the form of a draft Cabinet Note and has been sent so that they can cerebrate on it, and respond making a recommendation via which I think we propose to set up a team whose remit it will be to inquire into all aspects of the implementation of a metering system in Trinidad and Tobago for customers of WASA, and to advise on the best method by which this implementation could be undertaken. So that is, as I said, engaging us at this time and we hope that very soon we should be able to advise the national community as to where we are with that metering proposal.

In respect of Sen. Beckles' contribution; Sen. Beckles is wont to make excuses all the time for the non-performance of her government over the period of when they had the reins of power and in particular, in respect of water and the water supply to the population. I have gone on record, very, very often, to indicate our views on this and the facts indeed bear us out regarding the low priority that the facts indicate the previous government gave to the supply of water to the population and I need say no more.

In respect of the brown water issue, I had indicated that WASA had put out a statement via the press to indicate what had happened and what caused the brown water. I want to reiterate again that the advice is that the population who are experiencing this brown water should leave the taps on and let the brown water run out and the clear water will eventually show.

Mr. 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. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you very much to my colleague Senators for allowing me a further 15 minutes. I did not know that 45 minutes went so fast.

Sen. Beckles referred to the brown water and I just dealt with that. WASA will from time to time experience these problems as they maintain the facilities, and we hope that people will understand sometimes—I myself take full responsibility for all of this. Sen. Beckles said that she is not holding me responsible but even if Sen. Beckles does not hold me responsible, I hold myself responsible for all of the issues surrounding WASA and for WASA's performance. [*Desk thumping*]

The goodly Sen. Beckles referred to the fact that WASA had increased charges to various customers for a lot of different services, and some of this is news to me so I promise the goodly Senator, through you, Mr. President, that I will do my best to find out what is happening there.

In respect of a particular charge or increase in charges, because the Water and Sewerage Authority has been able to improve the service to a lot of the customers over the last year under our first-year programme of trying to bring 24-hour service, two days per week, to the population served by WASA at minimum, and because we had got to the point where we were able to deliver to 96 per cent of those people targeted, the PUC decision taken in 1993 that once customers' service had come up to a certain point, they then can be charged a fee—an increased charge—that is what kicked in to allow this additional charge to be put in on these customers.

I want to say in response again to Sen. Beckles that we have not heard an uproar about this, and it is because—it is my view and my considered view—people's service has indeed increased and those in circumstances, those persons affected would not mind paying the additional charge based on the PUC's—I do not want to call it determination—recommendation of 1993.

9.00 p.m.

Although I may not have satisfied my colleagues opposite with all of the responses I have given, I seek their patience, in the sense that I will try to find out information that will allow me to respond to the other matters and if necessary I will give an indication in another statement in the Parliament or in the Senate regarding those issues.

I want again, finally before I close, to ask for the support of the Senate on this measure to increase the water improvement rate for industries located in the Point Lisas area by \$4.50, bringing the total charge under the water improvement area/water improvement rate to \$8.50 and when added to the \$3.50 existing commercial rate will

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bring the total amount paid per cubic metre of water by Point Lisas companies to \$12.00. We think it is a modest request to make after 14 years without an increase, and, in fact, when we did the numbers originally, what was suggested was an increase to around \$16.00 to \$18.00, which would have meant a much higher increase in the water improvement rate, but we have tried to be conservative because it is really no fault of the Point Lisas companies that these charges have not been increased for so many years, so we could not, in good conscience, come and institute a very, very large increase.

So, finally I want to thank all the Senators again, including the Senators on the Opposition Bench, for their contributions, and I seek the support of the goodly Senators for this Motion.

Mr. President, I thank you. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) (Variation) Order, 2011 be approved.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George): Mr. President, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed, sometime in 2012.

I wanted to take the opportunity to say a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to this honourable Senate and in particular to my colleagues opposite; both the Independent Senators and more particularly to my colleagues on the Opposition Bench, and more particularly to my good friend, Sen. Al-Rawi, and even more particularly to my good friend, Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds.

I want to say to my colleague and friend of long standing, Sen. Dr. Lester Henry, that he has brought considerable benefit by laying his bucket down in Trinidad and Tobago. I am always happy to see him. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

MOTION ON THE ADJOURNMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, leave has been granted for a matter to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of the Senate.

Sen. Penelope Beckles: Thank you kindly.

Mr. President: The allotted time is 15 minutes.

**El Dorado Youth Camp
(Government's Decision to Close Down)**

Sen. Penelope Beckles: Thank you kindly. Mr. President, let me thank the Leader of Government Business. He has indicated that—well I have four Motions. I am going to deal with two and I promise not to—I would try my best—take up the whole 15 minutes on either of them. I know it is—well, I do not know, I would try—Christmas time and people are very anxious to go home.

Mr. President, the Motion, as it relates to the—I would deal with the one on the El Dorado facility first. That Motion was filed on the 15th of last month. It came to my attention, and I probably would like some clarification as it relates to exactly which Ministry this facility falls under. I know that it originally fell under the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. I am advised that it presently falls under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, and I have been further advised that there is consideration for it to be placed under the hon. Minister Verna St. Rose Greaves, but I imagine, having regard to the decision that has been made, that may not be the case. Nonetheless, I am raising this Motion, and the Motion really reads that the Government reconsider its decision to convert the El Dorado Youth Camp to a nursing academy.

This, for me, is a very important Motion. It is important because this particular facility is the only facility in Trinidad and Tobago that specifically deals with issues relating to young girls, in terms of developing certain skills. This is a 35-year-old facility which, as I have said, fell under the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. I do not have all the particulars and I imagine the Minister will give us some particulars, because I am simply going by what I have read in the newspapers and what has been said by the Minister.

It is stated that to develop and expand the country's public health sector, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is moving to establish a multi-million dollar revolutionary nursing training academy in El Dorado. Once completed, it is expected to cater for some 3,000 students at BSc/Masters level. It is stated that facility is underutilized. I imagine that may have been one of the reasons why the Government considered transforming this facility into a facility for the training of nurses.

They have indicated that 1,955 nurses have graduated between 2006—2009, but there is still a deficit of some 2,614 nurses. I do not know that anyone can argue the need to have a lot more nurses. We all understand the challenges as they relate to the health sector and we all understand that it is a very, very serious matter. We know, over the years, that we have had nurses coming from the Philippines. We have had nurses

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coming from different parts of the Caribbean. There have been a lot of efforts to improve the number of nurses over the years. Notwithstanding that, we have not really been able to attract sufficient persons to get into the field of nursing. Therefore, I imagine this particular situation would have no doubt influenced the Government.

That having been said, my question really is: was it necessary to totally close down the Eldorado Youth Camp? I refer specifically to what was offered there to the girls, because that is the only facility in Trinidad and Tobago that specifically deals with assisting young ladies, in terms of developing particular skills.

Sometime ago, I think it was in 2009, the Nigerian Minister of Youth Affairs visited Trinidad and Tobago, because of her special interest in that facility. It was in 2009. It says that the Federal Republic of Nigeria has a keen interest in the youth development and skills programmes that are offered in Trinidad and Tobago. That was evident during a brief visit to Trinidad and Tobago. The hon. Elder Godsday, Peter Orubebe, Minister of State in the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria visited that facility.

The delegation was led on a tour of the spacious facility by the camp director, Winston Baldeosingh. The hon. Minister and the delegation visited three classrooms: beauty culture, bookbinding and computer studies and interacted with students at these classes. They enquired about the entry requirements, duration of the programme, subject areas taught, types of certification offered and support systems for trainees, once their training is complete.

Mr. President, the El Dorado Youth Camp provides a two-year residential course focusing on technical and vocational skills for girls 15—17 years. Most of the trainees enter the programme because they need to develop practical and life skills, while learning about teamwork, discipline and sharing in residential settings. The Ministry also has two other similar camps at Praesto Praesto and Chatham and offers residential training for boys 15—17 years.

I must say I am a bit disturbed. I really do not know if, in closing down the camp, the intention is that we would never have such a facility again, or is it that in the reconstruction of this multi-million dollar facility, there will be room for providing that specific service that was provided for the girls between the ages of 15—17 years.

When you have the only facility like that in a country, you understand the importance of the facility. The question for me is whether or not that particular facility could not exist. As I understand it, there is a lot of land and a lot of space. I am very intrigued by what would have influenced the closing down of the facility, and if the

Government saw no value in such a facility. There would still be two facilities for boys. This is a residential facility. There is no other facility in the country providing those types of skills training and skill sets for young girls. It is kind of mind-boggling to me why it would be closed down, because I do not know that there is any other facility.

A number of young ladies who come from all over Trinidad and Tobago will come and stay in that residential facility and it would help them to develop. I gave the list of the types of skills. You can go back to probably where you live in some rural community and open up a little barber shop or a small restaurant service or offer beauty culture or what is offered there. I guess, for me, I recall that the hon. Prime Minister indicated that the budget is an agenda-responsive budget.

9.15 p.m.

I know that the Prime Minister returned from Australia recently, the Prime Minister went to England, and the Prime Minister, our first female Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has spent a considerable amount of time speaking about the advancement of women and girls, and her specific interest in the advancement of women and girls not just in the area of politics, but in all areas. And, therefore, for me it would be particularly distressing, disheartening, maybe even to the point of being depressing, that this Government would take a decision to close down the only facility for young women in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Somehow I do not believe—and I might be wrong—that my sister, Sen. The Hon. Verna St. Rose Greaves could have agreed to this Cabinet decision. [*Desk thumping*] I would be very distressed as someone who has fought and struggled even at the expense sometimes of her job and other things that this would be something which she would have in any way agreed to. I really hope that it is not too late for the Government to look very seriously as it spends—I mean, they gave all the figures and it is a substantial amount of money which is going to be spent on the nursing facility—that they cannot see their way to make some changes and to reconsider the decision.

Mr. President, I have had the opportunity to speak to some of the workers, and to the union who were taken by surprise, even up to today, that this facility is being closed down because there was absolutely no consultation on the closing down of this facility. All that happened, and if you read an article in the *Guardian*, you would see that the workers were shocked and surprised that one day they simply saw persons coming on the facility just basically having discussions.

Mr. President, there is a *Guardian* article of the 28th of May and it refers to the closing down of the facility and it says:

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“A disgruntled employee, who spoke to Sunday Guardian under the condition of anonymity, said: ‘We have been treated with total disrespect. No one has told us anything, all we continue hearing is that the centre is expected to open soon, then last week we were told it is not going to re-open. Girls have been calling since January to start the programme and we cannot give them any assurance when we are going to take them...’”

The point about it is they interviewed 60 persons, the programme was supposed to continue and, of course, that is the end of it. So that you now have a situation where they have stopped, there are no further intakes of any girls I am advised, and I really, really hope that what I read is not true.

This is the first time we have had a female Prime Minister in Trinidad and Tobago. I was one of those who I would say even to the point some persons might not have been happy, because sometimes persons do not understand that if you are on different sides it does not mean that you cannot congratulate. But when we have a female Prime Minister, for all women that is a celebration and I think many men as well were quite happy for her development and advancement.

But that having been said, I think a number of us anticipated that it would certainly be the opportunity in which we would see many women and girls advance. We expected that when certain decisions were taken that women and girls would not be put at a disadvantage. This is clearly a decision where our young girls between 15—17 have been put at a disadvantage. I would hate to think that it is being done at the time when we have a woman leading our country in Trinidad and Tobago. So I really hope that this decision would be revisited.

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

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I am indeed very disheartened, very intrigued. I am very distressed and I am certainly depressed, especially when my dear colleague continues to refer to the fact that the El Dorado Girls Youth Camp has been closed—no such thing.

I will refer to the article which my colleague on the other side was making reference to and subsequent to the article of May, there is an article in the *Sunday Guardian* of August 21st which I would make reference to. But let me just say for the record that the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago on the recommendation of the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs at that time indicated that this facility, the El Dorado Girls Youth Camp, was a vastly underutilized asset—and I will show that very shortly—and recommended its transfer in view of the fact that we were talking about the urgent need for training nurses and professionals in the health sector.

It is kind of ironic when I look at the two Motions before us that in both cases in El Dorado and in San Fernando at the Naparima Bowl, the concern seemed to be for the training of nurses, doctors and personnel. I do not know whether there is something wrong with that.

Mr. President, the decision to establish the youth camp for girls in Trinidad and Tobago was influenced by then government's design in 1975, 36 years ago, to provide facilities not necessarily for girls in the 15—17 age group, but 15—24 who could not be absorbed either in the secondary school system or in technical institutions.

Yes, we had the camps at Presto Praesto and Chatham; we also had one at Chaguaramas and one at Mount St. George. It might be useful to see what is the state of Chatham if it exists at all, you might find out it was closed down, and it might be ironic to find out under which administration it was closed down, and likewise Mount St. George, my colleague from Tobago is saying. So I am very distressed and disheartened and depressed. I would like my colleagues on the other side to visit Presto Praesto in Arena Road, Freeport and Chatham in Cap-de-ville. Let me say in response to my colleague, very respected Sen. Beckles, that facility stands on 25 acres of land and yes, it started training since 1974 and it was a two-year certificate programme; and the curriculum really resembled many vocational skills training.

In the interest of time, I will just give you some of the areas which they were receiving training in: English, Mathematics, Remedial History, Literature, Home Management, Agriculture, Handicraft and so on. She did, in fact, make mention of some of the recent programmes.

Mr. President, I have spoken about the El Dorado facility before and on numerous occasions, and I want to tell you that that facility was built to accommodate 300 students. My colleague spoke about the camp director, Mr. Winston Baldeosingh. I myself had the opportunity, upon transfer, to take a delegation from the Ministry to visit. The very camp director to whom she refers, when I asked him what the programmes existing were at this camp, he indicated that there was one music class of seven persons who resided in the community. That was the extent of utilizing a facility which could house 300 persons on 25 acres of land, and facilities which were sitting there idle, while we are suffering for facilities to train persons in the health sector and other places too.

I want tell you some of the programmes—in 2005, 78 students graduated in the following courses: beauty culture; bookbinding; and small appliance repairs. Those were the three classes. During the period 2005—2007, the property was handed over to

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the Ministry of National Security. Let me repeat that. The El Dorado Girls Youth Camp of which we are depressed and dejected and so on today, was handed over to the Ministry of National Security from 2005—2007.

Sen. Moonan: Who was the Junior Minister at that time?

Sen. F. Karim: Well, we will find that out maybe—probably asleep at this stage. In 2000 as a police training school, and as a matter of fact there are 240 beds which I saw in 120 rooms. In 2008, Mr. President, the property was returned to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and there was an intake of 68 trainees in the above courses, including electrical installation. From this intake 40 students graduated which indicates a dropout rate of approximately 40 per cent.

Mr. President, we speak about programmes which we denied, let me just say, and I have said in this article, this is the newspaper article and let me read what I said here:

“Having visited the camp with a team recently, Karim said among the items discussed was the integration of the current staff and also “the continuity of programmes that were met at the El Dorado Girls’ Youth Camp.”

So I do not know where the notion is coming from in terms of closure and in terms of displacement. As a matter of fact, I want tell to you that in my previous incarnation, I was the CEO of YTEPP and we, in fact, had a YTEPP and continue to have a YTEPP Centre at what used to be called the El Dorado Senior Comprehensive School, I think it is now the El Dorado, maybe East or North Secondary School.

Mr. President, in terms of catering for programmes for girls—and I want to say that the nurses training programme, and one could look at the statistics and the data—traditionally you could see which sex really ascribes to those programmes in terms of male and female. It is very great in terms of the percentage of female as opposed to male, while we cater for both sexes.

Mr. President, some of these programmes which cater for girls as well in the vocational area to which my colleague referred are YTEPP; the MUST Programme—many are found there—HYPE; MIC—which is on the doorsteps of this facility—the National Energies Skill Centre (NESC); the Civilian Conservation Corp—which continues—the YAPA Programme in agriculture; and, of course, you have programmes in people and social development and the YDACs which we referred to as the youth camps; the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centers.

Mr. President, the above clearly indicates that the property was vastly underutilized. In light of the underutilization of the facilities at El Dorado, and the critical shortage of nurses and allied health care workers in the country, the Government took a conscious decision to utilize those facilities at El Dorado for the training of nurses and allied health professionals.

In this regard two agencies were identified under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education namely: COSTAATT and the University of the West Indies to implement the training programmes. These agencies have developed a draft business plan which provides for the implementation of the health care training plan on a phased basis.

Mr. President, data from the Regional Health Authorities in 2011 indicate that there are current vacancies for 2,910 registered nurses and other nursing personnel in the public sector. This we obtained from the Ministry of Health, Strategic Plan 2009—2013. Included in these numbers are shortages of other categories of specialist nursing personnel which include: 157 district health visitors; 239 midwives; and 136 oncology nurses. There are other areas where shortages are known to exist.

Rather than going into a series of those, let me just indicate that while the duration of the nursing programme is three to four years in order to provide immediate support to nurses, the training of health care assistants is intended to commence in the first quarter of 2012.

The aim behind supplying health assistants is an interim measure to supply and to supplement the manpower needs, as this category of staff can perform some of the simple tasks which nurses currently retain under their purview, and do not aim to replace the nursing staff. For example, the role of accompanying a patient to the imaging laboratory with the file can be performed by that category of staff and they can make up unoccupied beds. So it is really to assist quickly in this shortage of nursing personnel.

Mr. President, to this end a contract was awarded for the refurbishment of the facilities to convert some space in to classrooms and labs. It is expected that work would be completed early in the New Year. The training centre would contain teaching classrooms, library facilities, science and simulated labs and administrative offices.

On completion COSTAATT, in collaboration with UWI, would deliver nursing and allied health care programmes. The programmes to be offered in the first quarter are: health care; registered nursing; midwifery; emergency care management; infirmary care and surgical/technical.

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9.30 p.m.

Mr. President, the El Dorado Girl's Youth Camp certainly started off with good intentions, as many other things under the previous administration over the three decades, but the facility had failed to deliver on its original mandate. A sprawling campus that was created for the primary purpose of providing practical training to young women unable to be absorbed, as I said, in the traditional school system at the technical institutes became little more than an underutilized shell with deteriorating equipment and neglected infrastructure. As I recalled earlier on, built to accommodate 300 students, only 40 were able to be graduated in 2010.

The time has come, Mr. President, for this property to live up to its potential and this Government of the People's Partnership has found the ideal avenue through to which this can be done. With close to 3, 000 vacancies as I indicated, we have to do something urgently about this shortage in the public health system. As I speak the property is being refurbished in preparation for the start of courses offered by both UWI and COSTAATT. This revival project will see the start of classes in the first quarter of 2012.

So as I indicated earlier on, it is ironic though that since 2009 the Nigerian Minister of Youth Affairs came and showed such great emphasis and interest in this facility. Two thousand and nine came and went, and 2010—well we know what happened by mid-year of 2010. But before that, what was happening to this facility—and I give you the history of it.

I want to say as far as I am concerned and under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, we have not spoken and we have said nowhere, to anyone, about the closure of this facility. We have said that this facility will be expanded to include what exists and will be expanded to include the nurse's training facility. Mr. President, I thank you very much.

Sen. Beckles: Just two quick questions. Can I ask whether there has been any intake of students recently, and whether you are saying that the existing courses that are being offered, will continue?

Sen. The hon. F. Karim: Certainly, what I indicated, as I said to repeat that, we did not close down any courses; these courses were completed and students graduated. And I was advised by Mr. Baldeosingh that there was only one class that existed at the time I visited after the graduation, and that is a class of seven musicians or people from the community who were interested in music.

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Could you imagine seven persons in a facility that could hold 300? Therefore, what I did advise them that we were going to do is wherever they had classes—and they had none, that if they had classes that were existing we would have allowed the classes to continue and to be integrated in that facility so that there was not going to be any displacement. In any event, there are no real workshops in those areas for electrical installation. And if you have to do vocational education and training you must have workshops. And there are even better workshops that I would have seen there; the better workshops are right close by in terms of the El Dorado Senior Comprehensive School.

So let me repeat in terms of your question, Senator. We are going to be examining the context of what are the programmes, we will have to do a needs analysis of the area to see whether those courses are still relevant, and if they are relevant we are going to take care of the persons in that area. But we are certainly going to advise and to counsel with anyone, the females particularly, in terms of the nurses training programme. Thank you very much.

**NAPARIMA BOWL
(GOVERNMENT'S DECISION)**

Sen. Penelope. Beckles: Mr. President, my second Motion has to do with the issue of the Bowl, and for the Government to reconsider its decision in relation to the changing of the use of the Bowl. The Minister a while ago indicated that my both Motions dealt with the issue of nurses and health sector in relation to what I have raised today. I just need to let the hon. Minister know that I filed four Motions and the Government has decided to do two of the four—you were giving the impression that I am specifically treating with two Motions on nursing as if to say that I am going in a particular direction.

I had two other Motions filed long before these last two Motions. I had a Motion filed on the Santa Rosa facility and on the water taxi. The Government has chosen not to do those two and to do these last two, so any of the four could have been dealt with. So I think it is important to make sure that that is clear so the impression is not given in the way in which—you may not know that there are other Motions that were filed long before this but are not being dealt with.

Notwithstanding that, I am aware from the newspaper articles, I think, of yesterday and probably the day before, that the Government has changed its position as it relates to the Bowl. I just want you to know that my Motion was filed on November 15, so that was quite some time. In the normal course of things, when you file a Motion—it was qualified for on November 17, so in truth and in fact, it

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should have been debated quite some time ago. In relation to the other Motion that we debated a little while ago, that Motion was also filed on the November 15. I just hope that you are clear, there is no misconception in terms of what I had to say.

My reason for filing that Motion, of course, and you would have noticed because it falls under your portfolio that a lot of people have breathed a sigh of relief. So clearly if I had the opportunity maybe to discuss it then, it would not have been even debated today.

The truth is that, as a child, I have, on more than one occasion, appeared on the stage of the Bowl. I practised there for many years as a member of the Arawak dance group and the contemporary dance group. [*Desk thumping*] I had the distinction of being trained by Eugene Joseph and so, therefore, I have an interest in it. I am not talking about it from any attack of it with regard to it being health issues. That is totally out of my contemplation. I am raising it because I have had the benefit of practising there, I have had the benefit of performing there and, therefore, it is Naparima Bowl for me.

When I attended St. Joseph's Convent that is where we had choral speaking. That was the only facility you went to as a—both in primary school and as a teenager. That was the prime facility. Whenever you were told that you were going to the Bowl, that was like—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Carnegie.

Sen. P. Beckles: That was your Carnegie, right. So that is my reason. This has nothing to do with trying to discredit your intention to improve the nursing—the amount of nurses.

I made the point in my last Motion that I do not think anybody will object, or anybody would not find it justifiable the need for increasing nurses. I am clear on that. But my concern in both instances, as far as I am concerned, is justifiable.

I made the point earlier on that when you spoke about the facility being underutilized, I agree with that. So I do not disagree with you at all. My only concern is that it was set up for a particular purpose and I asked you whether or not what you are intending to do, which is your nursing education, your development which is absolutely necessary that that could continue and the purpose for which the El Dorado Youth Camp for Girls was set that that could continue, and we have a win-win situation. That is my suggestion. I do not think that is unreasonable. And even if we argue, as we may do in the case of the Bowl that we have not had sufficient people entering, well there may have been some reason, management, a lot of other reasons. But it does not mean that the objective of establishing that facility was not a laudable one.

Mr. President, my reason for—getting closer to the Bowl, I listened to the hon. Prime Minister’s explanation as it relates to, again, the issue of training of nurses and doctors and so, and I am not going to discredit that. I admit that that is a lot of value in that. The point is whether the Bowl was the ideal facility to do that. Now, Sen. Karim like many others, Sen. Abdulah, Sen. Bharath, Sen. Moonan, come from San Fernando. The point is that unlike Port of Spain—[*Interruption*] you are in south so often, I think you are from San Fernando, but you work in San Fernando—live there. Sorry about that. But I am sure you would not mind having been born in San Fernando, but anyway that is an aside.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie:—And married a San Fernandian.

Sen. P. Beckles:—married a San Fernandian, Convent girl at that too, a very nice young lady who happened to be my head girl at some point in time.

Sen. Hinds: She is a tolerant woman.

Sen. P. Beckles: But I was making the point that, unlike Port of Spain—and as you know, Port of Spain where you have NAPA, you have Queens Hall, you have the Little Carib Theatre; on occasions, of course, you can use the Queens Park Savannah and there are other occasions where you have a number of hotels that allow you the opportunity to perform whether it be the Hyatt, the Hilton, Carlton Savannah and there are a couple others, so you have some options, San Fernando does not have that option. And that is why I raised the concern.

I am sure in reconsidering the decision all the different consultations that have taken place since this matter came into the public domain, both yourself and probably the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet would have, you know, had the benefit of listening to a number of the artistes and the people who utilize the facility. As a matter of fact, if you want to use the Bowl you have to book it a year in advance so that NAPA really would have been another facility. And those of us who know when you have the chutney shows and the semifinals, you either go the Guaracara Park or you go to Skinner Park.

We have a multiplicity of people who utilize those facilities. Of course, we have other—sometimes schools and we have the OWTU facilities that are also used from time to time. But clearly, the Bowl serves a totally different purpose from NAPA. Therefore, I feel that it would not have been the best decision. Now the Bowl celebrated—Naparima Bowl—it would have been 50 years since that facility was established. At the end of the day I think that the commitment to retaining the Bowl particularly having regard to its historical purpose, I must say that I am quite happy that the Government has reconsidered the decision. I am sure that the people who utilize Naparima Bowl are absolutely overjoyed.

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There were some consultations, very, very heated. And sometimes I know that Sen. Dr. Tewarie talked about the tone, and he talked about us taking sometimes a whole different approach when we are having these discussions. But the truth is that I guess that some people are a lot more passionate about issues. And Naparima Bowl is to San Fernando, I guess as what probably Queens Hall is to a lot of people that live—I do not know what is equivalent in Tobago.

Sen. Cudjoe: Fairfield Complex.

Sen. P. Beckles: Fairfield Complex in Tobago. So I could well imagine for Sen. Cudjoe, if somebody came out of the blue and decided that they wanted to convert that into some kind of training facility.

Sen. Hinds: They want to know what it is in Penal. Cuchuwan Trace.

Sen. P. Beckles: It would be totally different.

9.45 p.m.

Mr. President, I just want the hon. Minister to understand that my concerns were very genuine. I am sure that in his research, he would have known that the Bowl had burnt down, and they took what almost seemed to be forever to get it back on track.

Sen. Karim: Since 1977?

Sen. P. Beckles: Well you would not have only done your research, but—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Karim: I got married there.

Sen. P. Beckles: You see, Mr. President, [*Crosstalk and laughter*] the hon. Minister is saying to us that he got married at Naparima Bowl. I, myself, attended many weddings at Naparima Bowl. As I said, it is one of those facilities where you just need to tell a Trinidadian, Naparima Bowl, and I think every San Feranandian knows where Naparima Bowl is. He indicated at that time he wore a bell-bottomed pants. [*Crosstalk*] Actually bell-bottomed pants are back in style, Minister. So, do not worry. If Sen. Bharath said that, he is probably not in keeping with the trend. [*Crosstalk*] Sen. Bharath says he still has his platform shoes. Sen. Dr. Tewarie, you see, how some of the motions could have a good tone, once we do not misconstrue it as we do sometimes and feel that it is an attack.

Hon. Senator: I want to go home.

Sen. P. Beckles: Somebody said he wants to go. Well, we will go home soon, but I am making sure that I say my piece, because as someone who has had the benefit of utilizing the Bowl, I would make sure that I say my piece. At the end of the day, Minister, I think that the Government's decision to reconsider and to keep the Bowl is a very good decision. Like everything else, the consultations probably took place after the decision was made rather than before, but notwithstanding that, I am sure the entire country would have been happy.

There is a guy I am sure you know called Montano. He is 90 years old, and he has a great history about the Bowl, and he could actually tell about some of the original people who chaired and so on. I think it is really special when we have facilities that have a particular history and, in essence, define a place. When we travel all over the world and we see particular edifices and strange structures and so on, it says something about the place, and I think that Naparima Bowl says something about the many persons who have passed through and developed and grown there, and San Fernando has produced many artistes. I am not going to go through that today.

From time to time, we had choral speaking, and we had schools from north going to south to music festival. I do not know how many of the guys here went and sang. Sen. Brig. Sandy, were you one of those? Was your voice heard at the Bowl?

Sen. Brig. Sandy: Not at the Bowl.

Sen. P. Beckles: Many of us who were in choirs left Port of Spain as well and went to San Fernando, because San Fernando was the only place, and whilst most of us would have had to go up to Port of Spain, on a few occasions they came down to San Fernando. We were so happy that we did not always have to go to Port of Spain to perform. So, that having been said, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Let me start by saying that it is a wonderful tone in which we want to complete tonight's proceedings. My colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, is saying it is the spirit of the season. So, in completing I know that we are going to end on a very nice note.

Let me just say, before I go to Naparima Bowl, as I indicated with respect to El Dorado as you asked and I reiterated, whatever programmes are required for girls in the El Dorado area and the vicinity, we are going to ensure that through our agencies; whether it is YTTEP or through the neighbouring centres if they can be accommodated, the vocational training will continue.

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Mr. President, I listened to the Senator talking about the fact that she used to practise and perform with the Arawak Dance Troupe at Naparima Bowl. I want to tell her we will be looking forward to seeing her on the stage again, in view of the statement that I am going to reiterate from the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. President, I think it is important for me, as Minister, to put the Naparima Bowl in a context and to just say, as Sen. Beckles indicated, that Naparima Bowl is one of Trinidad's most vigorous arts centre, and yes by next year it will be celebrating 50 years with us as an independent nation.

The Naparima Bowl now falls under the purview of the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism and receives an annual subvention from the Government based on the estimates submitted for expenditure and revenue. The role and function of the Board which administers the bowl is to oversee the successful operation of the institution as an enterprise, focusing on developing the arts and the artistes and, by extension, the artistic, intellectual, social and educational development of the society as a whole. Administrative matters are executed through the chief executive officer.

Sen. Beckles indicated the multiplicity of values that the bowl serves, and yes that is correct in terms of the national community through Trinidad and Tobago; local and national as a performing arts centre and as a training facility and that is the history of Naparima Bowl as well. So it also hosts a multiplicity of socio-cultural and educational pursuits—and the Senator is right—like weddings, fairs, bazaars, graduations, church meetings, annual general meetings and seminars, et cetera.

Mr. President, today we are in the forefront asking about the Naparima Bowl, but it is lamentable, of course, that it stayed there languishing for so many years. Sen. Beckles is correct. The Naparima Bowl was partially destroyed by a fire in February 1977, as Sen. Al-Rawi would recall, and was refurbished and reopened not in 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 nor in 1987, it was reopened in 1990. The PNM took so many years. In fact, they took it for nine years and did nothing with it. It languished; it was an eyesore. [*Crosstalk*] I want to tell you the good note is going to come. [*Laughter*]

In May 2005, guess what? The facility was closed again in 2005, this time to facilitate major development. The major wing was demolished in 2006 as a consequence of threat to life and limb, because of flooding and the dilapidated state of the buildings. Mr. President, do you know what is lamentable? Temporary administrative offices were housed in containers. Containers were established as

interim spaces, pending the start-up of major development works, and guess what? These containers continue there, but I am going to show you later on how the People's Partnership Government is allocating funds to establish a new administrative facility on the compound of Naparima Bowl.

Between 2000—2006 concerted efforts were made under the PSIP to initiate the redevelopment of Naparima Bowl. In October 2005—and guess who?—UDEcott informed the then Board of Directors of Naparima Bowl that the project to redevelop Naparima Bowl was to be started.

Mr. President, in August 2006, the then ministry, that is the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, agreed that Carifesta activities were to be mounted at Naparima Bowl as an integral part of these celebrations.

As a consequence, interim dressing rooms had to be constructed. This feat was achieved in less than three weeks where they constructed these dressing rooms, 14 dressing rooms. Do you know how they did it in three weeks, Mr. President? In containerized spaces complete with toilets, washrooms, electricity, running water and air conditioning. If you pass by these containers they continue to exist.

The Bowl was reopened to the public during November to December 2006, but guess what? It was closed again right after, because of the threat of the stage collapsing after we spent millions of dollars to refurbish the Naparima Bowl.

In August 2007, it was reopened after upgrade of the stage, auditorium, canopy, foyer, box office, area lighting and drainage. The Board decided to keep Naparima Bowl open to the public until December 31, 2006. UDEcott continued to remain silent on the Naparima Bowl Redevelopment Project. Two years had ensued without any concrete news of a start-up of the project, and we are talking about Naparima Bowl, this prestigious place of the performing arts.

In 2007 UDEcott initiated dialogue with the Board of Directors on this redevelopment of the state-of-the-art Naparima Bowl cultural centre. The board hired a firm and even attempted to acquire property nearby; two parcels of state lands for its full reactivation.

Mr. President, in 2008 the former government spent \$1.9 million on Naparima Bowl; in 2009 they spent \$3.9 million and in 2010, \$5.6 million, and yet still we had containers and we did not have the full refurbishment of Naparima Bowl, and the People's Partnership Government came into office, and in 2011 we allocated \$5.2 million, which included the purchase of computers, office furniture and the first phase of sound equipment for the auditorium. Imagine that! The second phase in 2012, there

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is a budget allocation of \$7.4 million. Estimates include the purchase of furniture and equipment for the new planned administrative building and the second phase of sound equipment for the auditorium.

Mr. President, I want to just reiterate what Sen. Beckles was saying, and I am reading from the *Newsday*, “Naparima Bowl to be heritage site”, written by Azard Ali, Thursday, December 08, 2011. It says:

“The Naparima Bowl will continue to be used for what it was intended—promotion of culture and arts.

This was the assurance given by Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar who attended a Christmas concert function at the Bowl on Tuesday evening.”

Mr. President, this was at the Cedar Grove Primary School Christmas concert to which the hon. Prime Minister was invited, and let me again reiterate what she said, and I am quoting here now:

“I want to make it very clear that Naparima Bowl will continue to be used as it was, for functions, and as a cultural centre in San Fernando.

And as we move towards celebrating 50 years of independence, I intend to propose that Naparima Bowl be treated as a heritage site in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Mr. President, we stand by that statement and, as a matter of fact, I want to end by saying, that we are going to continue—my colleague, the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism has indicated that he has held discussions with the Board of Directors of Naparima Bowl, and they intend to develop soon and implement refurbishment works to the Naparima Bowl so that it could return to its pristine glory in the years past and even beyond.

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

10.00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. President: I now invite Senators who want to offer any greetings for this time of year, to do so.

Sen. David Abdulah: Mr. President, my colleague, Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George, is just attending to some other business, but on behalf of all of us on this side of the Senate I certainly would like to re-emphasize what he said earlier which was to extend Christmas greetings, not only to Senators opposite, but to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Christmas is one of those seasons when the experience of the birth of the Christ child demonstrates so many important lessons and values, one of which is of course he was described as the Prince of peace. In our society today which has been riddled over the years by so many acts of violence and injustice of one to the other, we certainly would wish every single citizen the joy of peace, a very peaceful Christmas, and to those members of the Christian community that they have a very holy Christmas, and certainly that 2012 would be a year, not only of peace, but of great progress and development, of the kind of harmony and unity in our diverse society that are absolutely necessary if we are to attain the objectives of every single citizen being able to achieve his and her sense of happiness and self-fulfillment as individuals.

Therefore, Mr. President, through you we wish all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago a very peaceful and joyous Christmas, one in which they can celebrate with their families and enjoy the love and spirit of family, of friendship and of community, because families make communities and communities make our nation. Thank you.

Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe: Mr. President, on behalf of the Opposition Bench of this Senate, I would like to say merry Christmas, season's greetings, compliment of the season to everyone, especially those of the Christian community. This time of year is a time of giving and sharing, peace on earth, goodwill to all men. I would like to encourage everybody in Trinidad and Tobago to have a happy and holy Christmas.

This is a time of drinking and all the wonderful things that we are accustomed to at Christmas time. I hear on the radio and on the different media that the hospitals are getting ready; the accident and emergency departments are getting ready for a very active season. I would want to encourage all the drinkers and "limers" to be safe, especially those in Trinidad. We do not have a lot of paranging in Tobago. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

That is one thing I would like to experience sometime soon, a Christmas in Trinidad and a carnival in Trinidad. I have never experienced those things. But for those who go out and have fun—[*Laughter*—in Tobago Christmas is a very peaceful and quiet time. It is more focused on Christmas and the Christian churchgoing part of Christmas. In Trinidad it is Carnival bacchanal time, already you hear it on the radio.

I hope we really reflect on true meaning of Christmas, and we look forward to a more productive, a more peaceful, and a less scandalous 2012. May we all have a peaceful and happy and safe Christmas.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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Sen. Helen Drayton: Mr. President, on behalf of the Independent Bench, in view of the fact that I have been told I am dressed for the season, it is my pleasure and privilege to offer to all of you season's greetings. May the peace and harmony that is this season fill, not only this Senate, but touch each Member, both of this Senate and the other place, especially the staff and their families, and we extend this to the whole national community.

In keeping with the Christian spirit of love and peace, it is our wish that 2012 sees a regeneration of moral living, personal development and the true sense of the purpose of this gathering, which is looking after the welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, that this be our purpose for 2012 and continuing. This allows you to eat, drink and be merry, but be sober when you get here for the rest of the year.

I thank you.

Mr. President: I would like to join with hon. Senators who preceded me in wishing a happy and holy Christmas to all of you and, by extension, the Christian community and also to all the staff in the Parliament. Certainly I wish you and each one of your families all the joy and love and peace of Christmas. May it dwell in your hearts and linger for a long time. I think in this season of gift giving, perhaps one of the things we could do in this time of rejuvenation is look inwardly to find the gift that we have been blessed with and seek to multiply so that it may benefit our communities and be our gift back to the Almighty. With that, I wish each of you a blessed and holy Christmas.

Sen. E. George: Mr. President, I already begged to move that this be adjourned to a date to be fixed, but I also want to invite all Senators gathered, and you too, Mr. President, to have a beverage on the next floor above us, all in the spirit of the season. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 10.08 p.m.