

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Tuesday, June 29, 2021*

The House met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS****(Presentation)****Land and Physical Infrastructure****Measures for Ensuring Water Security in Trinidad and Tobago**

The Minister in the Ministry of Education (Hon. Lisa Morris-Julian): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present:

First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Land and Physical Infrastructure on a Continuation Inquiry into the Measures for ensuring Water Security in Trinidad and Tobago with reference to the Eleventh Report of the Committee in the Fifth Session (2019/2020), Eleventh Parliament.

Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the THA)**Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (AATT)
(COVID-19 Restrictions)**

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present:

First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the THA) on an Inquiry into the Health and Safety practices and arrangements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (AATT) in light of COVID-19 restrictions, First Session (2020/2021), Twelfth Parliament.

UNREVISED

URGENT QUESTION**Collapse of High-rise Building in Florida
(Trinidad and Tobago Citizens)**

Madam Speaker: Member for Tabaquite.

Mr. Lee: Madam Chair, the Member for Tabaquite, can I ask her question? She is running a little bit.

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre): To the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs: Given the continuing rescue efforts following the sudden collapse of a high-rise building in Florida, has the Ministry been notified of any Trinidad and Tobago citizens caught in this tragedy and made any efforts to assist?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. Leader of the House.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, this is indeed a tragedy, but as of today's date, 29 June, 2021, there have been no reports of nationals of Trinidad and Tobago who have been directly affected by this tragic building collapsed which occurred in Surfside, Florida, on 24 June, 2021.

The Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs via our Consulate General in Miami is monitoring the situation very closely and is engaged in regular networking and contact with the local state officials. We are also in contact with Caricom counterparts, nationals of the Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean diaspora, as well as local and state media. In addition, Madam Speaker, the Consulate General continues official dialogue with the office of foreign missions which provides regular updates. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT**UNREVISED**

**CONSTITUTION (AMDT.) (TOBAGO SELF-GOVERNMENT)
BILL, 2020**

(ADOPTION)

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [June 28, 2021]:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Cannabis Control Bill, 2020.

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Member for Tobago East. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this historic debate on this important matter of the Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Constitution (Amdt.) (Tobago Self-Government) Bill, 2020. Madam Speaker, permit me to begin by presenting an excerpt from the *Hansard* of Friday 28 January, 1977, specifically a portion of Dr. Winston Murray’s contribution on the issue of Tobago internal self-government. Madam Speaker, Dr. Murray said and I quote:

“Permit me to read seven principles of internal self-government for Tobago. It is all based on the principle of natural law, which is God’s law, and the seven principles are enshrined in the Charter...”—[*Interruption*] Twenty minutes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: It is not necessary— Thank you so much, but it is not necessary based on the ruling. It is only those who are taking 60 will indicate. Thank you very much. Please continue.

Hon. A. Webster-Roy: “It is all based on the principle of natural law, which is God’s law, and the seven principles are enshrined in the Charter of the

United Nations. The seven principles are also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. My Countrymen from Canaan, from Egypt—a very significant name—Charlotteville and Speyside, have asked me to read these seven principles, not only for this House but for Trinidad and Tobago.

1. Unity: by unit we mean to strive and maintain control of our lands, our villages in all areas of life in Tobago.
2. Self-determination: to define for ourselves, speak and defend ourselves instead of being defined and spoken for and defended by others.
3. Collective responsibility: to build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together as Tobagonians.
4. Co-operative economics: to build and develop our own business places, stores, cinemas, brick factories, ice factories, etc., and to profit together from them.
5. Other purpose: to make as our collective vocation to building and development of Tobago, our national community, in order to restore the former greatness of its people.
6. Creativity: to do always as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.
7. Faith: to believe fervently in Tobago, its leaders, its people and the truthfulness and conviction of this national struggle to run our country without seceding from Trinidad.”

Madam Speaker, I chose to commence my contribution by recalling the

words of Dr. Murray as much of his sentiments are reflected in the voices of the people of Tobago today. Madam Speaker, when emotions posturing egotism are stripped away and the views presented by Tobagonians from all sides are dissected in an unsympathetic manner, it becomes clear, Madam Speaker, that Tobagonians have been clamouring for the same thing. And what Tobagonians have been clamouring for has remained largely consistent with what Dr. Murray outlined in 1977.

Madam Speaker, Dr. Murray succinctly summarized it when he concluded his seven point plan, his seven principles for Tobago's internal self-government by saying:

“We want a piece of the action, no big thing.”

And if you are honest, Madam Speaker, what the average Tobagonian demands and aspires from this union is a straightforward matter that has been complicated by those of us who have sat in positions of leadership and influence over the years. The average Tobagonian desires equality of status within the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. In its simplest form, equality of status would put us on an equal footing with Trinidad, both legally and conceptually. Madam Speaker, the average Tobagonian wants a fair share of the national pie, and in determining what constitutes a fair share of the national pie let equity be the guiding principle.

Madam Speaker, the average Tobagonian demands the right to our land and sea resources, as well as the ability to manage them as we see fit. Madam Speaker, the average Tobagonian wants a legislature that has the authority to enact laws for the benefit of the people and the island, while also ensuring that those laws are not arbitrarily amended or violated by the national Parliament. Madam Speaker, the average Tobagonian craves an executive in Tobago that is empowered to enter into

agreements on behalf of and for the benefit of the Tobagonian people in order to advance our development agenda without interference of the Cabinet. The average Tobagonian, Madam Speaker, is fundamentally demanding their right to self-determination and self-government, and as Dr. Murray said, “No big thing”.

With this knowledge and understanding of what the average Tobagonian wants, I took on the task of reviewing the Committee’s report, its recommendations and the clauses included in the two Bills that resulted from the Committee’s work. Madam Speaker, as difficult as it was, I restrained my emotions and attempted to be as objective as possible. What I discovered, Madam Speaker, is that while not perfect, the Committee’s recommendation and the various clauses of the Bill that resulted from the Committee’s work come closer to satisfying the desires of the average Tobagonian and responding to call for right to self-determination within the unitary state of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, while the proposal contained in the Committee’s recommendations to this House is not perfect, it lays the groundwork for establishing the new Tobago to which we all aspire, and establishes the institution—

Mr. Lee: Madam Speaker, 44(10) please.

Madam Speaker: Okay. So we all know it is a debate, and therefore, we are all guided by Standing Order 44(10). I did not really observe, but we will all be guided by that.

Hon. A. Webster-Roy:—within the constitutional framework within which Tobago can build and shape the institutions and systems that will be ours to govern.

Madam Speaker, the Committee addressed three fundamental issues that

have long been aggravating to the people of Tobago. The first is the vexing issue of Tobago being referred to as a Ward of Trinidad. The second is the issue of status of equality, and the third is a definition of “Tobago” and more specifically the maritime boundary.

Madam Speaker, the Committee has proposed the following remedies in relation to the three issues outlined above: the Trinidad and Tobago Order in Council 1898 should be amended in clause 2 so that the words, “the island of Tobago shall be a ward of the colony of Trinidad” be repealed. On the matter of equality of status, the preamble of the Constitution is amended by inserting after paragraph (c) the following paragraph:

“recognise”—one—“the right to self-determination of the people of Trinidad and Tobago including the right of the people of the Island of Tobago to determine in Tobago their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development;”

And two—“equality of status between the people of the Island of Trinidad and the people of the Island of Tobago in enabling them to access a fair share of the resources and opportunity available to all the people of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.” [*Desk thumping*]

Concerning the definition of “Tobago”, the Committee determined that on the advice of experts and legal luminaries it could not propose a definition of Tobago in terms of Tobago waters within the Constitution without serious consequences for the unitary state of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee was advised that as an archipelagic state, Trinidad and Tobago is defined in all applicable laws as a single unified entity or jurisdiction. The nation of Trinidad and Tobago is built on the concept of unity between the islands and the

interconnecting waters. Those seas are viewed as unifying rather than dividing factors. Madam Speaker, it is a fundamental tenet of Trinidad and Tobago's archipelagic status.

Consequently, the seas around, between and connecting the islands of the archipelagic state of Trinidad and Tobago, as defined, are under of the sovereignty of the State in respective of the individuals breadth and dimensions of the separate islands of the archipelago. Madam Speaker, the Committee was advised that the archipelagic waters constitutes the internal waters of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, there are no waters belonging to the island of Tobago or the island of Trinidad. All waters are under the jurisdiction under of the unitary state.

Madam Speaker, in light of the Committee's recommendations and an all somewhat layman interpretation of international laws and treaties, I believe that the people of Tobago and by extension the people of Trinidad and Tobago—

Mr. Lee: Madam Speaker, sorry again for doing this, 44(10).

Hon. A. Webster-Roy: Madam Speaker, if I may? These are my words, I wrote them this morning.

Madam Speaker: Okay. All right. In terms of this, having regard to the nature of the Bill, I have been giving certain latitudes to people with respect to going through the items of the Bill. Member, it is not just a question of your words, but it is a question of not sticking too closely to one's notes. Okay?

Hon. A. Webster-Roy: No problem, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, at this point I would like to caution Tobagonians once more. When it comes to our future and right to self-determination we cannot afford to be sentimental. We must be calculated and strategic. We must approach this quest for self-government with the maturity to recognize that the only reasonable

path to self-government is through an acceptance of the necessity of compromise.

[*Desk thumping*] Compromise, Madam Speaker, is not necessarily a bad thing.

I listened to the hon. Members opposite yesterday and while I found no merit in the arguments about the Committee's work and output, I did take note of their call for increased consultation. While increased consultation may be beneficial, the question is: When does consultation end? I recall recently I came across a quote attributed to Walt Disney that stated:

“The way to get started is to...”—stop—“talking and...”—start—“doing.” The Committee has proposed a workable solution to many of the issues that have concerned many Tobagonians for many years, and I believe we are now at a point where Tobagonians can begin building a Tobago we can all be proud of. This can be done by harnessing the potential within the measures outlined by the Committee and the proposed constitutional amendments. As an illustration, Madam Speaker, is the debate over Tobago's fiscal allocation. Madam Speaker, while some may argue that sum of 6.8 may be arbitrary, Madam Speaker, it more than what we have now. Any administration that will come in and inherit the governance of Tobago will be at a better footing than we are now, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] It places us in a better place, a better state.

Madam Speaker, the allowance for taxes is progressive. We do not have that benefit now. So even though the work may not be perfect, Madam Speaker, it is workable, it is doable and it is right that the people of Tobago get this benefit. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, while the work of the Committee is not flawless, it is commendable and a step in the right direction. It certainly places Tobago in a better position than previous attempts at this very exercise. If I may be permitted to quote the hon. Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly, Mr.

Ancil Dennis, you would recognize the point I just made is valid. Yesterday, on June 28, 2021, the hon. Chief Secretary made the following statement on social media and I quote:

“I’ve heard that we must not accept ‘little ‘and ‘suffer’ long. While I don’t agree that the current bill represents little, didn’t we accept a little in 1980, and then some more in 1996? How come the preference this time is for Tobago to accept absolutely nothing on this occasion and be stuck with a 25-year-old system? So, we must accept nothing and ‘suffer’ even longer? Ridiculous! The bills are major advancement for Tobago’s autonomy, and we must not miss this opportunity to go further, especially in the circumstances where no viable alternative exists.”

Madam Speaker, I fear that the voices of a few in Tobago will talk us out of this opportunity to advance our right to self-determination and internal self-government for the sake of political posturing and self-aggrandizement. [*Desk thumping*] For years, Madam Speaker, our islands’ relationship has been marred by anger, mistrust, hurt and fear. The majority of the tension stems from Tobagonians sense of marginalization, and some Trinidadians view of Tobago and its people as a burden. Madam Speaker, I am convinced that these sentiments have stifled our nation’s potential and are adversely affecting our ability to achieve the full development goals established over the years. Tobago’s development potential in particular has been negatively affected.

Madam Speaker, I am confident that the Committee’s work and output will make a significant contribution to fostering the healing required to propel the development of our twin-island Republic. Madam Speaker, I am also convinced that the JSC’s Report and the proposed Bills are a start and represents the best

compromise for preserving the [*Desk thumping*] unitary state of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, while allowing the people of Tobago a chance, a chance at internal self-government and self-determination. I implore the hon. Members to lend us the necessary support as we cannot give Tobago what it desires solely with the voices on the Government Bench.

We need the honourable House to do right by Tobago. We need to heal the decades of hurt for the sake of our nation. We need Members to vote unanimously in favour of the proposals made by the Committee. Despite what was said yesterday, an impression left in the minds of reasonable Tobagonians, the hon. Members opposite still have time to do the right thing. [*Desk thumping*] We are not voted yet. I urge Members opposite to give us this start. Give Tobagonians the opportunity to craft a new Tobago. Some may argue that this is not much, but it is more than what we currently have. Allow us to work with what is presented here to demonstrate to ourselves and the skeptics that Tobagonians are capable of handling more and that we do deserve more. If we as Tobagonians squander it, we the people of Tobago, we will bear the sole responsibility.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I want to once again quote Dr. Murray. Dr. Murray said:

“Mr. Speaker, I have not got more to say. All I wish to do, in conclusion, is to request you to advise this honourable House to take positive action. Let no one say as Agrippa, ‘Almost persuaded’. Let no one say like Pilate, ‘I wash my hands; I have nothing to do with this’. You have to be involved in this or there shall not be a unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Madam Speaker, the vast majority of Trinbagonians want the unitary state of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is in our hands. It is within our reach, and

we demand that this honourable House give to Tobago what Tobagonians deserved.

Madam Speaker, before I close, I want to speak to the people of Tobago and remind them that we have the opportunity to chart our destiny. Have we prepared ourselves for such? Let us do some deep introspection. Let us not let political aspirations and self-aggrandizement keep us from achieving our truest potential. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. David Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to give a 20-minute contribution or less in these critical Bills that are before us today. And I join my other Members saying that, or my other colleagues who had spoken yesterday, that we agreed that there are some issues with these two pieces of legislation and not enough consultation, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, one of the issues for me going through the JSC report was the birthing—and I use the word “birth”—of the companion Bill called the Tobago Island Government Bill. Now, that Bill was developed and I use the word “birth” out of that JSC Committee, and that Bill is being discussed today as part of the report, but that Tobago Island Bill has never been laid in this Parliament. So I am asking about the process of that Bill that we are discussing, that has not come to Parliament, and was laid on the floor of the Parliament Chamber, and yet we are discussing a Bill.

So in that JSC Report, when I went through that JSC Report sometime in April of this year, that first discussion of the Tobago Island Government Bill took place in that JSC Committee, Madam Speaker. And when you look at that Island Government Bill which is supposed to repeal the Tobago House of Assembly Bill, I asked if there was enough consultation on that particular Bill because we are

talking about consultation on the self-governance. But I do not know, because I have not seen any proper consultation on that Tobago Island Government Bill which repeals the Tobago House of Assembly Act by a simple majority, a simple vote, Madam Speaker. And that Tobago Island Government Bill has included some clauses that were not part of the THA original Bill, and it impacts greatly on the island of Tobago and the people of Tobago, Madam Speaker. So that that Island Government Bill, we feel—and I do not know if the process is correct the way we are discussing that Bill in this Parliament. So I do not know at what stage that Tobago Island Government Bill will be laid in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the first point I want to make.

Now, Madam Speaker, when I got a letter this morning—I mean, it was circulated, I am sure the Government would have seen it. It is a letter signed by Hochoy Charles and Farley Augustine, and the heading of that letter is the “Open communique” and it deals squarely on these two pieces of legislation that are being discussed today. The heading of it is the “Open communique from political leaders in Tobago, to all Members of Parliament, President, all MPs and Senators on Tobago’s autonomy”. And they have come up in this letter—because again, they are a bit fearful of these two pieces of legislation that is here today and they have come up with some amendments, suggested amendments, that they would like the Government or the Parliament to consider as amendments at committee stage I am assuming, or even for Government to take it into account and maybe adjourn the House on this piece of legislation, the Committee report, and consider what they have written to us here in the Parliament.

I would not go through the letter too much. I mean, they have some amendments. I am sure the Government would have seen it. It would have been

circulated to them, but one of the last paragraph of that letter, Madam Speaker, is if these amendments that they have asked for is not considered in a fulsome way because—and I want to quote:

These two 2021 Bills provide Tobago with no power which is the ability and capacity to influence and control its circumstance and destiny even in the sovereign with democratic state of Trinidad and Tobago, and are therefore in clear violation of international law.

So they are saying that they feel that the way these two Bills are presented is a clear violation of international law.

For in all major documents of the United Nations and fundamental human rights, the right to self-determination finds an honourable place i.e. all peoples.

So they have a concern, Madam Speaker, again that they have not had a voice, a proper voice. They needed more time. Especially Hochoy Charles had asked as MP Indarsingh when he was responding, talked about at the JSC about maybe two more weeks that they needed more time. And they are saying:

In the circumstances we urge you—meaning us—as constructive legislators to vigorously and scrupulously seek to make the amendments as contained in this letter.

Failing which, they are recommending to reject these two Bills. This is not the UNC saying to reject these two Bills. I want to put that on record. It is leaders of Tobago are saying this, Madam Speaker, because they have a concern.

10.30 a.m.

And when you look at countries with autonomous areas, Madam Speaker, an issue that we are talking about self-government and we are talking about unitary

state in the report. When you look at St. Kitts and Nevis, it is not similar to what the Committee has come up with because they mentioned St. Kitts and Nevis. I think the Leader of Government Business mentioned when she was talking about, Leader of Government Business, the unitary state. She was the Chair of the Committee. And it is clear that that if you follow that model of St. Kitts and Nevis, it is not the same model that is being piloted here today.

Madam Speaker, I want to come back to a different clause on the Tobago Island Government Bill because in the Tobago Island Government Bill, it gives legislative powers to make their laws but at the end of it, those laws can be overridden by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. We have an issue with that, I have an issue with that because these laws are not really giving Tobago, if they pass these laws, the self-governance or the self-autonomy that they feel they will be getting.

Madam Speaker, there are so many other issues in this Bill that leaves much to be desired. I think the people of Tobago really need more time. And when you look at the Tobago Island Government Bill in those clauses in that Bill, it is really not a mirror of the Tobago Act or Tobago House of Assembly Act and it is concerning. The Attorney General, when he was speaking, he made a hue and a cry that these Bills now would give some clarity or some strength to land issues in Tobago. And, Madam Speaker, why would these Bills—because land issues have been a problem in Tobago, in the island of Tobago and the people of Tobago. And we are asking how this Bill now would give them clarity to be able to have better tenureship of their lands and why they cannot do it now? So I hope in the wind up that the Leader of Government Business can add clarity of the land issues that the Attorney General mentioned that they can now clear it up in this new piece of

legislation.

Madam Speaker, we feel and I said I would not be long. We feel that these Bills need some work again because I listened to the Attorney General. He is bringing some amendments for us to go at committee stage and I am asking if the Attorney General is bringing amendments on these two pieces of legislation here today, that clearly shows that the work is incomplete on these two pieces of legislation and they require a lot more work because the Attorney General is now piloting amendments and there might be more amendments that might be required coming out of this Parliament and even coming out of the Tobago people who are now for the first time looking at these pieces of legislation that they are now concerned with.

So, Madam Speaker, as I end, we feel that these two pieces of legislation should go back to the Committee so there is a lot more work to be done. I thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Marvin Gonzales): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It gives me great honour to stand in this Parliament in support of the Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Constitution (Amdt.) (Tobago Self-Government) Bill, 2020.

Madam Speaker, as a young Member of Parliament, I must say that I feel tremendously honoured to participate in this national discussion, this discussion that is so important as it relates to our constitutional evolution as a society. Madam Speaker, it was Dr. Eric Williams who said in 1962, speaking to a young nation and informing this young nation that what we have achieved by gaining independence is that a nation has been freed but a society is yet to be born.

And therefore, Madam Speaker, I stand as a PNM member, proudly so,

representing the constituency of Lopinot/Bon Air West and a party that has fought to gain independence of Trinidad and Tobago in 1962 and a party that has fought to gain republicanism in 1976, Madam Speaker, working towards developing Trinidad and Tobago with a clear vision to bring a society together. And after getting our republican status in 1976, the issue of Tobago self-governance has always occupied the national agenda.

I have heard the Member for Couva South in his contribution alluding to the PNM as some great oppressor, giving the impression that the PNM is a party that undermines the effort of Trinidad and Tobago as though it is some threat to the national development of Trinidad and Tobago when it is the PNM that has contributed to the national development of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and has won the trust of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, almost every attempt and every effort to craft a very strong nation, one can see the fingerprint of the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] And that is the reason why I feel tremendously proud today that we are engaged in a discussion and a discussion that is very, very important to our nation and our evolution as a nation. This discussion, Madam Speaker, started all the way to 1977 when ANR Robinson was a member of the PNM fighting and agitating for internal self-government for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and for the people of Tobago in particular.

But, Madam Speaker, we have heard so much in this debate. We have heard the Members of the Opposition, of course, we are not surprised by the posture that they have taken. We have heard the Attorney General, we have heard the Member for Arouca/Maloney, we have heard the Member for Tobago East and the Member for Tobago West, all making valuable contributions talking to the people of

Tobago as to the benefits of what we are discussing here today in this Bill.

Madam Speaker, it cannot be said that this PNM Government and this PNM party is not committed to the development of Trinidad and Tobago and therefore, this discussion hinges on trust. It is an issue of trust because we have heard the Members of the Opposition coming here and talking about Winford James and Watson Duke and Augustine Farley. Yes, Madam Speaker, they are citizens of this country and their voices must be heard. [*Interruption*] Farley Augustine, I am sorry. I do not want to fall for the same trouble that the Member for Couva South has suffered from yesterday and the greatest apology to the member and the leader of PDP Farley Augustine.

But, Madam Speaker, this issue is an issue of trust and I ask the people of Tobago: Who do you trust in this debate? Is it the party that led Trinidad and Tobago to independence in 1962? Is it the party that led Trinidad and Tobago to republican status in 1976? [*Desk thumping*] This is what we ask of the Members and the people of Tobago. This is an issue and it is an issue of trust. And therefore, Madam Speaker, I think we have to go back to some kind of history and the history that is recorded in the *Hansard* of this honourable House.

And, Madam Speaker, I turn to the *Hansard* debate when the first THA Bill was passed and the discussion for internal self-government for the people of Tobago was being debated. In that debate, of course, the Member for Tobago East, our former President and Prime Minister ANR Robinson spoke and agitated very strenuously for full internal self-government for the people of Tobago.

But one of the things that stood out to me, Madam Speaker, in the *Hansard* report was that another Member of Parliament for Tobago West, on his way to this Parliament to make his contribution in this debate, was assaulted by a member, a

party supporter of the DAC and when he came to this Parliament, he reported it to the Speaker that he was assaulted and when that report was made to the Speaker's House and Mr. ANR Robinson was on his feet contributing to this debate, the Speaker had to clear the House and to clear the public gallery because there was a real threat. So passionate was this debate. So passionate was this debate, Madam Speaker. But the records also show that Mr. ANR Robinson did not conclude his contribution in this debate, this very important debate in 1980. He did not conclude because the Speaker had to clear the public gallery because of a threat to the national Parliament.

What stood out to me, Madam Speaker, was that the Members of the Opposition in 1980 led by Mr. Basdeo Panday had absolutely nothing to say in that debate. A debate that was so critical to the constitutional evolution of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the Opposition then in 1980 had absolutely nothing to say causing Overand Padmore who led and laid the debate to call and the Speaker had to call him to wrap up the debate because Mr. ANR Robinson did not conclude and the Opposition had absolutely nothing to say. And that is why I say, Madam Speaker, that this is an issue of trust. Who do you trust? Those on the other side? Or do you trust? Those who always fought and defended the people of Tobago and fighting for their internal self-government. This is what I ask the people of Tobago here this morning. [*Desk thumping*] That is what I ask for.

And, Madam Speaker, in 1986, even though Mr. ANR Robinson led the debate and did not conclude, in 1986, the PNM lost the election by a landslide defeat as it were. The NAR coming into Government with a 33:3 majority, a majority that could have changed the Constitution and do what we are doing here this morning. But what happened? The *Hansard* record shows that nothing

happened between 1986 and 1991 with respect to giving internal self-government to the people of Tobago. Who do you trust? Where was Hochoy Charles? Was he a member of the NAR? Was he a member of the DAC? I am not too sure. Perhaps he was. What did he do when his party had 33:3 seat majority in this House that could have changed and altered the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago and give Tobago full self-governance?

Madam Speaker, we come to 1996 and in going through the *Hansard* debate in the Senate, I saw the contribution of one Senator Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh and this is what he said:

“Over the years so much effort was devoted in search of justice for Tobago through the various commissions: the Seemungal Draft, the Wooding and Hyatali reports and the 1995 draft. We have copies of those and we add the Guya Persaud Report, a committee of 1996 that met 32 times. This is must be a record. Added to this, our own Joint Select Committee of Parliament did...work. Yet today, political guile hinders a proper solution.”

1996, Madam Speaker, it resembles exactly what we are talking about here today.

And, Madam Speaker, I move forward and I talk about this is an issue of trust. Who do you trust? This is what I ask my fellow Tobagonians: Who do you trust in this debate? Look at their record, examine their record and let it speak for themselves, and I dare say that when it comes to national development, the PNM party stands very proud. Very, very proud. [*Desk thumping*]

And, Madam Speaker, I turn to 2013, Prime Minister speaking notes during the debate on the Constitution (Amdt.) (Tobago) Bill, 2013, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and of course, months before the THA elections in 2013, came to Parliament, laid a constitutional amendment Bill and this is what she had to say:

“...I am proud to lead a Government that is keeping its promise to the people of...”—Trinidad and Tobago—“...I am proud to lead a Government that is not afraid to confront the harsh political realities of the past...We are doing what is right and best for Tobago in the context of what is fair and equitable for...”—Tobago and Trinidad.

“...I...recognize the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters in Tobago whose voices and cries for change echoed empty and angrily in the political wilderness. Their just pleas fell on deaf ears for...”—so—“long...”—The time has come for us—“...to put an end to the political and constitutional subjugation and”—their—“subservience...”

Does she stand by that today? I ask the question. Is she prepared to lead her party and to stand by those words?

And on the issue of consultation, this is what the Member for Siparia and the Leader of the Opposition had to say. The Green Paper towards internal self-government for Tobago public consultations:

“Some...”—say—“there have been no consultations.”—The entire country knows—“that my Government held extensive nationwide consultations in both Tobago and Trinidad...it is disingenuous, indeed, dishonest for anyone to suggest otherwise. This is nothing but a red herring...intended to stultify and frustrate the legitimate expectations of the people of Tobago...”

I ask the question of the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Siparia. Is it disingenuous and indeed dishonest for anyone to suggest that this is nothing but a red herring intended to stultify and frustrate the legitimate expectations of the people of Tobago? I hang these words at the necks of every Member of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker,

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this was in 2013. And you know what happened in 2013? They got a “licking” and “ah red wash” in the THA elections and she never picked up that constitutional amendment Bill. She had nothing to do with all those nice lovely words for the people of Tobago but the “licking” that they got in that THA election caused her never to pick up that constitutional amendment Bill. She had nothing more to say on that particular topic.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, what we saw coming out of that was one Vernella Alleyne-Toppin being used to pour her guile and her viciousness against another colleague Tobagonian, led by the Member for Siparia who is the Leader of the Opposition. Putting Tobago against each other. That is what they are known for.

And therefore, I say I stand as a proud Member of Parliament, as a proud PNM member representing the constituency of Lopinot/Bon Air West that we are not about putting people against each other because, Madam Speaker, the names that they call that we should speak to and we should get their approval, if it is one thing that we can say about all of them is that they are political opponents of the People’s National Movement. That is all they can say. And what they do is that they create an enemy because that is what unites all of them, their hatred for the PNM. They cannot come here and go to this constitutional amendment Bill, this Report of the Joint Select Committee and say exactly what they are not in agreement with.

But they invite us to listen to Hochoy Charles and the Winford James and the Vanus James and the Watson Duke. Yes, we must listen to them but what about the Shamfa Cudjoes? What about the Ayanna Webster-Roys? [*Desk thumping*] They are the representatives of the people of Tobago. They were sent here to

represent the interest of the people of Tobago and I dare say and I call upon all of them respect Ayanna Webster-Roy, [*Desk thumping*] the Member for Tobago East, [*Desk thumping*] respect the Member for Tobago West, respect the Member for Diego Martin West who is a son of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Do not come here and pretend as though that those on the other side who oppose the PNM, the Hochoy Charles, as though they have more voices and their voices ought to be louder than the people who the Tobagonians sent here to represent their interest. It is gross disrespect. It is gross disrespect and their voices are not louder and it cannot be louder than the legitimate representatives of the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I say I feel very proud. The PNM stands proud, the PNM ought to be proud that whenever the history of this country is recorded, the PNM has always stood in defence of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the unitary state of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, in closing, I ask those opposite and I ask some of the opponents in Tobago to remove your proverbial knees at the necks of our colleagues and our friends in Tobago. It is time that they breathe. It is time that they breathe. And as the Tobagonians would say—perhaps, Madam Speaker, this is no coincidence that this debate is taking place in broad daylight because the Tobagonians must see those who stand in defence of their interest and those who stand against their interest.

As the Tobagonians would say, Madam Speaker, “yuh nah take boule-dife tuh see in de night what you can see in broad daylight”. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Davendranath Tancoo (*Oropouche West*): Thank you, Madam

Speaker, for the opportunity to join this very important debate today. I join with a heavy heart largely because I think that the Members opposite are very well aware that the piece of legislation that they are bringing to this honourable House is half-baked, incomplete, has significant errors, procedural and otherwise as my colleague, Chief Whip, Dr. Lee, raised recently, just now. The Bill itself, the document itself, lacks consultation, Madam Speaker, and the Members opposite are very well aware of that. [*Desk thumping*]

So to come here and listen to them carry on as if this is normal. “This is great. This piece of legislation is phenomenal. It has gone through all the right channels.” The hon. Attorney General spoke about 200 plus years, “we need to free Tobago”—Madam Speaker. The hon. Attorney General went on and on about what Tobago deserves and Tobago deserves and what Tobago deserves because he was talking about what he thinks Tobago deserves. Tobago deserves good legislation just like Trinidad does [*Desk thumping*] and, Madam Speaker, this is not good legislation and they are aware of that. The question then: Is if they know that the legislation is not good, why are they bringing it?

What is the haste, Madam Speaker? And there was haste. The Joint Select Committee indicated—the Minority Report clearly indicated that there was a rush to bring this legislation here today.

Madam Speaker: Member, at this stage, I am really going to rule on tedious repetition and for guidance to all Members joining here. So far, the number of hours we have spent has looked at process, we have looked at time, we have looked at consultation in terms of definition, nature, content, character, sufficiency, insufficiency, inclusiveness. Okay. I think all the hours we have spent have been just on process, time versus consultation. I will ask Members, therefore, to move

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on to another point.

Mr. D. Tancoo: Duly guided, Madam Speaker. I want to reference my colleague the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West when he said political guile hinders a proper solution. I am in absolute agreement with him because that is what this Bill is here today, it is political guile. The Government knows that the Opposition is going to oppose this Bill because of what it contains because of the lack of consultations and other things but they will still bring it here.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance spoke at length about the Opposition's conduct in these Standing Finance Committees. He said that the Opposition is fighting down Tobago, we are always fighting down Tobago. Madam Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The role of the Opposition in Standing Finance Committee and even here today is to ensure that the right thing is done for the right people and the right people are all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The Members opposite and I have listened to them extensively speak about this Bill being a Tobago Bill, the Committee report being about Tobago, about being about Tobago, it is not about Tobago only. These legislative pieces that they have brought here and this Committee report is about Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, Members opposite have spoken about consultation, I would not venture down that road again, except to say that Trinidadians also need to be consulted because of the fact that this legislation impacts us too and, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Member, I have said I have already ruled on consultation and if you did not hear me say that it also includes the issue of Trinidad being included,

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every aspect of consultation has been well ventilated in this House. And time. A distinction was made between time and consultation. We spent the whole of yesterday and I have allowed it for two speakers already for this morning. Please move on to another point.

Mr. D. Tancoo: Madam Speaker, I thank you for your guidance and for re-enforcing our concerns. Madam Speaker, this Bill affects constitutional rights. That is a fact which is why we need special majorities to approve the legislation that is associated with the report that is before us. Fundamental rights of our citizens are being affected. The Attorney General is normally the first one when we hear about Constitution to jump up and talk about Suratt and proportionality. Ironically he was the same one defending constitutional rights now.

Madam Speaker, when we bring legislation to this Parliament, the purpose for bringing the legislation is to improve what exists in terms of law. That is the purpose of the legislation. What is created and what is brought from the Parliament must drastically improve what exists today. We have seen time and again, this Government bring legislation anxiously to the House without the intent to either proclaim or to implement and as a result, those pieces of legislation sit idly on the books. It is as if they bring legislation just so that it would enter the law books and that we could occupy parliamentary time. We spent long hours yesterday and we will spend long hours today as well discussing and debating this particular piece of legislation and I wonder, Madam Speaker, openly, whether the Government really ever intended for this legislation to be implemented. Just like, Madam Speaker, they brought amendments to the procurement legislation and to date, that legislation still has not been fully implemented, but that is only one.

11.00 a.m.

What about the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill, Madam Speaker? Those pieces of legislation tells that this Government has no inclination to implement.

Madam Speaker: Member, I stand and caution you on Standing Order 48(1).

Mr. D. Tancoo: Madam Speaker, Members opposite have indicated repeatedly ad nauseam that the Government of the People's Partnership, under the leadership of Kamla Persad-Bissessar, has done nothing for Tobago. They have repeatedly said that over and over and over. They are still saying it. But that is their job. Their job, unfortunately is, is not to speak truth. Their job is to misrepresent what facts are.

So allow me, Madam Speaker, to lay some facts just as reminders for my colleagues opposite. The Scarborough General Hospital, the Scarborough General Hospital, the Scarborough RC School, the Scarborough Methodist School, the integrated campus, the workforce assessment group, Buccoo Integrated Facility, the Buccoo Community Center, Pembroke Heritage Park, Glen Road Community Center, Tobago Technology Center.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Again, Standing Order 55. Three or four speakers have already outlined those exact projects in their submissions. Please move on to something else.

Mr. D. Tancoo: Madam Speaker, again I thank you for reinforcing our points that these matters have been raised and these matters have sought to clarify what was said before.

Madam Speaker, if I may, in the two minutes I will speak for again? One Member just recently—today the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air, spoke about trust and claimed in his history lesson that you cannot trust the Opposition, you cannot trust persons on this side. Madam Speaker, it was a PNM Government that dismantled the Ministry of Tobago Development twice. It was a PNM Government

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that did that. It was a UNC Government that actually gave life to PNM in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We gave them something to talk about. We gave them something to talk about, because a lot of the things that they are claiming in Tobago was actually done by us. I just read out a list. The hon. Speaker indicated before that that list was indicated by others. I confirm that.

Madam Speaker: Please.

Mr. D. Tancoo: I am sorry.

Madam Speaker: Do not bring the Speaker into the debate.

Mr. D. Tancoo: Duly noted, Madam Speaker. Other colleagues before have indicated clearly the multitudinous number of projects that were done in Tobago that you are now claiming credit for.

I notice my colleague for Tobago East looks rather confused. But what can I expect when my colleague, who is supposed to bat for Tobago, who is supposed to be the one speaking most on this Bill, representing Tobago, could only find 20 minutes to speak about. That itself tells you the emphasis that Tobago East has for Tobago, the concern that they have.

Madam Speaker, just to repeat, political guiles hinder a proper solution, Madam Speaker, and that is what we are facing from those opposite. They know that the legislation is flawed. They bring it expecting it to not be approved so that they could proceed to campaign, Madam Speaker. Because what they want is not this legislation. What they want is to deny citizens of Tobago their rights expressed previously in an election held just recently. The indication, Madam Speaker, is that they do not want this legislation to pass. They have no desire for it to be approved, so that they could go ahead and campaign for 15 seats. That is what they want to do. But even that piece of legislation, just like this piece of legislation, is flawed

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deliberately. Because, Madam Speaker, there is already on the law books a process for resolution.

They talk about what Tobago wants. Tobago has already indicated what they want, and what they want was indicated in a local government election, in a THA local government election just recently, and Tobagonians spoke volumes when they said enough was enough. The resolution for that process has been stymied by this Government, because the PNM does not like what Tobagonians have said. So they are denying those very same persons, including the Aldermen and the Councillors, the opportunity for expressing the views of Tobago in the Parliament, in the THA. [*Desk thumping*] They are denying them that right.

Already in the system, Madam Speaker, there is a process for resolution and I really wish, I really wish that instead of occupying parliamentary time, the right processes will be accompanied, will be adopted, to ensure that the views of Tobagonians are solely and clearly heard, having already expressed it. Give them what they deserve, what they have said they wanted. Give them that. Allow them to guide their own future, Madam Speaker, instead of doing what they are trying to do now, which is to undermine that process. Madam Speaker, with those few words, I thank you very much for the opportunity. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for La Horquetta/Talparo.

The Minister of Youth Development and National Service (Hon. Foster Cummings): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to join in this debate. Allow me to take the opportunity to congratulate the Chairman of the Committee, the Member of Parliament for Arouca/Maloney, the hon. Camille Robinson-Regis, who, I think, distinguished herself as an experienced and dedicated Member of the House—[*Desk thumping*—]—in the way

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that she conducted the proceedings of the Committee.

I wish to also express thanks to the Attorney General for his professionalism throughout the exercise and to the other Members of the committee who gave their time and service to the Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Because what we are about in this debate is internal self-government for the people of Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I have listened to some of the contributions from the Members of the Opposition. And the last speaker admitted what we have been saying all along, that the UNC is intent on undermining internal self-government for Tobago.

Mr. Tancoo: Madam Speaker, I did not say any such thing. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member, please continue.

Hon. F. Cummings: That on every occasion they appoint a Ministry in Tobago, clearly intended to undermine the work of the Tobago House of Assembly. He claimed that the PNM dismantled the Tobago Development Ministry and we know, and we have been saying that on every occasion the UNC has sought to undermine the work and the role of the Tobago House of Assembly. It is quite surprising to hear all the love coming for Tobago from the UNC. Your actions speak louder than words. [*Desk thumping*] When you were in Government, Tobago had gotten absolutely nothing or very little. [*Desk thumping*] I heard one of the speakers from the Opposition side saying yesterday that UNC had done so much for Tobago, but after they called two projects they had to stop because they know very well that the party that has taken Tobago forward is the People's National Movement Government.

Madam Speaker, the people of Tobago deserve self-determination and the

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ability to make rules and laws to govern the affairs of the island of Tobago and to impact the lives of the many Tobagonians who continue to contribute to the nation State of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is what this legislation is about. But on every occasion that the UNC Opposition gets an opportunity, they marry and hold fast to all those persons who, the—only thing they have in common is opposition to the People's National Movement.

It is not that they have taken the time to carefully study this legislation. Because even though they were part of the Committee, if you listen to the contributions coming from the Opposition, the substance of what they have been speaking about is more time and consultation, without putting on the table one single amendment, or one single suggestion as to how this legislation can be improved. If you so love Tobago and you want to give Tobago all that the speaker—the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre pointed out a letter from persons and leaders in Tobago. If the UNC's position is that you want to give Tobago all that it wants, you want to agree with Farley, you want to agree with Hochoy Charles, then come here and put on the agenda what the UNC position is. [*Desk thumping*] Do you support internal self-government?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, 55(b). That has been raised on a number of occasions.

Madam Speaker: Continue.

Hon. F. Cummings: Madam Speaker, they must come clean with the country. They must come clean with Tobago. Do not hide behind consultation. This matter has been in the public domain for years, and the UNC clearly has no policy position on Tobago whatsoever.

Madam Speaker: So, Member, I have already ruled on the issue of consultation.

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So that, if you will develop your argument on something else please.

Hon. F. Cummings: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I am guided.

Madam Speaker: I know you are responding, but the consultation discussion is now ended.

Hon. F. Cummings: Madam Speaker, this is a right that many Tobagonians have advocated for, for many, many years, and the work and result of this Committee is intended to move the position in a positive direction.

Back in 1977, the late MP for Tobago East, Mr. Robinson, moved a Motion in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. The Motion was discussed and the desires of the people of Tobago took center stage in that debate. It led, in fact, to what we now know as Act 37 of 1980, and that gave life to the Tobago House of Assembly as we know it. And although events would have occurred that caused the mover of the Motion not to be able to complete his contribution on the Motion, the Bill was still passed, owing to the contribution of Dr. Murray.

Notwithstanding the position of the mover of the Motion at that time, following the passage of the Bill, he went on to contest the THA Election and eventually became the first Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly. Madam Speaker, this matter continued, because it is really at the heart of what Tobagonians desire. And in 1982, in the THA, Dr. Davidson moved a Motion which read as follows:

Be it resolved that this House of Assembly take all proper and necessary steps to terminate the present unjust union of Tobago with Trinidad and to secure either its replacement with a union based on the terms and conditions acceptable to the authorized representatives of the people of Tobago, or for the full independence of Tobago with secured territorial boundaries.

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The Motion was passed 10:4. At the time, the THA was led by Mr. Robinson. Madam Speaker, we know and the history tells us that following that the NAR took government and did not produce self-government for Tobago.

The point I wish to make in relation to that, is at that time the ULF was part of the NAR. The ULF morphed into Club 88 and Club 88 gave birth to the very UNC that forms the Opposition party currently in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. So even back then, in all the various incarnations, they have never had Tobago as a priority and as a policy position. [*Desk thumping*]

Following that, in 1995, the NAR and the UNC got together and formed a government. The UNC was the major partner in that arrangement, and the NAR brought two seats to the arrangement. And even then, the UNC did not have, as a policy position, the advancement of Tobago.

Madam Speaker, as we move forward, the UNC in 2010 formed the Government again and at this time they called themselves the People's Partnership. And, Madam Speaker, and Trinidad and Tobago, and Tobago in particular, notwithstanding the work of the John Prince Committee of 2007, notwithstanding several approaches to that Government, notwithstanding the fact that a Tobago party formed part of that partnership, the UNC failed to do anything to improve the lot of Tobagonians. As a matter of fact, the history will show how they treated the Tobagonians who joined with them to form the Government on every occasion.

This legislation, these pieces of legislation that we are discussing here today, Madam Speaker, gives benefit to Tobago in several areas. It gives life to the Legislature to make laws for the benefit of Tobago. It expands the island's nautical miles that exist in the current legislation from six miles to 11 miles. It increases the size of the Legislature from 16 to 25, therefore giving a greater spread for

representation throughout the island of Tobago. The UNC's behaviour, Madam Speaker, is always designed to deny the people of Tobago their right to self-determination and their right to self-government.

During their time in office they visited Tobago with much fanfare. But when they have the opportunity to give greater autonomy to Tobago, they hide behind every possible excuse. I dare the Opposition, if you really care about Tobago, come to the table and do what is right by the people of Tobago, and if you really want to give more, tell us the more and let us look at your amendments and let us see if we can give Tobago what they justly deserve. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, yesterday, during the debate, the Member for Naparima asked: What happens to a fisherman who finds himself outside of the 11 nautical miles? Well let me answer that question for the Member. That fisherman will still be in the waters of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We are not discussing secession and independence. We are the discussing internal self-government and, therefore, all the waters are the waters of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And that is what we are discussing. We are not discussing creating a separate country called Tobago. We are discussing giving internal self-government to the island of Tobago as a part, an equal partner, in the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, the people of Tobago must see it for what it is. The UNC by their actions have demonstrated that they do not support any legislation brought by the Government. But more so, on this occasion when they have an opportunity to demonstrate that they are about nation building, when they have an opportunity that they can demonstrate that they can act and their actions can speak louder than their words, they fail to do it on every occasion. If they support internal self-

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government for the people of Tobago then their actions would have been very different in this debate.

In this legislation Tobago will no longer be referred as a ward of Trinidad. For the average Tobagonian on the streets of Tobago, that is a big accomplishment. The Tobago Legislature, as I said, will make laws specific to Tobago. And in addition to that, a significant increase in the budgetary allocation for the island of Tobago is also part of this legislation.

Madam Speaker, in addition to that, an office of the Service Commission will be established in Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] taking into account members on that Commission living and residing in Tobago being a part of the Commission. The Bill proposes, as I said, a stronger legislature and wider representation.

The entrenchment within the Constitution of the Executive and the Legislature for Tobago, this would afford Tobago the protection of the Constitution so that future policy could not simply reverse these actions without special majority considerations.

Madam Speaker, Tobago's Executive will have jurisdiction over a wide range of functions, including tourism, works and infrastructure, youth development, transportation, the environment, housing, health and services, construction and maintenance of public buildings, trade and industry, education and training, planning and development, culture and the arts, customs and excise, public utilities, social welfare, state lands, statistics and information, telecommunications, emergency management services, finance, fisheries, highways and roads, industrial development, infrastructure including and air sea transportation, labour, land and marine parks, Office of the Chief Secretary, Office of the Secretary of Legal Affairs, Office of the Tobago Legislature, consumer

affairs, community development, agriculture, forestry and sports, to name a few. That is what the UNC wants to deny Tobago. And that is what we need to make sure that the people of Tobago understand.

So that this legislation gives greater power to the Tobago Executive. It gives greater power to the Tobago Legislature, while maintaining, Madam Speaker, the sovereign and unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] But some of voices that they are listening to are speaking a different language. If we are speaking self-government and you are speaking to people who are speaking secession and independence, then you are on a different table from us. We need to take into consideration, Madam Speaker, that while we on this side are committed to giving to Tobago what Tobago deserves, there are those who are hiding behind excuses to prevent Tobago from realizing its fullest potential and getting the self-government that Tobago deserves.

I call upon the Opposition to do the responsible thing, to stop the petty politics, to come clean with Trinidad and Tobago and to support this legislation in the interest of the people of Tobago and in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for St. Augustine.

Ms. Khadijah Ameen (*St. Augustine*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I thank you for this opportunity to contribute in today's debate.

Madam Speaker, I have to admire the blind loyalty of the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo. [*Desk thumping*] I do not know if that is what he thinks will get him leadership but I think Arima and Lopinot/Bon Air West might be ahead of him amongst the PNM membership. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, in the contribution from the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, there were so many

blatant untruths, untruths that the PNM continue to repeat as part of their propaganda, as part of their campaign, as part of their continued effort to keep our citizens in a state of ignorance.

Madam Speaker, this Bill from the contributions opposite, you could swear is a Bill about the UNC. This Bill is not about the UNC. It is about Tobago and the people of Tobago, and the fact that they deserve better governance. Every speaker on other side spent a great deal of their contributions attacking the UNC, attacking the current Opposition Bench, attacking the people before. But you know, Madam Speaker, this is typical of the PNM in that anyone what does not agree with the PNM, they tend to label them as unpatriotic and tarnish their character. [*Desk thumping*] They do it all the time in Trinidad and they often attack the UNC and call us unpatriotic.

But in this debate, in today's debate, we are seeing that they are doing it in Tobago as well with Tobagonians who have been outspoken against the PNM's policy. They have been attacking and vilifying Tobagonians, who are brave enough to disagree, brave enough to put forward different opinions from the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, this is dangerous. In our democracy, of course, there will be different views and the strength of our democracy must be to embrace those different views. So the fact that there are people, well respected people in Tobago, who do not agree with you, does not give you the authority to label them as unpatriotic. [*Desk thumping*] They are "un-PNM"; in fact that might make them even more patriotic to Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, local government practitioners—I myself spent 10 years as a local government representative and I know that a big part of the PNM's campaign and manifesto promises along the lines of local government, often

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promises a model similar to the THA model. So for that reason, I know that today's debate and the proposals that are coming forward are of interest to our local government representatives in Trinidad as well; the idea of a guarantee of a certain percentage of the budget, the idea of being able to manage your affairs within your geographic space, when it comes maintenance of government buildings, administering public health care, agriculture, fisheries, your resources, managing your resources within the region, within your geographic space. Those are critical issues and it is being aired here today in this debate, where we are looking at Tobago specifically. But in Trinidad, as well, I must say that quite a number of local government representatives and practitioners have expressed an interest.

Madam Speaker: Member, we are not talking about municipal corporations.

Mr. K. Ameen: Of course. Of course.

Madam Speaker: We are not having a conversation either. All right? We are not having a conversation. We are not talking about municipal corporations. Confine your contribution to the report and the contents of the report before us.

11.30 a.m.

Ms. K. Ameen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, a very critical area when it comes to governing your own geographic space is cushioning the citizens and the population from the political whims and fancies of the elected persons, the political directorate, the political parties. The issue of our Service Commissions—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 53.

Madam Speaker: I am being disturbed.

Ms. K. Ameen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The protection of our citizens from

the political breezes that blow from time to time is also important. The idea of how we are going to treat with the Service Commissions, how we are going to treat with public servants and civil servants and give them that protection from the political directorate. Are you going to have an affiliation to the ruling party to get a job? Those are things that we must in our democracy continue to protect our citizens from.

The question is, in Tobago are we putting forward a model that will allow for protection of public servants to independently carry out their duties and be protected from the political structure and the political players? The public administration system we have now has the Service Commissions, there was talk about the THA being allowed to have their own service commission, to be able to make decisions about the recruitment and the administration and the disciplining of their staff on their own. Today what we have coming forward is Tobago representatives being on the Service Commissions and an office of the Service Commission in Tobago.

Madam Speaker, with or without legislation Tobago should have everything that Trinidad has. [*Desk thumping*] And the PNM is putting forward this as though it is a great, grand idea. When the UNC was in Government everything in Trinidad also went to Tobago [*Desk thumping*] because we love and respect Tobago as part of Trinidad and Tobago. So, law or no law, that equality in treatment must also come from the political directorate.

We must, Madam Speaker, protect our citizens from—we must ensure the subordination of individual and political interest. We must allow the public servants and the civil servants to have that authority and responsibility to carry out the public administration functions without political interference, that discipline

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that protects our citizens, that unity of command, that unity of direction that will continue regardless of who is in government is important.

And, Madam Speaker, today I want to submit that it is important for the Government to not only take the views of the PNM players into consideration. [*Desk thumping*] They have spent the greater part of the past week using the media even in their speeches in the debate, vilifying, unfortunately, those people who dare to put Tobago first before the PNM. That, Madam Speaker, is dangerous.

And I warn this Government that you will reap what you sow when it comes to Tobago. Because what you are doing is putting forward the views of the PNM and not the views of the people of Tobago. I thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for St. Joseph. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Health (The Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to join this debate. I will spend the first few minutes of my 20 minutes answering and rebutting some of the untruths told by others. I want to start off with both MP Tancoo and the Member for St. Augustine, talking about the Ministry of Tobago Development, and unity of command, and unity of direction. That Ministry of Tobago Development was nothing but a propaganda Ministry directed to copy and duplicate the work of the Tobago House of Assembly. It was a naked grab for power. Nothing more, nothing less. And it created absolute mayhem and disrespect to the fundamental basis of self-determination. It was just a duplicate of the TRHA; that is all.

Madam Speaker, yesterday the Member for Naparima spoke about quantification of opinion. I want to ask the Member for Naparima, when the Kamla Persad-Bissessar government brought the runoff Bill, what was the number of

people who wanted that Bill to undermine democracy in Trinidad and Tobago? A most undemocratic piece of legislation to kill off third parties. That runoff Bill, that collapsed in a heap of ash and flames because of public outcry, outcry. Where was the data Naparima, to show that Kamla Persad-Bissessar MP, SC, had the power of the people behind her to bring that piece of legislation to change the Constitution?

Tabaquite also accused the PNM of talking down to you. Let me ask the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, at least Dr. Keith Rowley goes to Tobago, talks to Tobagonians, goes on Tobago media. Has Kamla Persad-Bissessar MP, SC, ever once gone to Tobago and subjected herself to questioning by Tobago journalists? Has she ever done that once in her life? Gone to Tobago and talked to Tobagonians on their media and outline her vision for Tobago? But no, they use their surrogates in Tobago because they know they are not welcome in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, the issue of internal self-government and health which I will deal with. I refer to pages 11 and 12 of the Joint Select Committee Report which talks about legislation and “Intergovernmental fiscal relations”, [*Crosstalk*] and Schedule 1—Madam Speaker, can Naparima please be quiet? [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Member for St. Augustine, maybe sometimes if you faced this way, you would see when I stand. All right? There is a lot of noise in the Chamber, and I caution all Members with respect to Standing Order 53. If Members do not wish to hear, we have a system of rotation which makes it very easy for Members to exercise their options, all right?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, they cannot handle the truth, because when they are exposed, empty vessels make the most noise.

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[*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, internal self-government and health are spoken about in Schedule 1. I want to speak squarely to two issues mentioned in the joint select report on pages 11 and 12, legislation and “Inter-government fiscal relations” as it relates to health.

Trinidad and Tobago as we know has five RHAs, four in Trinidad and one in Tobago. I just want to put on record what is the TRHA vision. The vision—because no one else has touched this—

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, 48(1), this has no relevance—

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. Indarsingh:—to this joint select report.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: For the uninformed, “Health Services” is in Schedule 1 of the report. [*Desk thumping*] Schedule—if you would just condescend to reading the report, you will see it. It is there. So the TRHA’s vision, the vision of the TRHA is:

“...to promote and deliver client focused, cost effective, equitable, holistic and quality health care...”

But the TRHA is unique amongst the five RHAs because it is subject to the THA Act. Madam Speaker, under the Committee’s report—

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, I have several times told you about the beautiful voice you have for a Chamber, please exercise it properly in this Chamber.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: They cannot deal with the truth; they cannot deal with facts; they cannot deal with the report because this is pages 11 and 12 of the report and Schedule 1.

It speaks to increased budgetary allocations. What does that mean for

health? Payment of gratuities to health care workers, faster update of obsolete equipment, increased funding for a better health care services for two hospitals and 17 health centres across the length and breadth of Tobago.

Madam Speaker, what is so objectionable to Members opposite for citizens of Belle Garden to get better health care under this Joint Select Committee Report? Belle Garden; Bethel Health Centre; Bloody Bay Health Centre; Canaan Health Centre; Roxborough Health Centre; Charlotteville Health Centre; Speyside Health Centre; Delaford Health Centre; Plymouth Health Centre; Pembroke Health Centre; Parlatuvier Health Centre; Mason Hall Health Centre; Mount St. George Health Centre; Moriah Health Centre; Les Coteaux; L'Anse Fourmi; Buccoo; what is so objectionable to that, I ask? [*Desk thumping*]

But you know, in Tobago and everywhere else there is something called the silent majority. You do not hear the silent majority, what you hear is the vocal minority. [*Desk thumping*] The go-to people who only represent their views, but the silent majority never has a voice. And we proved that with Sandals. It is only after the UNC and their surrogates in Tobago ran Sandals that people woke up and said, "Oh God, we shoulda talk out sooner". I am asking the silent majority, speak today. Speak truth to power. This is your time in the sun. This is your time for the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of 60,000 citizens of Tobago, of Trinidad and Tobago to have their hopes, dreams, and aspirations, finally, finally, come to fruition.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

What is so objectionable to that? This is the recommendation of the committee, of your committee, Madam Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, sorry, with this increased allocation, it means that Tobago Regional Health Authority under

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this report, and I was in Tobago very early in my tenure of Minister of Health, the current Secretary of Health was not there as yet. It was Claudia—I forgot her name—Duke? We visited the Scarborough General Hospital and we saw there, foreign students from Germany especially, coming to Tobago to do their internship. That is medical tourism. Why would you want—why would you not want to have that with this Joint Select Committee? Because in Schedule 1 again, it speaks to health services—more dialysis.

I am met a young in Scarborough, first time I saw a 19-year-old man undergoing dialysis in Tobago. More surgery, they could attract more specialists instead of relying on flying orthopaedic specialists, cardiac specialists to Tobago. That is what this Bill can do. But the UNC does not want that, does not want that. And I am asking the silent majority in Tobago, unless you make your voices heard this is “Sandals 2”. Do not let this opportunity as this joint select report envisages, to have your hopes, dreams, and aspirations fly away because the silent majority did what the silent majority does best, they stay silent. And they let that vocal minority, the go-to people, speak on their behalf.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill also speaks about law-making for law-making, to give the new structure in Tobago some leeway in making laws but under the national context of a Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. COVID, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has shown that Tobago needs this, and I will tell you why. There are two RHAs amongst the five—

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1). COVID is not in this report.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: I am talking about lawmaking.

Mr. Lee: No, no, no, no, 48(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. I am talking about what COVID has brought to bear as far as lawmaking is concerned which the Joint Select Committee Report envisages. There are two RHAs amongst the five that need to have some flexibility, Eastern RHA because of their geography, and Tobago.

COVID has shown that you need to pass certain pieces of legislation on public health measures to respond to COVID. Why should a Minister of Health in Trinidad have to sign off, have to sign off on emergency projects in Tobago? In other words, if this legislation devolution takes hold, the Minister of Health in Trinidad does not have to approve emergency works in Magdalena, does not have to approve Studley Park to start back operations to provide rock and gravel for that project. That could be done under the hand of the legislature in Tobago. That is the point I was trying to make. And that is squarely envisaged.

Tobago will need and does need a more nuanced response to respond to new threats, to protect lives and livelihoods instead of having it done via Trinidad. They know their local business best. To Tobago, take charge of your affairs. Take charge of these internal affairs which affect you. But the silent majority needs to speak. Do not let your hopes, dreams, and aspirations be crushed by a vocal minority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 60,000 persons, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago but in Tobago especially, your history is unique, your culture is unique, your ways and customs are unique, therefore, you need a unique model of governance. You need that unique model of governance to bring those hopes, dreams, and aspirations to bear.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, I close with the words of the Chief Secretary the hon. Ancil Dennis when he says:

“Tobago does not want independence from Trinidad but...a deeper

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entrenchment of those very telling words in our national anthem...”

And those words are:

“...side by side we stand.”

Trinidad and Tobago must stand side by side, islands in this blue Caribbean Sea.

And he goes on to say:

“These bills...represent a giant step”—not a small step, a giant step— “in the right direction.”

Let us start. Is it perfect? No. Which piece of legislation is perfect? None, but you start, you start the journey, the longest journey starts with one step. Let us make that one step today.

“These Bills represent a giant step in the right direction. Let’s get it done.”

And he goes on to end by saying:

“This is Tobago’s time.”

Tobago this is your time. This is time for your hopes, your dreams, and ambitions.

It lies with this report. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Rishad Seecheran (*Caroni East*): Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker, I did not intend to speak on this Motion, but I was forced to because the Minister of Health intervened.

Deputy Speaker, Tobago has made it clear that it wants equity, and they do not want special treatment, they want to be treated as equal citizens with equal representation, and with equal opportunity to determine their destiny.

Now, Deputy Speaker, I found it was quite interesting that the Minister of Health joined this debate. And the reason I say that is what moral authority does he have to speak on Tobago after what has happened after the Easter weekend? [*Desk*

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thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Member.

Dr. R. Seecheran: Yeah.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Make it clear, legislation with regard to COVID is what was brought up. Nothing about the Easter weekend and so on.

Dr. R. Seecheran: No problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And I am going to be clear as we go forward.

Dr. R. Seecheran: No problem. And Deputy Speaker, the Minister spoke about pages 11 and 12 of the Joint Select Committee Report, Schedule 1, being regards to “Health Services” and he also spoke about COVID. So, Deputy Speaker, what I am saying is, why does Tobago need this special legislation in order to have proper health care? That is what I am saying. Is it not necessary for Tobago to have proper health care right now? [*Desk thumping*] Deputy Speaker, what has been happening with the health care in Tobago? Tobago has a surge of COVID-19 cases.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member—

Dr. R. Seecheran: Yeah.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I said, I am only taking aspect with regard to legislation. Anytime cases and other things come up I will have to rule accordingly.

Dr. R. Seecheran: No problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So this is the second time. Thank you.

Dr. R. Seecheran: No problem. So, Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Health went on to speak about legislation and intergovernmental relations with regards to the Tobago Regional Health Authority and the special powers that they may have under the Tobago House of Assembly Act. Deputy Speaker, what I am asking, and a question I would like to ask the Attorney General is: How would this help health

care in Tobago given the fact that we are in a pandemic? And how would this help in terms of Tobago being able to lockdown their borders? Could Tobago do that under this new legislation? Because that would be vitally important.

Tobago is separate from the island of Trinidad and thus the cases that we may have here in Trinidad do not reflect what would be happening in Tobago, Tobago is a separate island. They are separate to Trinidad and Tobago, thus they are independent in terms of what is happening with COVID-19 cases in Tobago during the pandemic.

So I am asking, under this legislation would the health services in Tobago be able to lockdown the island of Tobago if they deem fit for the safety and security of Tobagonians? That is a question I would like to ask.

Deputy Speaker, this Minister of Health has failed Tobago in many respects. The UNC, the United National Congress built the Scarborough Hospital which is vitally important to the health infrastructure in Tobago.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 55(1)(b). We have heard about the Scarborough Hospital about 10 times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Member, tie it in quickly because as mentioned by the Member for St. Joseph, the Scarborough Hospital has been discussed, but tie in your point and then we will see where we go from there.

Dr. R. Seecheran: Right. He also spoke about the health restrictions and the value of the Tobago House of Assembly through their health services being able to implement their own health restrictions. Deputy Speaker, I am asking, would they then be able to create their own health restrictions independent to Trinidad and Tobago? Would they be able to adjust their curfew hours? Would they be able to address the fact that we are under a state of emergency? These are questions that I

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am asking. I do not know the answer to these questions. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: AG, thank you. Thank you, please.

Dr. R. Seecheran: Deputy Speaker, I am also asking: would Tobagonians be able under the health restrictions be able to access private rapid testing in Tobago, independent of what is happening in Trinidad?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I respectfully rise on 48(1). Because all of this is in black and white in the legislation. Clearly the Member has not read the report. It is a requirement of relevance that you are relevant to the truth.

Ms. Ameen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when raising a point of order, you just say your piece and sit down.

Mr. Al-Rawi: You are on a point of order? Or are you just grumbling?

Ms. Ameen: The Member seems to be giving a speech—

Mr. Al-Rawi: There is no point of order.

Ms. Ameen:—and he is interrupting the Member for Caroni East who is speaking.
[*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Al-Rawi: Stop grumbling, Big Bird.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Members, hon. AG, hon. Member for St. Augustine, we have a format of how we do things in this Chamber. No need to answer please. We have a format, and I am not going to tolerate the back and forth as we continue. Again Member, legislation with regard to health. It is not a COVID debate but tie in your point and kindly proceed.

Dr. R. Seecheran: Okay. So Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: [*Crosstalk*] I just ruled.

Ms. Ameen: The Member for Laventille West is harassing me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Listen, again, Members, Member for St. Augustine, I just informed that we have a procedure of how we operate in this House. So kindly please, and that goes for Members on both sides. Member, proceed.

Dr. R. Seecheran: Deputy Speaker, so the pandemic has changed the rules with regard to how the entire world operates including Trinidad and Tobago. And because the fact that we had a pandemic and we had these public health restrictions in both Trinidad and Tobago, many Tobagonians were not able to access consultation in sufficient quantity to able to advise on this Bill. We do not really know what many Tobagonians think in terms of health, in terms of what could pertain to health because of this pandemic, Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Minister of Health has failed Tobago. He has failed Tobago. We have had in excess of 20 deaths in the last three months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, Member, kindly move on to your other point please.

Dr. R. Seecheran: And I would like to ask the Attorney General: Under this legislation, would Tobago be able through the Tobago House of Assembly or whatever it may be called in the future—be able to procure vaccines on their own? That is a question I would like to ask, because this Government has been unable to procure vaccines for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

12.00 noon

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, this report is to repeal the THA. So clearly, the Member has not read the report because there will be no THA. And secondly, the autonomy for administration is clearly set out in the Constitution and Tobago Bill. So the answer is yes. So I honestly recommend that the hon. Member actually read the law that is proposed before us today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. R. Seecheran: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you, AG. And the Minister of Health also went on to say that there will be increased budgetary allocations, Tobago would be able to access—be able to procure their own equipment, better health care to be able to best service their two hospitals as well as 17 additional health centres. And what we need to ask is: How would this benefit the Tobagonians in this pandemic? And would Tobago then be able to access much needed health supplies during this pandemic, such as ventilators, such as oxygen tanks and equipment that may best be able to suit what the Tobagonian is going through currently?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Health also went on to say that Tobagonians would be able to carry out emergency projects in Tobago and emergency works would not need his approval. And that is to be, you know, to be welcomed because he is a very incompetent Minister of Health and he has done very little to protect Tobagonians. And with these short few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to say thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Keith Scotland (*Port of Spain South*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, in law there is something called locus standi. And you know, you may at some point in time have to contest an election in a state in order to come and speak on a debate—locus standi. I would get to that shortly.

The hon. Members on the other side have argued to delay the passing of these Bills to give more time for two things: consultations and to make amendments. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my first point as a practitioner in law is I ask: Which piece of legislation is perfect? If the pieces of legislation were perfect, there

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will be no court rulings. That is the first point I want to make. But I say that this piece of legislation does not fall far from being perfect. [*Desk thumping*] And I do not, for one moment, buy into the narrative that there is much to do to make this legislation into a workable document. In fact, it is, as it stands, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I want to debate with the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

What I do say on behalf of the Government is that these two Bills, these two pieces of legislation, the Tobago Island Government Bill, and the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill represents an exercise in good governance. The hon. Members on the other side always say, “Well, we will support legislation that supports good governance.” After my 20 minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will prove to you that this legislation represents good governance and I will call upon the hon. Members of the other side to honour their commitment and support this legislation.

My first point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this legislation promotes the development of Tobago in economic, social, and cultural and political spheres. That is good legislation. That is good governance. Although, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no agreed international definition of good governance, the United Nations defines “good governance” as including these five pillars: one, the full respect for the rule of law; two, effective participation; three, multi-actor partnership; four, transparent and accountable processes, and five, political empowerment of the people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will go through each pillar of good governance as enunciated by the United Nations, and correlate it and interrogate it with this Bill to show that it represents good governance.

One, full respect for the rule of law. In the presentation of this Bill to the honourable House, and these Bills to the honourable House, it is my submission that this Government was faithful to the adherence of and to the rule of law.

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Because the pieces of legislation are in consonance with legislation that recognizes a sovereign, democratic twin-island state of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Moreover, in keeping with the respect for the rule of law, when the legislation required a special majority, the Government—the hon. Attorney General, acting on behalf of the Government, confronted frontally. For example, clause 5(2) of the Bill seeks to include the Tobago Legislature in the fundamental rights of Trinidad and Tobago. This requires a two-thirds majority. This was brought to the Parliament for its consideration, observation of the rule of law.

Secondly, section 61 gives the powers of the new Tobago House Assembly to make laws. It requires a three-quarters majority in the House of Representative and a two-thirds majority in the Senate. This was brought before the Parliament. Clause 121 attempts to vests powers in the Chief Secretary to make appointments. This requires a two-thirds majority in both Houses and it was brought to the Parliament. What I say, it fits the first point.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b). All of this was said by both the Leader of Government Business and the Attorney General when they were debating. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled at this time.

Mr. K. Scotland: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The point I am making is that the Bill supports the rule of law.

The second one, effective participation. Mr. Deputy Speaker not wanting to incur anybody standing up and saying I am being repetitive, the history of this Bill reveals widespread stakeholder participation between 2015 and 2016. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know that there were over 40, four zero, meetings and consultations held in Tobago alone as it relates to this Bill? And all the naysayers,

all the Minority Reports, all the groups that are now calling for delay participated in those over 40 meetings. It culminated in a meeting at the Signal Hill Secondary School where, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was an educational process to educate the people of Tobago as to the contents of these Bills. Could there be more effective participation than that? That is two.

Three, multi-actor partnership. This process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, involves the same hon. Members on the other side who are now jumping up, Opposition participation, the JSC Report, it produced a minority report. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know the trade union movement was involved in this process? The trade union movement; the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and most importantly, distinguish sons and daughters of Tobago: Mr. Gilbert Peterson Senior Counsel, Ingrid Melville and Deborah Moore-Miggins to say the least, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That, in my respectful view, is multi-actor participation. [*Desk thumping*]

Transparent and accountable process. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other side can get a rash because this Bill, it cannot be denied. It had the process of pure transparency in the full public space in the full public gear. No section 34 here, no middle of the night bringing of Bills in the public glare. That is transparency.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48 (1). The irrelevance, please. He has a long run up.

Mr. K. Scotland: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, tie in your point.

Mr. K. Scotland: Yes, please. As it relates to the accountable process involved in this Bill, we are here because this is the pinnacle of accountability. This is the

Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago where the Government comes to account for the people or to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, political empowerment of the people. In April 2005, the THA adopted a resolution as follows: to call on the Government to pursue as a matter of urgency, legislature and constitutional reform to accord the people of Tobago democratic self-governance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this and these Bills that are before you is the culmination of that call and was made long before, but it shows that it represents the will and the aspirations of the people. Therefore, on these Bills, I submit as follows: one, this legislation meets the criteria for good governance and having met the criteria in my submission, I call upon the hon. Members, when it is time to cast your vote, support legislation that supports and that agrees with good governance. Do your sovereign and sworn duty.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48 (1). That has nothing to do with the Bill. [*Desk thumping*] That has nothing to do with the report. He is just filibustering.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Chief Whip, that is a serious point of order you just made? A serious one? Overruled.

Mr. K. Scotland: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not surprised as I have called on the Members—on the hon. Members of the other side to do their sworn duty, that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre gets up and disrespectfully says “filibustering”, because they will filibuster and not do their duty. That is why he will get up. But I say also in law and in reality, the pieces of legislation preserves and protects the autonomy of the territorial integrity of Tobago. It promotes sustainable development and economic growth and development for Tobago. It creates a framework for social and cultural

development and fulfilment for Tobago. This opportunity should not be missed. I call upon the hon. Members on the other side, support these Bills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I started, I asked about locus standi in this debate. When was the last time the hon. Members contested a seat and Tobago in any elections? But I wonder when we come to this Parliament and they come and they pretend that they are supporting the people of Tobago, is it that, Mr. Deputy Speaker—is the support for a common Farley, under the guise of a Duke, that will now morph into a queen from Siparia—not Siparia, superior?

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1). [*Desk thumping*] The Leader of Government Business said that the duke and the king in her opening—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. K. Scotland: And the Farley. Remember the Farley. Mr. Deputy—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Mr. K. Scotland: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I want to say on this point is this Government has no guile. Tobagonians wake up and open your eyes. What you see is what you get. The Member for Tobago East, take bow, because she is here. [*Desk thumping*] There is no proxy to her vote. The Member for Tobago West, she is here and there is no proxy. [*Desk thumping*]

When we do a comparison, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with this legislation, it finds sibling with other countries throughout the world. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre stated that it does not compare to St. Kitts, but it does you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because regionally, in St. Kitts and Nevis, there exists a federal constitutional monarchy with two spheres of government and what happens is that this is recognized by the Constitution, and it works perfectly.

In the United Kingdom, for many years, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were part of a union under the United Kingdom Government

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based in Westminster, hence the Westminster system and that has worked remarkably. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Africa, in Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya divides Kenya into 42 counties.

Hon. Member: Standing Order 48(1).

Mr. Charles: Yesterday when I spoke about the United—

Hon. Member: Geez! No, no, no.

Mr. K. Scotland: Wait.

Mr. Charles:—they told me it was irrelevant. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. K. Scotland: Wow. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Charles: [*Inaudible*]—what it has to do with the clause— [*Inaudible*]
 [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please, please, tie in your point, Member.

Mr. K. Scotland: Yes, please. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my simple point is, is that there are comparisons throughout the world, the systems as to what we are doing here, and what we intend to do with these Bills. That is my simple point, [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please, AG, thank you.

Mr. Charles: And that was my point too.

Mr. K. Scotland: May I continue? Clause by clause, however, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this and these Bills that provide autonomy for Tobago are far superior to what exists now under the current Act 40 of 1996, which is the Tobago House of Assembly Act.

One, it recognizes the island government as having equal status to that of Trinidad and Tobago. Two, it proposes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the augmentation of the budget or the minimum budget allocation from 4.03 per cent to 6.8 per cent.

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Three, it gives the new THA, the legislative assembly, the powers to make law. Under the old Act, the THA had no such powers. Four, it gives the THA the power to borrow, make investment and gain access to international markets. Five, it defines the nautical miles of the coastal areas of Tobago and my learned—

Mr. Charles: Standing Order 55(1)(b). We have heard the powers—[*Desk thumping*] [*Inaudible*] I have heard it over 10 times.

Mr. K. Scotland: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude, the benefit—sorry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second. Again, Member, right, in terms of the Standing Order, it is clearly articulated in the Bill, what the Member is trying to ascertain. Overruled.

Mr. K. Scotland: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder though, what is the haste to jump up when I am trying to show the benefits of the Bill for the people of Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] Is it that the hon. Members do not want it to people of Tobago to know that this Bill has tangible benefits? Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You end at 12.20, roughly four minutes.

Mr. K. Scotland: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a history of Tobago and these Bills that are not taught in schools. Dr. Winston Murray, one of the first members of the Legislature and the representative of Tobago, on the 31st of December, 1977, he hoisted a Tobago flag in Plymouth. This Government now is hoisting a flag for Tobago. It is hoisting a flag based on the Tobago autonomy Bills and we are calling on the hon. Members of the other side, put your vote where your mouth is. Support this legislation. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Mayaro. [*Desk thumping*]

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Mr. Rushton Paray (*Mayaro*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the arguments as provided by the Member for Port of Spain South, who spoke before me, they are vexatious and facetious at best. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member had to come here today to employ the people of Tobago to wake up and open your eyes. But I respectfully submit that is what the Government should have done before today. [*Desk thumping*] If they had done the right work, in terms of the work of the JSC, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my brothers and sisters of Tobago would have been already wide awake, with their eyes open, ready to judge the debates that are happening in this House today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask the question: What is democracy? Democracy is the understanding by the minority of the right of the majority. But should this majority right expose the minority to acts of brutality and unfairness? Mr. Deputy Speaker, the right of the majority must always be exercised with care and concern for the welfare and safety of those in the minority. That right must have conscience, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the report before us today, and the subsequent legislation requires 31 Members of this House to support our brothers and sisters in Tobago to realize a new and spirited future. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we here in Trinidad are now tasked in determining that future for every Tobagonian child.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by virtue of our Republican Constitution, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, Government and Opposition, must act in cohesion via a constitutional three-fourths majority for that future to materialize. So, the Government has done their part, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have brought legislation to this House for the debate and they have told us that they have done it in the best interest of Tobago. A JSC was conducted for some time, Mr. Deputy

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Speaker. They too have in their report—by virtue of their report, have advised this House that they have done all that they were supposed to do. They have consulted with all the stakeholders, they have done the necessary fine tuning and they are now desirous of at least nine votes on the Opposition Benches to make it law.

I want to agree with one thing that the Member for Port of Spain South has said. He said that he feels that they are very close to good legislation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am to agree with him, then why the haste to push through this legislation today? [*Desk thumping*] The people of Tobago have been asking for a bit more time, not five years and 10 years, a bit more time because of the haste at which this documentation was provided to them last week with the hope of having some consensus today. So if the Member for Port of Spain South is correct, well then, what is the couple days? What is the recess that we can go into for the months of July to August to September and allow this additional conversation to happen, to make sure that we are doing right by what our Tobagonian brothers and sisters?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so what is our role? What is the exercise that we are doing here today? I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not to rubber stamp anything that the Government does and brings before this House. The three-member team from the Opposition Benches that sat on the Joint Select Committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they submitted a minority report, which in reading, I was satisfied, as a Member of Parliament in this House representing the people of Mayaro, I was satisfied that sufficient issues were raised to cause for concern that they had to put a minority report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in determining my role and my vote today in this House, my platform for consideration has to be the Minority Report which was submitted by my Members of the Opposition Benches. But that was not the only

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data that I have to go along with. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Tobago House of Assembly has a Minority Leader which is the official Opposition in Tobago. That person, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the citizens he represent forms the second largest support outside of those people who are not in support of the Government. [*Desk thumping*] So these people whom the Member for Port of Spain South rattled out callously, they are not representing goat and sheep, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are representing the citizens of Tobago. So whether they are voices in Opposition, or in the business, or in the academic fraternity, they have a voice that is representative of the people of Tobago so you cannot dismiss them. You ought not to dismiss them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are several other smaller political parties in Tobago who have all expressed their voices of concern with not all the issues of the Bill, but several of them. They have all asked for a bit more time to bring some rationale into the Bill and to make it stronger and better over the coming weeks, a couple months, not five and 10 years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say without a doubt from where I stand the voices in Tobago against this body of work that is before this House today, it is overwhelming. [*Desk thumping*] In my estimate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say without a doubt and without fear of contradiction, the majority of people in Tobago have rejected these proposals wholeheartedly. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday the hon. Attorney General spoke during his entire contribution and he called on the UNC to submit amendments and to submit recommendations, submit a number of things. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question that I must ask, in this instance, we have a role to play as legislators, but besides just writing and penning on putting our fingerprints on the law, Mr. Deputy

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Speaker, our role here too is to talk about the effect legislation have on our constituents, what effect legislation has on the people who must submit and live within the regulations of these things. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this instance, I really feel strongly that the amendments ought to come out of the voices of the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is where these amendments ought to come out from and a mechanism should be employed by the Government to allow that to happen. That has not happened. I have heard no persons, so far, saying anything about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say if the Government had spent yesterday and today going back out to the joint select and having those voices who have been very loud sense last week Friday, all the same voices that the hon. Member for Port of Spain South spoke of, allow them an opportunity for 18 hours yesterday and today, I think by next week, we could have had a Bill that will have unfettered support. But that has not happened. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let the opposing voices in Tobago tell the Opposition here in Trinidad that we are satisfied, we are happy, we are contended with whatever that the Government has put out for us and we are ready to dive into a new and uncharted future. And at that point in time, we on this side would listen to what the Government has to say.

But Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must never get caught in imposing our will on the people of Tobago by using the very same constitutional arrangement that they want to get away from and that is the juxtaposition that we find ourselves in. The same thing that the people of Tobago wants to get away from, we are being asked to impose our will on them, in my respectful view, without they having a final and fruitful say in where they want to go, because this is the future at the end of the day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a couple of minutes that I have left, there is always this conversation that we do not read the legislation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, legislation is law. Some of us—many of us—I have never protested to be a lawyer or a legal entity but I read it with the intention to understand what is the impact, what is the impact that it will have on the lives of people. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my reading of vast pieces of the legislation, I had to ask some questions and I am hoping that the person who is going to speak after me could perhaps answer some of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my reading of the legislation, it really highlights a fundamental difference in the governance systems between the PNM and the UNC. The PNM centres on heavy bureaucracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the UNC develops people and enabling institutions. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one just has to look at the bureaucracy in the grant system during these trying times that we are in, the confusion and bureaucracy. But that is a signal fingerprint of the PNM, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We must not have that in Tobago on this legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in reading the legislation, in my view, the Bill does very little to develop entrepreneurship in Tobago in order to advance the residents, make them more self-sufficient and to wean the island over a period of time from its historic financial dependence on Trinidad. That should be key. That area should be key. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Tobago also needs a facilitative environment aimed at boosting domestic and international business investments and building sustainable enterprises. None of that is in the legislation, as it stands, that will facilitate some of this. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I submit to you that the legislation must also focus on having all the relevant state agencies active with resiliency and properly resourced to provide efficient, prompt and good quality services. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in

reading a lot of the legislation, I am not seeing it manifested in terms of how it would create and shape the systems to take Tobago forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in closing, the legislation should really be designed to create a successful and progressive future for the young people of Tobago. None of these speakers so far have spoken in those areas to tell us, to convince us that those key areas will be what the outcome for the people of Tobago when this legislation becomes law. Our young people in Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should be able to craft a successful career path that is not dependent upon employment or a service contract at the Tobago House of Assembly. The legislation should point us to that direction where the young people in Tobago will have a bright future outside of that arrangement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does the legislation do for hospitality, that sector? What is it going to do for agriculture? What is it going to do for other sectors in Tobago to become self-sufficient and financially thriving? And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you fix every single thing in legislation? I say, no. But in presenting today, rather than go against the UNC and make it about the UNC and who supports what, convince us here today for that nine votes, that Tobago will achieve this at the end of the day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have tried my best to bring the views in terms of how I have read the legislation; how I see, as a businessman, that Tobago can benefit and I have not been able to pick it out from the legislation as it stands. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to join the debate. Thank you.

12.30 p.m.

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very

much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I address the people of the beautiful island of Tobago, for the most part here this morning, this afternoon, I am calling on the people of Tobago, pleading with them, not to lose their mind, not for a moment. Do not play with the UNC. Any time you find yourself in the same space, political or otherwise with the UNC, Tobago you are in trouble, you are in danger. A calypsonian did that, for reasons best known to him, and it almost cost him his career and his fan base.

A former Member of Tobago East, Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson, a great man, a great a great contributor, he did that back in 1996. He became the President, and when we used his presidential position and dismissed the UNC for corruption, out of office, demonstrating and saying expressly that they lacked moral and spiritual values, and did not deserve to continue in Government, I saw the Member for Siparia, the Member for Couva North at the time, castigate and disrespect the same Mr. Robinson who they joined with 17:17:2 to form a Government shortly before that. I warn Tobago.

Mr. Charles: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 55(b). We have heard the issue already about Robinson.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: I heard the Member for Siparia call him, quite disrespectfully, as President, Robbie, on platform after platform. So, when you hear them saying, Rowley now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does not surprise me because class is class and the absence of class is what it is. [*Desk thumping*]

I have heard the comments of persons like Winford James and Vanus James writing to us, writing to the people, as has been stated by my friends before, these two personalities are not without political affiliation. One campaigned recently for

the PDP openly on platforms in Tobago and the other one went and fought the PNM and lost his deposit as an independent. That is W. James.

Today, I have reason to believe, we have reason to believe, the citizens, the right thinkers in this country, that there is an unholy, a continuing unholy alliance between the PDP and the UNC, and they are here in the Parliament today joining with the UNC to obstruct the people of Tobago from the obvious benefits these measures will bring. In terms of economics, finance, a difference of \$2.5 billion annually. You know what the Secretary for Finance could do with 2.5 billion in terms of houses, land acquisition, land title, roads, bridges, open up the Windward side of Tobago, jobs and incentives for small business?

The Minister of Health told us this morning, health facilities aplenty. It has got to be criminal to stop yourself from acquiring access to these things. I say to Tobago, the Report of the Joint Select Committee that we are considering here today, the Constitution (Amdt.) (Tobago Self-Government) Bill, are the product of the work of that Joint Select Committee. The main theme we heard from our friends, because they have nothing useful else to say, was about consultation until you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, shut them down from that tired and weary topic, but they have nothing substantial else to add.

All we do in these measures is, recognizing that we have central government, we have local or municipal government, but the local or municipal government is not entrenched in the Constitution. Tobago has self-government, largely so, since 1996. Not municipal, not like any other local authority. They have an Assembly and they have all the trappings of self-government. What we are doing now is entrenching it, deeply so, in the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This is not a threat to Tobago. This is an offering to improve

their quest for self-government, giving Tobago as much as can possibly be given, just short of out-and-out independence, because that is not the desire of the Tobago people.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

As has been said earlier, Tobago has no friends in the UNC. They do not contest elections in Tobago. In fact, Madam Speaker, if they could, they will hive off Tobago. When we are talking constitutional amendment or constitutional law, we are talking raw politics. The Constitution regulates the relationship between the three arms of the State, and while we may speak in nice and philosophical terms, at the end of day, it is about power, political power. The UNC does not care for Tobago. They will encourage anything like that. We want to see the union and the people of Tobago want the union to continue, but it wants greater opportunity to guide its affairs.

Mr. Lee: Madam Speaker, Madam Speaker, 55(1)(b). The Minister has repeated everything that has been said by his colleagues.

Hon. F. Hinds: Today? Today? [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: So, Member, I will give you some leeway.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. All of the attributes of self-government, just short of independence, are available. How did we get here? The UNC did not bring us here, Madam Speaker. It is the PNM that brought us here, and they are obstructing this today, telling us they are not supporting it, only for political expediency, because they see two seats in Tobago as standing, oftentimes as it should, against them.

They believe without Tobago, they have a better chance of being in the Government. And you know what that means for Trinidad and Tobago, God

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forbid. We promised greater self-government to Tobago in our 2015 campaign, and we have kept our promise. We, led by the Prime Minister, a son of Tobago soil, we kept our promise. We are here.

Let me submit, Madam Speaker, without fear of contradiction, in my intellectual assessment and my political assessment, all the objections to these measures can be categorized as coming from persons who are guided by emotions rather than the force of logic, guided by fear, guided by conceited intellect, because there are some people who feel they so bright. According to Kirk Alleyne, they too bright, they have to object to everything just to be heard, seen on the television and heard in the newspaper. They look for arguments to make themselves large. And, of course—

Mr. Lee: Madam Speaker, 48(1). The relevance please.

Hon. F. Hinds:—guided by ignorance. So, I come here today, Madam Speaker, to clarify the facts and the truth and the history, so as to remove to veil of ignorance that the UNC thrives on and the emotions that the UNC thrives on.

So, we have these two Bills before us. Tobago gets greater administrative jurisdiction in clause 5(2) of the Tobago Island Council, Island Government Bill. And I do not have to go into it, because my colleagues have. It gives them lawmaking power as well in a unicameral system. And the reasons for that is because the experts have told us, including the EBC, the unworkability of the other option of a bicameral legislature. We know that, and the UNC knows that. That is why you hear them talking about consultation because they do not want to discuss the fact that the EBC and the experts have told the Joint Select Committee, of which they had three members, that the unicameral system is the most appropriate. [*Crosstalk*] Great. He does not want to hear it again.

Madam Speaker: So, please, every Member is allowed to raise a Standing Order, but also remember in raising Standing Orders, you can be abusing them. Thank you, Whip. I will determine when I find that there is tedious repetition, but thank you for raising it.

Hon. F. Hinds: The UNC sat in Trinidad and Tobago, they participated feebly in the Joint Select Committee. I have seen them many times in others, pretentiously raising a point here and a point there, knowing full well that they are coming here today to object to the measure, because they do not want nothing good for Trinidad and Tobago, they do not want nothing good for Tobago. But the Prime Minister of this country led the charge. He went on television last week, Channel 5, a few days ago, and on radio in Tobago interviewed by Brother B and a Mr. Leacock and taught the people of Tobago the innards about what is in front of us, again, working to remove the emotions and the fear that the UNC thrives on, lives in.

The Bill that went to Joint Select Committee was drafted by Senior Counsel Gilbert Peterson after all the work was done, brought it to us. I was on the original committee with this Bill. We brought that. So what started this, as has been said before—and I am just passing through this—was not our work. It was the express desire in legalese drafted by Senior Counsel Gilbert Patterson and that is what went to the Joint Select Committee, and it was the UNC and Independents and the PNM on the Bench in the Joint Select Committee working through what you have here today as the product of that work.

Madam Speaker, noisemakers are abounding, noisemakers are aplenty in the country. I heard Vanus James speaking with aplomb this morning on my television, as a commentator, saying that nobody understands what Tobago needs. When I heard that I want to know where was Gilbert Peterson, Orville London and

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all the other people, Hochoy Charles and they, who worked and drafted that Bill that they brought to this Government, because we knew and we told them that the only place this could become a reality is in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

When I hear Hochoy Charles saying a couple days ago, Madam Speaker, that he “doh” want no Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago making any law of Tobago, I know the thing upside down. Because we all know, the UNC knows, notwithstanding their deception, that the only place you can have this action taken is in this Parliament. So, I reject the weak argument of Hochoy Charles in that regard and Vanus James trying to tell us nobody understand. The President “doh” understand, the Prime Minister “doh” understand and the Parliament “doh” understand. Only Vanus James understands. He argues for a “People’s House”. Well, we dealt with that. We have said ad nauseam, it is not against our wish to satisfy the desires of the people of Tobago as much as we can, just short of secession or independence. We considered it, but the experts told us it is unworkable for the time being.

The Joint Select Committee, yes, he spoke about diversification. Well, this self-government allows, and self-determination is allowing a people to decide on its social, cultural, economic and political future. That is what this is about. So after this, you are in a better position to diversify the affairs of Tobago, and you would not chase Sandals away again, if diversification is so important.

The other James, he wants a bill of rights. We already have that. You are negotiating for what you already have. Once we maintain the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago as a state enjoys the protection of a bill of rights in sections 4 and 5 of our Constitution. The people of Tobago enjoy that. Some people are saying, Tobago want a bill of rights. But Tobago is not a separate

state. So, you are going to have different constitutional arrangements in Tobago for rights and privileges under a Constitution and Trinidad too? It does not make any sense, Madam Speaker.

And let me run quickly to the question of self-determination. I told them once, I will tell them again. Self-determination is defined in international law where it rests, as the rights of a people to freely determine their political status, economic, social and cultural. Trinidad and Tobago enjoys that as a state. It has two applications: an external application as a state and internally as well. But we already have that. The question of self-determination does not arise in a discussion such as this, because Tobago is not a separate state.

And the question of the demarcation. It has been said before, the experts have pointed out that any time you interfere with those lines, you create international relation issues and economic issues in terms of the economic zone. We were told that. So, as a result, we desisted from that. Altogether, Madam Speaker, with just the few moments left that are available to me, I commend these measures to the people of Tobago, because they are substantially better, a significant improvement of what now exists in the 1996 formula. [*Desk thumping*] This is an advance. It is man making it. It may not be perfect, but it now accords you 6.8 billion a year as opposed to 4.3. It now allows you, a Parliament that can make laws on the subsidiarity principle, meaning, your laws will prevail over national laws to the extent that they are not inconsistent with them in specific areas. As I said, self-determination does not arise.

You now have the right to borrow money and, therefore, you could diversify, you could shape your economic affairs as you Tobago see fit. Do not allow the UNC and those motivated by their political, failed political ambitions,

and those who only want to make themselves large like intellectuals and talk. This is your opportunity, Tobago. Grab it with both hands. A son of your soil, the Prime Minister, the political leader, he said, this is what you want Tobago, and he did the only thing a Prime Minister could do. He brought it in the Cabinet. The Cabinet approved it. We sent it to the Parliament; the Parliament sent it to a Joint Select Committee and all of the time was spent and all of the work, and the opinions and the expert advice and this is the product today in June of 2021. You are going to turn your back on that on the advice of the UNC?

I began by saying, Madam Speaker, any time Tobago finds itself in the same place, space, political or otherwise with the UNC, you are in danger. I thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Arnold Ram (*Caroni Central*): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity today to contribute on this Bill before this House. Madam Speaker, prior to coming to the House today, I had no intention of really contributing, but having heard many misgivings on the other side, I had no—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: So, Member for Caroni Central, please continue.

Mr. A. Ram: Thank you. Thank you for that opportunity, Madam Speaker. We all know how destructive this Member is to this House, every time I get up to speak. And I am beginning to see a trend, Madam Speaker, and I have to highlight that, Madam Speaker, that—

Madam Speaker: No, no. A Member is standing. You cannot speak over the Member.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I respectfully rise on Standing Order 48(4) and 48(6) in respect of the reflections upon the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, what I would say is this—Attorney General, I have heard you—I think there is a certain sort of banter that exists between certain Members, and the Chair will not intervene with that. But I caution all Members that we have to be respectful and comply with parliamentary language, but I understand the banter that happens. Continue, Caroni Central.

Mr. A. Ram: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And, Madam Speaker, so having heard the number of misgivings coming from the Government Benches, I thought it fit and it will be remiss of me not to contribute in this House, at least on a couple points.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain South, his contribution was based on good governance, and I would like to answer some of the principles as defined by the United Nations in terms of the 12 principles of good governance. And the first one, Madam Speaker, it talks about participation.

So we have heard about consultation, which is equivalent in meaning to participation. And what this Government has done, instead of allowing persons during the consultation to allow them the time—the three weeks that they required or the one month—they have sought to force this Bill upon the people of Tobago. And that is something that according of the principles of good governance, must be rejected.

Madam Speaker, Tobago self-governance has been a talk for the longest time, approximately 44 years, and when you listen to the contribution made by the Member of La Horquetta/Talparo, you will think that it is only the UNC who had the opportunity to come to this Parliament and bring a Bill that will grant Tobago self-governance. Every opportunity, it was like a history class. Looking at the election results from the time that we became a Republic to present, about who and

when the UNC had an opportunity. But what about the PNM? What about the PNM? This is the first time in all these years that the PNM is bringing a Bill that deals with Tobago self-governance, Madam Speaker.

So, they like to talk about the 1996 formula, what about the 2013 formula brought by the administration of Kamla Persad-Bissessar? The PNM had an opportunity then to support the Bill for the internal self-governance of Tobago, but what did they say? The Opposition Leader then, Dr. Keith Rowley stated he has vowed not to support the Bill before Parliament, altering the Constitution linking Tobago and Trinidad, but instead wants a tripartite committee to consult afresh on the issue. Where is the tripartite committee now? His position has changed, Madam Speaker. In 2013, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and Prime Minister wanted a tripartite committee. We are in 2021, eight years later, where is that tripartite committee, I ask, Madam Speaker? Nowhere to be found. So their tune and their song and their dance has been changing to meet their needs or to meet their position, Madam Speaker, and there is no constant position with respect to what they want for Tobago.

If they really wanted something that was good for Tobago, they would allow the participation, principle one, participation, Madam Speaker, to take its full realm. And I make a clarion call here this afternoon, Madam Speaker, that if the PNM and the Government wants what is best for Tobago, let us have a referendum. Put a referendum out there. Let the people of Tobago decide. The last referendum returned 6:6, Mr. Attorney General, 6:6. So it shows that the failed policies of the Government—

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, referendums are done by law and there is no referendum law in this country, not even the correct word.

Madam Speaker: Continue.

Mr. A. Ram: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, that is the first principle. The very first principle, referendum. So, I am calling, making a clarion call, for the Government to allow for a referendum of some sort to take place in Tobago before this Bill is brought before this House any time soon.

Mr. A. Ram: Madam Speaker, as I continue, and I look at some of the clauses in the Bill, I look at clause 34 and it says “Audit of Accounts”:

The accounts of the House of Assembly are public accounts of Trinidad and Tobago for the purposes of section 116 of the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, I do not think that the THA needs this Bill in order to account for their moneys and for their finances. For the longest while the Auditor General Reports have indicated that there were no accounts submitted by the Tobago House of Assembly. So, we do not need this Bill for them to account. They ought to be accounting to the Parliament at this present time, and accounting to the Auditor General at this present time. So this Bill is not required for that. We want them, the PNM Tobago, to account to the Auditor General. And I am saying that this Bill is not required for that accountability to take place, and that is a principle under the governance, under the United Nations principles of good governance as iterated by the Member for Port of Spain South.

Madam Speaker, what this Bill allows, is for the making of what you call subsidiary legislation by the Tobago House of Assembly in specific areas. And when you look at Schedule—and I am looking at the Schedule now, Madam Speaker—it speaks to a number of areas that are not inconsistent. Madam Speaker, what happens or what is the best way for someone to make law that reflects their culture and their social circumstances? If we want to give Tobago the opportunity

for self-governance, this is the opportunity for us to allow them to make their own laws, because they alone will understand their culture.

As it exists, Madam Speaker, there are a number of small lil cultural existing areas or existing traditions that Trinidad is different from Tobago. So, we are making law that may be for Trinidad and Tobago, but it is not best for what is for Tobago. And I am saying, the Bill did not go as far enough as it ought to go. Because if we are to cater for their social and cultural needs, we should be giving them the autonomy that they require to make their own laws, and not that laws that are inconsistent in specific areas will not be allowed.

Madam Speaker, there is one other issue, which I would like to address before my time is up, and that is the issue with respect to something called the Ward of Tobago, something that has been repeated ad nauseam on the next side, that Tobago is a ward of Trinidad. Now, Madam Speaker, that is so far from the truth, for simple reason, Madam Speaker. When a deed is prepared and somebody is living in Canaan, for example, you say, the Street in Canaan in the Ward of Tobago, Madam Speaker, in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. So, Tobago is a ward of not Trinidad, but a ward in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is very important. I have heard it on the other side, repeatedly saying, that the reason why we are in this Bill in this present form is because Tobago is a ward of Trinidad. Madam Speaker, that is so far from the truth. It is a ward in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to bring to your attention, that based on TV6 People Meter question last night, whether the Opposition should support this Bill in the present form, there was a resounding, no. Madam Speaker, 76 per cent of the persons indicated that the Opposition should not support this legislation

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before the Parliament here today. So, Madam Speaker, with those few words, I want to thank you for the opportunity. [*Desk thumping*]

1.00 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Member for Arima. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Penelope Beckles):
Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. And let me first of all thank my colleague, the hon. Camille Robinson-Regis, Member of Parliament for Arouca/Maloney, for her chairmanship of the Joint Select Committee and for her excellent presentation yesterday.

Madam Speaker, let me first address some of the issues raised by the last speaker who sought to mislead this Parliament and this country by giving the impression that this PNM Government, that this is the first time that any Bill or any discussion as it relates to Tobago is being brought before this honourable House. But let me go back as far as Dr. Eric Williams, who was the first person to actually set up a Ministry of Tobago Affairs for which he had responsibility. Madam Speaker, I suspect that it was because the last speaker was not a Member of Parliament during the period, 2015 to 2020, that he may not have been aware, so I forgive him for what he said because clearly he does not know what transpired over the last couple of years. But let me just remind him that it was as early as 2007 that the Tobago House of Assembly commenced discussions to advance the quest for internal self-government and during the period, 2014 to 2016, at that time the THA received several—there were widespread consultations, I should say, and those consultations concluded in 2016 with a debate at that time in the THA on a draft Bill to amend the Constitution.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am sure that you are aware that following all

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those discussions there was the origin of the Bill that made its way to Parliament, which is the 2018; the Government laid the Constitution (Amdt.) (Tobago Self-Government) Bill in the House of Representatives. Elections took place in 2020 but notwithstanding that the process continued, but first of all the Bill was sent to a joint select committee in March of 2018 and over the period, 2018 to 2019, the Committee received several submissions, held a series of public hearings and consultations with stakeholders and experts from both Trinidad and Tobago, as well as legal and other experts. The life of the Committee ended in 2020, but notwithstanding that, the hon. Camille Robinson-Regis, the Joint Select Committee continued its work in 2020 and the hon. Member, yesterday, over a period of two hours, indicated exactly what transpired since the Committee resumed its work in 2020. So I hope that I have sufficiently educated my colleague who spoke a while ago that his information is totally inaccurate and misleading.

Now, Madam Speaker, I would like to ask this Parliament, especially my colleagues on the opposite side, if not this Bill then what? And, if not now, when? When will Tobago get what is due to Tobago? I ask my colleagues on the other side, are they comfortable denying Tobago what is rightfully theirs? What really is the position of the Opposition as it relates to Tobago? What exactly is their policy? And I want to ask whether or not they are just comfortable adopting what leaders of political parties have either said or wrote, because if you listened to all the previous speakers, they are coming and they are either reading an article what this leader said, that leader said, what Farley said, what Hochoy Charles said. As a matter of fact, you would recall that the first speaker, the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, he actually suggested that Farley and Hochoy Charles, in a letter written—I suppose, I do not know whether it is to the Opposition, but a letter that

was in his possession that refers to certain amendments and he is actually suggesting to this Government that what we should do at the committee stage is to consider the amendments as recommended by Farley and Hochoy Charles in that letter.

Now my question to the hon. Opposition, where are your amendments? Is it that you are coming to this House and say to us that Farley and Hochoy Charles did a letter and they have amendments and that is what the Government should consider? That is why you are here as the Opposition, it is your responsibility to make recommendations for amendments. And I want the people of Tobago to pay close attention to the fact that the Opposition has not recommended one amendment. [*Desk thumping*] All they continue to do is to keep referring to the majority voices and the majority voices in Tobago by virtue of all the several persons that they have spoken about, but what is your position? And are you aware that as a result of your failure to vote on this Bill today, that you are actually going to deny Tobagonians what is rightfully theirs?

Now, the question I want to ask my colleagues opposite, when do you think that Tobagonians will get another opportunity for improved governance, for improved opportunities to deal with some of the challenges that they have been speaking about over the years? You have an opportunity today as Members of the Opposition to give Tobago what is rightfully due to them. And if this Bill is not passed today, I ask the Opposition, when next is it possible, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, five years? Now, based on what is recommended in the Bill, Tobago is likely to get, in the next fiscal year, an additional \$1.2 billion. Previous speakers have spoken about the various things that Tobago needs, whether it is the improvement to the tourism sector, whether it is the improvement to the investment

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sector, whether it is the improvement in the agricultural sector, but I also want to say, if we think of another five or 10 years that means Tobago is being denied \$5 billion—whether it is \$10 billion, and that means that issues relating to road, agriculture, infrastructure, investment, just think about what—how Tobago—

Mr. Lee: Madam Speaker, respectfully, 55(1)(b) to the Minister. All that has been spoken to.

Hon. P. Beckles: Yes, Madam Speaker, this is directly linked to the Bill because the Bill specifies what percentage of the budget will go to Tobago. And I am saying, by virtue of the Opposition refusing to support this Bill, they will be denying Tobagonians billions of dollars. That is the point I am making.

So a while ago they are saying that, Tobago needs this, Tobago needs that, but, yes, so if you are saying that Tobago needs improvement in agriculture, in development, in the tourism sector then vote for the Bill and give the Tobagonians the additional money that is needed to improve Tobago. That is the point I am making. [*Desk thumping*] There are 7,000 people waiting in Tobago on their list for housing, think about what one billion dollars would do for the people living all over Tobago. But, no, your position is that you simply want to refuse the Bill because you are saying that there was not enough time and who is saying they need another two weeks. But even if there was another two weeks, what is the recommendation from the Opposition? I mean, you have been in Government, you were there in 2015; you talk about 2013—as a matter of fact, there was the Ministry of Tobago Development that was established by the last UNC Government and they totally disrespected the THA at the time. So is it that that is what you position is, that you would want if you are back in office again to set up a Ministry of Tobago Development to disrespect the Tobago House of Assembly?

Madam Speaker, if this Bill is passed, some of the challenges that have been faced by the Tobagonians coming to Trinidad still to deal with issues relating to land, to title, issues relating to gratuity, this Bill gives to the THA, gives to Tobago that autonomy that allows them to make legislation and laws that will address some of these long outstanding matters. Now I want to make it abundantly clear like several other speakers, it is not a perfect Bill. Every single thing that Tobagonians want is not in the Bill. That is absolutely true, but at the same time when you talk about legislation and the role and function of Parliament, is that things improve gradually. So what is this perfect piece of legislation of which they speak? And—

Mr. Hosein: But, Madam, respectfully, 55(1)(b). We have heard about this perfect piece of legislation about 20 times already for the morning.

Hon. P. Beckles: Well, I hope since you have heard about it for more than 20 times, I hope you are going to vote for the fact that what I am saying is that it is not perfect. I am not saying that it is a perfect piece, I am saying it is not perfect.

Mr. Hosein: Madam, again, respectfully, 55(1)(b). This is tedious repetition now, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you for letting me know your view. Please continue.

Hon. P. Beckles: Madam Speaker, Tobagonians have been waiting a very, very long time for the updating of the legislation to address the challenges that relate to Tobago and what we are doing is reviewing the legislation so that we can bring it current to address the issues and the challenges that they face. We are asking the Opposition that Tobago needs your support to advance the agenda of self-determination.

You ought to remember that as a result of the activities of the then Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly—and I remember yesterday that

somebody said that, “London bridge is falling down”; well, it is as a result of the activities and the fact that the then Chief Secretary, Orville London stood his position that the UNC Government at the time was not able to just railroad the Tobago House of Assembly. Now, I want to ask this question to the Opposition, can Tobago and Tobagonians not be allowed to pursue their own economic, social and cultural development? Do you recognize that by failing to support this Bill you will be denying Tobagonians the right for them to manage their own affairs? How will history record Members of the Opposition when you vote against this Bill by denying Tobagonians their right to advance their autonomy? Throughout this debate you continue to speak about the majority of voices who have asked for this and have asked for that. I want to say that it is everybody’s right to speak their mind, and a number of the persons in Tobago, some have had dissenting voices, some have agreed, the real issue is that this is the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago; this is where we make laws to govern and to ensure that whatever we pass here that is the best possible law that we can for the advancement and rights of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. But you, the Members of the Opposition, you have participated in this debate over the last two days and you have failed and you have disappointed the people of Tobago.

I want to suggest that it is misleading and mischievous to say that the majority of people of Tobago do not want this Bill. Where did you get that information from? Where did you get that analysis from that the majority of people from Tobago do not want this Bill? Where have you been over the last couple of years? Have you not been hearing the cries of Tobagonians that they want the legislation changed? Is it comfortable for you to sit there today and just casually say, as all of you have been standing, you are not going to support this Bill? I am

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really hoping that before this debate ends that somebody from the Opposition Benches will get up and say, “This is what we are recommending. This is what we are suggesting. This is what we want to see differently.”, rather than just adopting the voices, the letters of other persons. Let Tobagonians know that you genuinely care about them and that you have your own suggestions and ideas for the improvement of the lives of the people of Tobago.

Notwithstanding what the Opposition has said, I am going to maintain and say to you that Tobagonians need your support. They need your support. And I look forward, at some stage during the debate, for your submission and recommendation for the amendments to this Bill so that the Tobagonians can be comfortable that when you speak about support and care, advancement, that you have genuinely thought about it and you do have before you some submission for the improvement of the lives of the people of Tobago. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Barry Padarath (*Princes Town*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise to contribute to today’s debate as Government seeks to adopt the report from the Joint Select Committee that was established to determine the way forward with respect to Tobago’s self-government. Madam Speaker, I was very intrigued by some of the comments made by the Member for Arima in particular, also the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West and the Member for Port of Spain South. And one of the underlying themes that was repeated by the Member for Arima was, “Where do we go from here?”, and that answer is very clear, we go back to the people of Tobago. The Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West said, “Who can we trust?”, and he predicated his entire contribution, Madam Speaker, on,

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“Who can we trust?” He indicated that the PNM has been there for the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the past 60-odd years.

Madam Speaker, one of the other questions they asked was for recommendations. They asked, “What were the amendments of the United National Congress?”, that we had not tabled any amendments. Madam Speaker, from day one, from our very first speaker we have been very clear on what the UNC’s position is. Our recommendation is, go back to the people of Tobago that you have betrayed. That is our position. [*Desk thumping*] Do not come here and ask us to do your work, the amendments that are needed for this entire Bill require the input of the people of Tobago, Madam Speaker, [*Desk thumping*] and I will not go down that particular road, except to answer my colleague from Arima with respect to, “Where do we go from here?”

The Member anticipates that the Opposition may or may not support this particular Bill, but, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member also indicated in her contribution a short while ago—the hon Member asked, “Who are these people who are so disenchanted and disillusioned with this Bill and where were their voices?”. Madam Speaker, it seems as though that this Government is deaf to the cries and the concerns of the people of Tobago and it is evident in this Bill. Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for Arima asked, “When next will Tobago get the opportunity to advance?”, and I say to the hon. Member, Tobago will get the opportunity to advance when you stop betraying Tobagonians and advance their needs instead, Madam Speaker, of using this Bill for political expediency.

Madam Speaker, I heard the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West give a long history of where we were when Mr. Robinson entered the political gayelle to where we are today with this particular Bill. And, Madam Speaker, I really found it

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curious, but I said to myself, the audacity—the pure audacity of Members of the People’s National Movement to ask and to raise the name of former President, former Prime Minister, ANR Robinson, Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson—for them to raise Mr. Robinson’s name in this debate and give all these accolades to Mr. Robinson. Madam Speaker, the reason why former President and Prime Minister ANR Robinson left the People’s National Movement is because the PNM betrayed Tobagonians. [*Desk thumping*] And today, you know, in local parlance we would say, “Mr. Robinson would be turning, rolling in his grave.” Because I also heard the Member for Arima indicate that Dr. Eric Williams was the first to establish a Ministry of Tobago Development, I want to also remind the hon. Member for Arima that Dr. Eric Williams was also the first to disband the Ministry for Tobago Development. [*Desk thumping*] How many PNM administrations successively have established a Ministry for Tobago Development? Absolutely none, none.

Madam Speaker, I want to turn to a few areas that were raised and this, Madam Speaker, will fall squarely—when we look at the schedule, schedule one, it will fall squarely within the parameters of numbers 6, 31, 37 and 41, and it ties into the theme of Lopinot/Bon Air West of, “Who can you trust?”. Madam Speaker, I want to remind the hon. Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West when you asked, “Who can you trust?” to govern and to look after the affairs of the people of Tobago as we advance this self-government Bill today for Tobago, I want to remind the hon. Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West that the People’s National Movement was in control of the THA and central government when several issues contained in the schedule, particularly items 6, 31, 37 and 41, fell into disarray because of poor governance, poor management by the People’s National Movement, both in THA

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and at central government.

So, Madam Speaker, when we advance this Bill today and we now give the opportunity to Tobago to govern their own affairs as it relates to items 6, 31, 37 and 41 in the schedule of the report, Madam Speaker, I am going to ask the question to hon. Members opposite and they should be able to answer, what is going to change when you did not give the support when you are in the majority in the THA and the central government? And, Madam Speaker, I refer to item 31; item 31 falls in the portfolio of Sport and Youth Affairs. The Member for Tobago West sits as the Minister of Sport and youth affairs, Madam Speaker, and instead of advancing sport and youth affairs in Tobago, as identified in this schedule under item 31, the hon. Minister lost her voice when it came to the real burning issues that affected Tobago. But, Madam Speaker, I am not surprised.

This was the same Minister when the sea bridge collapsed told this country, “We could get groceries in Tobago, there is no shortage. I could get almond milk and yogurt”, like Marie Antoinette, Madam Speaker. But today the hon. Members opposite come and they tell us, “Well, in schedule—item 31 that deals with sport and youth affairs, this will enhance Tobago’s ability to deal with that portfolio item, when the very Minister, the Member for Tobago West had the opportunity to fix the problem in the first place, they buried their heads in the proverbial sand. Madam Speaker, one of the areas in the schedule, it also deals with youth development; it also deals with sport, culture, community development. I want to quote from a prolific Tobagonian, one Dwight Yorke. Madam Speaker, just a few years ago—and this has been a prolonged problem, and the article is headed, “*Yorke slams ‘None’ response to stadium repairs*”, Thursday 30 November, 2017, and this is contained in the schedule, under item 31, for sport affairs. Madam

Speaker, Dwight Yorke said:

“This has been going on for some time, in terms of the conditions being unsuitable for these athletes and footballers to use, and it’s disappointing that we are still at that point; so much so that athletes are now refusing to even go to the venue and are now forced to train in foreign countries.”

Madam Speaker, 2017, who was in the majority in the THA? Who was running the Tobago House of Assembly? Who was the head of the central government here? Who was the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs? Not the very Member for Tobago West? So when I see this item in the schedule, in Schedule one, I ask myself, why are they coming to cry crocodile tears when they could have assisted Tobago’s development in the area of Sport and Youth Affairs in the very first place. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I want to turn to something that the Member for Port of Spain South said. The Member said, “Tobagonians wake up, open your eyes”—“Tobago wake up, open your eyes”, that was like an echo coming from the Member for Port of Spain South, and, Madam Speaker, the schedule deals with the areas of Works and Transport and in particular the issues that affect Tobago in terms—most importantly, one of the areas that will affect Tobago will be sea and air transportation, Madam Speaker. And that sea and air transportation as contained in the schedule, under item 37, will affect things like products coming out of Trinidad and the wider Caricom and our imports, internationally. But, Madam Speaker, when I looked at the schedule and I saw that it dealt with sea and land transportation, giving Tobago the autonomy, as it were, to govern themselves in terms of sea and air transport, I said to myself, but I recalled the Member for

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Tobago East. The Member for Tobago East stood in this very House, Madam Speaker, and you would recall, when the Member said, when we had a collapse of the sea bridge and we could not get bread and milk, basic commodities, rice, flour, sugar, oil in Tobago, the Member for Tobago East stood up in this very House and the Member said, “Tobagonians are not suffering.”

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That was the utterance coming from the Member for Tobago East. So when they had the opportunity to advance, to advance the interests of the people of Tobago for the most basic things, the most basic things, they chose party over country. That is the basis and the genesis of this entire debate here today. It has nothing to do with Tobago, it has nothing to do with Trinidad, it has nothing to do with Trinidad and Tobago. This has to do with advancing the interests of the People’s National Movement, and ensuring that they are in control of the THA once more. That is why we are here today, and the people of Tobago have seen through them, because they are transparent. They are like the emperor without clothes.

Madam Speaker, I want to turn your attention to an article, an article, and the article indicated on October 08, 2017, that over \$700 million was being lost in Tobago, because commodities, products coming out of Trinidad, coming out of Caricom, coming out of the international community in terms of our imports, could not reach Tobago. Therefore my argument today—like others, I was not inclined to contribute to the Bill, but when I heard the utterances coming from the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, telling us about the history about Robinson, I said, “My God, had Mr. Robinson been in this Parliament”—[*Interruption*] W---ell, the Member for Barataria/San Juan is completing my sentence, but I will not go there,

except to say that I am almost certain that Mr. Robinson is rolling in his grave today.

Former Prime Minister Patrick Manning, did not betray the people of Tobago, and today his son sits as a Member of Parliament here, and what his father did not do, the Les Coteaux jumbie is now coming to do, who got rid of his father. Madam Speaker, those are the burning questions, because they do not want us to ask those questions in the Parliament today, of their betrayal of the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

So when Member for Arima you asked, “What is the UNC’s position?”, and the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air talks about Kamla had love for Tobago in 2013, but she has no love for Tobago today, the Member for Siparia has done far more for Tobago than the Member for Diego Martin West, and that is on the public record. [*Desk thumping*]

I heard the hon. Attorney General speaking about that Tobagonians will now be allowed to register land in Tobago, Madam Speaker, the Member for Siparia— PNM administration 1976, PNM administration 1980, PNM administration 1991, PNM administration 2000, PNM administration 2007, PNM administration 2015, Madam Speaker, and absolutely nothing as it relates to land registration in Tobago. Coming here to cry crocodile tears that this legislation will fix and will be the panacea, because they understand that land issues in Tobago are very sensitive issues to Tobagonians. It took the courage, strength and determination of the Member for Siparia to establish an office of the Registrar General that first dealt with lands in Tobago, over decades of PNM rule, both in Tobago and in Trinidad. So when you come to cry your crocodile tears here today, your utter hypocrisy, understand that it takes the political will, and the only political will that the

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People's National Movement had to bring this legislation is because they want control of the THA, because they almost lost it in a tie with the PDP. [*Desk thumping*] That is where we are today.

So when I look at the Schedule items 6, 31, 37 and 41, and I ask myself: What sort of future are the people of Tobago going to have, especially the young people, where the Member for Tobago West and the Member for Tobago East, two young women, put party ahead of their country? One telling the country, "Tobagonians are not suffering, get it right. We are not suffering in Tobago", and then Penny Savers "come out de next day"—not Penny Beckles, the Member for Arima, but Penny Savers, stood up for the people of Tobago and say, "We cyar geh rice, we cyar geh flour, we cyar geh sugar", but the Marie Antoinette Tobago West, stands up and say, "We could get almond milk and we could get yogurt." That is what is important to the Member for Tobago West and the Member for Tobago East, not what is contained in terms of helping people through sport and youth affairs, through community development. These are the areas that this law will impact, that will create job opportunities, if we get it right.

But, Madam Speaker, today is a rehash. You know the Member for St. Joseph likes to talk about powder puff, and really today is really cosmetic. It is a cosmetic advancement, giving people the opportunity in Tobago to believe that they are doing something for them. But, Madam Speaker, as I have said before, the people of Tobago have seen through them, they are transparent, and the people of Tobago will reject them, just like they did with the 6:6 tie, and this time—the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air spoke about a red wash in 2013. This time you might get a green wash with Duke, the prince, Farley, whoever it takes, [*Desk thumping*], because, Madam Speaker, the people of Tobago are opening their eyes. The people

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of Tobago are seeing through them, and to borrow the words of the Member for Port of Spain South, Tobagonians wake up, open your eyes, open your eyes.

Today they have opened their eyes, but they have also opened their mouths. Today, while they do not have a voice in this Parliament, because Tobago West and Tobago East choose to support party over the people, we the responsible Opposition headed by the Member for Siparia, will stand in defence of the people of Tobago, and advance their thoughts, their ideas on this Bill. So when the Member for Arima and others ask: What is the UNC position and where are our amendments? This is our amendment. Our amendment is to go back to the people of Tobago that you have betrayed. [*Desk thumping*] I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member for Point Fortin.

Mr. Kennedy Richards (*Point Fortin*): Madam Speaker, thank you for acknowledging me. When we listen to the Member for Princes Town, Madam Speaker, you hear plenty smoke, but no fire. [*Desk thumping*]

Today, I stand proud to be Trinbagonian. My first time I entered into this Parliament I was in awe, the architectural work, but as the months and as the weeks and the days and the months progressed, I had a greater appreciation for the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, Madam Speaker, my professional career would have allowed me to spend 50 per cent of my time in Trinidad and 50 per cent of my time in Tobago, and that experience taught me a few things. Firstly, Tobagonians are very assiduous and intelligent, and they crave an opportunity to control their own destiny. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, autonomy is a step-by-step process, and we have reached at the stage where Tobago is ready to take its rightful place alongside Trinidad as an equal partner in a unilateral State. It is simple.

Many states have taken such steps, inclusive of Scotland, St. Kitts/Nevis, just to name a few. Scotland got law-making ability in 1999, and in 2021, the PNM is proposing internal self-government for the people of Tobago. This is not indigenous. It is not indigenous to our parts.

The report speaks to giving an identity to the people of Tobago, and not making important decisions for them, giving them that ability to control their own destiny. Why should we sit in this Parliament and make laws to govern local settings in Roxborough, Scarborough or even Bloody Bay? Why should we?

The report as laid by the hon. Camille Robinson-Regis, seconded by the hon. Attorney General, Mr. Faris Al-Rawi, went on to give us the remits. It went into details of the laws, clauses, and then the hon. Shamfa Cudjoe, Member for Tobago West, would have polished it off.

Before I go into some of the highlights of that Bill, I would like to say, all the respondents waxed cold. No one responded to what the PNM was proposing in this Bill. Some of the highlights of that Bill, Madam Speaker, are amendments to the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. I would not go in depth in it because, you know, 55(1) would start to come out here, but amendments to the Constitution to provide internal self-government for Tobago, the creation of a Tobago Island Government, most importantly power to make laws. We have heard repeatedly from the Opposition, repeatedly, that this Bill does not give power to make laws. That is untrue, and sometimes the Opposition takes the stance of saying untruths over and over, until it becomes solidified in the minds of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, so that it becomes truth in their minds.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva South presented for 90 minutes, and came up with one thing in that whole 90 minutes. After he danced around the

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whole contribution, one thing he came up with, Madam Speaker, is that he has love for Tobago, and “dey cyar make laws”. So we dispelled the part where the Tobago Island Government does not have the power to make laws. He says yes that he has love for Tobago. He loves Tobago so much, that he referred to the Chief Secretary, young and brilliant man, as Ancil David. He also referred to Augustine Farley, a total disregard and disrespect to the people of Tobago—disrespect. [*Desk thumping*]

Love, when you are talking about love, love is an action word. If you have love for the people of Tobago, you would vote today to give them internal self-government. [*Desk thumping*] That is what is love. Love is not holding people in bondage. Refer to Schedule II, an action word, refer to Schedule II.

As I said, I am not going too deep into it, but some of the things I pulled out from Schedule II, one is the financial matters, the opportunity to borrow, to invest. Clause 38 of the Tobago internal government Bill permits Tobago to borrow. The UNC has never been in favour of giving Tobago the ability to borrow, and I quote from Rushton Paray, hon. Member for Mayaro, in a debate on the Miscellaneous Amendments Bill, 2020. This Bill was to provide for THA to borrow \$300 million to finance development projects and programmes. I repeat, this is from Rushton Paray.

Madam Speaker: Member, in terms of when we refer to Members here, we either refer to them by constituency or by portfolio. So you could refer to the Member for Arouca/Maloney, or the Minister of Planning and Development, or the Member for Mayaro. Okay?

Mr. K. Richards: Madam Speaker, I am so advised by you. So the hon. Member for Mayaro says:

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Madam Speaker, this is probably one of the most potentially dangerous and reckless measures that this Government can take in this time, and I will tell you why. Madam Speaker, this clause is to give Tobago House of Assembly some powers to borrow money on their own. The Tobago House of Assembly has had a long track record of playing fast and loose with the public purse. I am very weary that this state, that the Government is allowing this particular enterprise the opportunity to be able to borrow money on its own, and adding to an already overburdened national debt.

Does this sound like somebody who would give Tobago the opportunity to govern itself? Does this sound like somebody who is actually expressing love and commitment for the people of Tobago?

Madam Speaker, I go on to housing, for this financial matter was not there before. Housing—this would make for the internal ability to treat with housing needs on the island, the heritage and historical sites. That speaks for itself. Sports—I wonder how much people here could remember Andy Jackson before it had Chris Gayle, blistering opening batsman for Trinidad and Tobago? Madam Speaker, Navin Stewart, and a young man named Joshua James. Those three people are from Tobago, and giving them this opportunity for internal self-government is going to create more Andy Jacksons, more Navin Stewarts. It is going to give them the ability to deal with the people of Tobago.

Tourism, including the amenities—

Madam Speaker: One minute please. Would you like to make an interjection? You know the proper way, yes? Continue.

Mr. K. Richards:—including amenities and levies, Sandals for example. If the Tobagonians were handling that on their own, construction would have been at an

advanced stage at this point in time, Madam Speaker. They can pass laws and Bills to the betterment of their tourism product, putting them way in advance of places like St. Lucia, and Barbados, and Antigua and Jamaica. This is what this Bill is creating, Tobago Island Government Bill.

Statutory authorities and state enterprises. They cannot just walk into Tobago and do as they please. They must act in accordance with the policies set out by the Tobago Island Government. That is an important piece of legislation. This is the opportunity to set Tobago as an equal partner in the unilateral state.

The Tobago Legislature, Madam Speaker, I said before, power to make laws, has all things set out in Schedule II, oversight, and on that point of oversight another reference here. This Tobago internal government Bill, in clauses 18 and 19 and 20 provide for the Joint Select Committees, Public Accounts Committee and other oversight committees, so that they could have oversight. The UNC is always calling for more accountability, more oversight in Tobago, but they place refuse to support this Bill that is going to give oversight.

The hon. Member for Mayaro again, in the same debate, the Miscellaneous (Amdt.) Bill, 2020:

Madam Speaker, the THA's financial predicament—

I am reading from him now:

The THA's financial predicament has a lot to do with the mismanagement and the absence of oversight, transparency, accountability, granting of the THA the additional right to raise funds is in operation, is like giving someone the keys to the vault. The Government is simply funding this inefficiency.

The PNM has put forward an entire Bill, entire proposal through these reports that

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went to—I do not want to say the word because that is 55(10)—but it went to the Joint Select Committee. It came here, and today we are fighting to say that these things did not happen. It happened, it happened, Madam Speaker. Oversight, all of that is in the Bill.

The UNC always say bring proper legislation and we would support that. This is proper legislation. This is total, [*Desk thumping*] and proper legislation, and the time is now. “Doh not change yuh tune.” We have brought proper legislation, we are asking for the support.

All the speakers have not spoken to the contents of the report. Consultations were done—the word “ah ‘fraid to say right now”. Consultations were done, after hundreds of hours, they come today asking for more. Even then own political leader is on record saying in 2013, enough with the consultations. We have exhausted that, and it is time to move forward. I am saying today, it is time for us to move forward. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I have a few Tobago friends, Tobagonians. They are like brothers, so I was able to call one last night on my drive to Point Fortin, and he was immediately interested in, “De Bill pass?” His words to me are that, “Allyuh give us what is rightfully ours?” I said that we are ready to give it to you, and then the conversation developed, and he said to me that this legislation would not pass. He said the only reason why this legislation would not pass is because of the person who is championing this legislation. He said we have a Tobago born Prime Minister, and that is the major impediment for United National Congress. He said they are afraid that he would be immortalized in the hearts and the minds of Tobagonians, and he would be one of the biggest legends in Tobago, and that is one of the reasons why they cannot support that Bill today, Madam Speaker. It has

nothing to do with the contents of the report. It has nothing to do with the structure of the report, it is simply who is bringing the report.

I say to them today, Madam Speaker: What do you have to offer that is different to what is in the Bill? We have been dancing around. They have come here with clever political strategy, and I must admit, the strategy is good, but the people of Tobago watching, and they are waiting to see if we would give them their just due today. So the political strategy is not good enough. They have not made one amendment to a clause, and they continue to hide behind the strategy.

The biggest thing that they have done today is try to put Tobagonians against each other. So we hearing about the Dr. Vanus James, we are hearing about Hochoy Charles, we are hearing about Augustine Farley, we are hearing about all of them, but we have not heard once what the UNC is willing to accept or not accept, because they have not even taking the time to read through this Bill properly. A couple of the speakers said today they did not come to talk. They did not come to talk, they did not come to contribute, because Tobago is not important to them, Madam Speaker.

I just want to make a call. In closing, Madam Speaker, I just want to say that this matter has been fully ventilated. The people of Tobago are watching. The people of Tobago are deserving of what is in this Bill. For far too long “we dancing around what is right”, so it is time for us to do the rightful thing, and ensure that the people of Tobago could treat with the issues in Tobago.

So today I call upon the Opposition, put away your dislike for the Government. Put away your dislike for the people of Tobago, and Tobago on its own, and do what is right. Madam Speaker, I have no fear in saying that this Bill is going to be beneficial from the cradle all the way up to seniors. We are being led in

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Tobago by a very young, astute Chief Secretary. Put this Bill, put this legislation in his hand, and watch Tobago grow. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva North.

Mr. Ravi Ratiram (*Couva North*): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to join in this debate. Madam Speaker, I start off my debate today by attempting to clarify a lot of the misinformation that I see being peddled by the other side, misinformation of dividing the people of Trinidad and Tobago, which is something that they have been accustomed to, misinformation that they come to this Parliament, under the Parliament privilege, to propagate onto the population, information that is very far from the truth.

Madam Speaker, I want to start off today by responding to some of the contributions that have been made by Members on the opposite side. I start off today when referring to the contribution from the hon. Member for Arima, when she touched on agriculture and investment, and I want to quote what she said:

Giving Tobago the additional money to improve the affairs of Tobago, the affairs of the people of Tobago.

Madam Speaker, it is in this House, in this Parliament, that they on that side came last year to pass a budget, where they so boasted about what they were going to do for agriculture for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, where agriculture was going to receive an additional \$500 million. And from then to now, the only drawdown from that line item that has been placed in the public domain, is \$57 million for the procurement of relief items for the COVID relief items that is being distributed by NAMDEVCO. Not one cent has been used for the people of Tobago, and for the people of Trinidad, and for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, where agriculture was important to them on the other side.

She came here this morning to speak about giving Tobago additional money to improve the affairs of the people of Tobago. Why do they not use the current money that has already been made available for the benefit of the people of Tobago and the people of Trinidad, and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] But you see, Madam Speaker, they come here and they profess to be holier than thou with good intentions.

What I want to say is that allocation has been made, already been made available, and it is clear that those on the other side are not utilizing those allocations to the benefit of the people of Tobago, the people of Trinidad and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and that was clear in the last election. It was clear in the last election of the THA, where the voice of the people reflected that the people of Tobago rejected the PNM, and it is clear.

2.00 p.m.

But I want to move on to the reason why we are seeing all these reports popping forward, we are seeing correspondence being sent, and when we look at the report that has been put forward, it is clear that the people of Tobago want a certain level of autonomy. It is clear that the people of Tobago want to be in a position to administrate themselves, to make decisions for themselves because, Madam Speaker, the people of Tobago have lost confidence in this PNM Government. [*Desk thumping*] So they want autonomy not from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago or from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, they want autonomy from the PNM administration that is oppressing the people of Tobago and the people of Trinidad and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to look at the correspondence that has been sent to

the Joint Select Committee that is included in the report and it is from the Member for Chaguanas West, MP Dinesh Rambally. This is a correspondence dated the 30th of March, Madam Speaker. And in this correspondence the MP clearly stated and I quote:

“Even further, having May 2021 set as a possible deadline for completion is an unreal target and betrays the lack of appreciation of the very complex nature of this present exercise.”

Madam Speaker, this is since from March 2021, where the Member advised those involved that it is unrealistic, it is unrealistic, it is an unrealistic target and it betrays the lack of appreciation for the very complex exercise. They are aware of that. They are here to hoodwink the population and to fool the population to believe that they have the best interest with respect to Tobago’s self-governance but that is furthest from the truth because they know this piece of legislation is going to fail, Madam Speaker. They are fully aware of that but they are only utilizing this piece of legislation here, rushing it here through this process of rushing it through a process so that they will use it to hoodwink the people of Tobago for political gains. But, Madam Speaker, the people of Tobago have woken up. The people of Tobago have woken up, Madam Speaker. I want to tell them that you can fool some of the people some of the time but you could never fool all of the people all the time [*Desk thumping*] and it is clear that the people of Tobago are not going to be fooled by this PNM Government anymore.

So when it is they were advised on the 30th of March by the Member for Chaguanas West, that this is not going to be rushed and the targets are unreal, they still proceeded. And I want to go to the report itself, the section that deals—

Madam Speaker: So, Member, I have given you seven minutes to sort of settle in.

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In terms of time with the JSC, in terms of consultation, I know the difficulties that you are not all in the Chamber, I have already ruled that those are tedious repetition. Okay? So that I am just letting you know so you would not go there.

Mr. R. Ratiram: I am guided accordingly, Madam Speaker, and I am just going to quote a section of the report here that has not been read out in this debate as yet. And this section of the report, item 14 states:

“On Friday April 30, 2021 and Saturday May 1, 2021, your Committee held public consultations and received oral submissions from 31 citizens...”

That is what the report says. After written submission—

Madam Speaker: Member—

Mr. R. Ratiram:—public consultations.

Madam Speaker: And what I am saying is—

Mr. R. Ratiram: Only—

Madam Speaker: Member, while this is what the report has said, I am saying that this ground that has been covered, over-covered, under-covered, recovered between yesterday and today. That is why I stood up and cautioned you before you went there. All right? So if you could go on to another point, please.

Mr. R. Ratiram: Point well taken. Guidance accepted, Madam Speaker, but the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have a right to be aware of the process—

Madam Speaker: You have gone on to another point because, one, it might be a manner of speaking, I do not—it is not required that you agree with me but that you comply. All right? So as I said, we are not going on with consultations and so on. We have done that. Please proceed on another point.

Mr. R. Ratiram: Madam Speaker, can I seek your guidance with respect to my contribution in going forward before I—So, Madam Speaker, stepping away from

the 31 citizens who have been consulted and I am not speaking further on that topic, not speaking further on the issue of limited consultation that took place, I want to ask the question: How many persons from the agriculture society, from the fisheries industries, from the various agriculture fishing associations, market places, market vendors, how many of these persons which Schedule 1 is speaking on agriculture, I would like to know how many of these persons had any input into the drafting of this legislation? Because you see, Madam Speaker, this legislation is going to have a direct impact on the agriculture sector. It is going to have a direct impact in the fisheries industry and the markets and so forth. And even though I will not spend much speaking on public consultation, what I can specifically say is, from my perusing of these documentations, this bundle of documentation that was presented to us, I was unable to come about any substantive response, report, recommendations or any kind of deliverables from persons in this sector.

Madam Speaker: And I will ask you, Member, to move on.

Mr. R. Ratiram: Madam Speaker, those on the other side came and spoke about giving Tobago the opportunity to borrow, giving Tobago the opportunity to borrow, giving persons the opportunity to borrow, and also spoke about borrowing that has already taken place. I believe the previous speaker spoke about 300 million in borrowing that previously took place. So it appears that borrowing is already an ongoing activity that happens in Tobago managing its affairs. But, Madam Speaker, borrowing seems to be something that their Government is very focused on, because from since they have come into office, Madam Speaker, other than taxing, taxing, taxing the citizens, the next thing—[*Interruption*] So, Madam Speaker, I am responding to the previous speaker—

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Madam Speaker: Out of order on Standing Order 48(1).

Mr. R. Ratiram: Point well taken, Madam Speaker, and I am guided accordingly, and I move on. I move on, Madam Speaker, of the issue of autonomy that the folks in Tobago have been seeking for some time, and the volume has increased because of the six years of neglect that they have faced from this PNM administration. The volume has increased for this self-governance in Tobago because they want to be independent, because when we look at the health sector as an example and we look at the independence they are seeking in the health sector, it is clear that they have lost confidence in the health sector. [*Desk thumping*] And just last week the hon. Member for Chaguanas East piloted a Motion of no confidence in the Minister of Health.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1). The Motion of no confidence in the health sector?

Madam Speaker: The objection is upheld. Please, something else please and be relevant.

Mr. R. Ratiram: Guided accordingly, Madam Speaker. I am certain those on the other side do not want to hear what is happening and why the folks of Tobago want this support, the independence, they support the autonomy, they support the self-government, they do not want to hear why but I am highlighting the reasons why and I am saying that while—

Mr. Al-Rawi: I rise on Standing Order 48(1) which has just been ruled upon. The hon. Member is arguing the decision it seems.

Madam Speaker: So, Member, I would want to say that I would accept that you are not trying to circumvent the ruling but I have already ruled that talking about the borrowings of the Government is irrelevant. I already ruled that the no

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confidence Motion in the health sector and the Minister of Health is irrelevant. So please, again, this would have been the third occasion that I am standing to warn you, please, do not let me stand again.

Mr. R. Ratiram: Guided accordingly, Madam Speaker. And moving along with my contribution, I want to touch on how this Tobago self-governance Bill that has been brought before this Parliament, that has been rushed before this Parliament, how it is going to affect the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Because you see, Madam Speaker, we are a very united country, Trinidad and Tobago, twin-island republic where every creed and race finds an equal place and an equal space, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, what is being proposing here is at least a 6.8 per cent of the national budget, 6.8 per cent minimal base towards this autonomy. And, Madam Speaker, while a figure has been thrown out there is no sort of breakdown or explanation as to why and how they arrive, Madam Speaker, at this 6.8 per cent. The question is, is it sufficient? Is it enough to achieve all what it is we are to achieve to have true autonomy and true self-governance for the people of Tobago? Will this 6.8 per cent be sufficient? Or is there a seed capital that is going to be required for a proper and efficient rollout of the self-governance for the people of Tobago?

You see, Madam Speaker, what those on the other side do from time to time is they provide pie in the sky plans. They come here and throw out proposals and projects that are pie in the sky, that are very unreasonable, unrealistic, unachievable, again, with political intent to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker: Member, again Standing Order 48(1). The relevance of that to

the Committee report that we are debating is giving me some difficulty. So either you make that connection now or move on to another point please. And again, I think that my—your latitude is being expended at this stage.

Mr. R. Ratiram: I take your guidance, Madam Speaker. I take your guidance, Madam Speaker, and I move on. I move on with the point that I was making into the efficient rollout of what this Bill is expected to achieve, because this Bill is speaking of a service commission, civil service, public service to be set up for Tobago.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, respectfully Standing Order 55(1)(b). The issue of the Service Commissions has been dealt with by, at least, five speakers on that side.

Madam Speaker: Okay. I accept, I uphold but in addition to which, this Bill is not talking about rolling out—okay?—which will be an administrative matter, so I will give you a little leeway to try and tie what you want to say into what the report is. Okay? But it is not about rolling out and the failure of the Government to rollout other things.

Mr. R. Ratiram: Madam Speaker, all the legislation, all Bills, all pieces of law treat with the governance of our country and governance of our people, and when we stand here to discuss and to debate and to make laws, it will more or less have an impact on the citizens of our country. And it makes absolutely no sense for us to debate and to discuss unrealistic targets. And what I am asking here today is, the Government has put forward a breakdown of the national financial allocation where they are recommending a certain percentage—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, 48(1).

Mr. R. Ratiram:—to be made available—

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Mr. Deyalsingh: The Government is putting forward nothing. This is a Joint Select Committee Report.

Madam Speaker: Okay. So I understand that. Go ahead.

Mr. R. Ratiram: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And when a specific allocation of 6.8 per cent or 8 per cent or in between is being made available, what specifically is this being made available for? And if we examine the document, we will get the answers to that.

And the Member for St. Joseph indicated that previous speakers have spoken about the public service so I will not go into that. But what I want to ask, Madam Speaker, is while we divide labour in Trinidad and labour in Tobago, what impact is it going to have on the entire labour movement? Or I should say, on behalf of the working class of Trinidad and Tobago—

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, Member for Couva North, your speaking time is now spent.

The Minister of Communications and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Symon de Nobriga): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I had started to take notes while my colleague opposite was speaking and apart from misinformation and a quote somewhere that he said that we on this side think ourselves holier than thou and full of good intentions which, Madam Speaker, I want to agree with, in particular when we see what we are compared against. Madam Speaker, other than that, all I have is 48(1) so I will just move on with my contribution.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Diego Martin Central, I want to thank you for the opportunity to join this momentous debate, and while I am here to speak on their behalf, I am hoping that they and you will give me a

moment of personal testimony. Madam Speaker, I love Tobago, I have an inextricable connection to the sister isle that makes the opportunity to stand here and to add to the debate a profound honour and privilege. Madam Speaker, generations of my family have made their life in Tobago up to and including my late uncle and godfather Glen de Nobriga who lived there for many years, worked in the hospitality industry until he was unfortunately called by the Father at an early age. Madam Speaker, my daughter took her first steps in Tobago, both my children learned to swim in Tobago, there are so many personal milestones too many to mention but Tobago is a place that I find peace and my love for the island and its people are, in many ways, beyond the telling of it.

However, Madam Speaker, our presence here today signals a watershed moment in the history of the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and it represents what has got to be among one of the most significant pieces of legislation that this Twelfth Parliament will have the opportunity to debate during its entire tenure.

Madam Speaker, in preparing for this debate I thought about the idea of relationships in general and how typically they are the coming together of imperfect beings in an attempt to create a union that strives for perfection. And, Madam Speaker, there is always an ongoing process. It is a process of learning, of compromising—of learning and of compromising and of adjusting our expectations, our wants and our needs. But, Madam Speaker, the pillars on which any successful relationship must thrive, must exist have to be respect, trust, commitment and a real desire to see you partner become the best version of themselves. Madam Speaker, that is what this debate is about. The potential outcome of this debate, Madam Speaker, is a comprehensive overhaul of the

governance relationship that currently exists between the islands of Trinidad and Tobago and it will substantially alter the manner in which our sisters and brothers in Tobago govern themselves and it is a debate that has been long in coming.

Madam Speaker, while I was doing my reading and preparing for this debate, I came across the submission by the current leader of the National Joint Action Committee Kwasi Mutema in his submission to the JSC. And, Madam Speaker, he said and I am quoting:

NJAC is of the opinion that this current move to amend the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to accord self-government to Tobago is a timely opportunity for our nation to make a bold step towards this process of constitutional reform by implementing appropriate measures in this Bill. Such measures should point the way forward as an example of a new direction for Trinidad and Tobago rather than just mirror what currently exists in the present Constitution.

Madam Speaker, that is not a PNM Member speaking. It is not a party group. That is the National Joint Action Committee leader, and NJAC once formed was once a partner in their People's Partnership. Madam Speaker, I think his submission perfectly encapsulates what we are here about today. Madam Speaker, as I listened to my colleagues opposite from the very start as they fumbled and bumbled and struggled to arrive at a place of relevance in this debate, the recurring decimal in their contributions has been this need for additional and more in depth consultations. Madam Speaker, they are tripping over themselves, not only fumbling and bubbling but stumbling, Madam Speaker, to create some sort of not so transparent attempt to demonstrate compassion and empathy for the views and opinions of our brothers and sisters in Tobago. But, Madam Speaker, their

duplicity has failed miserably.

And, Madam Speaker, there are two things about that failure. The first thing is this, that the longer this matter of Tobago's autonomy is tied up in their attempt of a paralysis of analysis, the longer that we continue in consultation after consultation is the longer that they compel the diatribe that this Government does not care about the people of Tobago and they continue to do it today, Madam Speaker. The longer this matter can stay unresolved, Madam Speaker, is the longer that some of the players who are making the rounds since for "donkey years"—

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, 55(b), Standing Order 55(b).

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, Minister, I will give you a little leeway and ask you to move on. I will just give you a little leeway and move on.

Hon. S. de Nobriga: Madam Speaker, I take your guidance, Madam Speaker. The truth is that the matter of greater autonomy in Tobago within that matter of greater autonomy for Tobago within the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago can no longer be sacrificed so that others can continue to play this blame game and pappy show Tobagonians.

But, Madam Speaker, the second point is this. The bleating and braying that comes from the opposite side is not—while not un-entirely surprising must be seen for what it is, Madam Speaker, but as I take your guidance I also take the guidance of the words of our first Prime Minister who advised on how to ignore bleating and braying and I will encourage the good people of Tobago to do the same.

Madam Speaker, it is with the greatest respect to my colleagues on the other side that I urge them to pick a struggle and pick a fight but greater autonomy for Tobago is not one of those things. You have never cared, you never listened. You have never sought to represent them. So, Madam Speaker, in the words of my

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younger constituents, “rest meh, nah”.

Madam Speaker, I am certain it is not too distant a memory for persons in here that in 1988 there was a group called Mike and the Mechanics who had a song called in “The Living Years” which began with the words:

“Every generation blames the one before
and all of their frustrations come beating on your door.”

Madam Speaker, the lyrics of the song speak about a son who was so full of regret for not resolving his conflict with his father before his father’s demise. Madam Speaker, we will do future generations a great disservice and they will be perfectly right to come beating at our door if we are not able to put aside our differences, if we are not able to put aside—if we are not able to lay bare the prejudice and the fears that have become almost symbiotic for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, while I am listening to Member, I crave your indulgence under Standing Order 48(1).

Madam Speaker: Continue, Member.

Hon. S. de Nobriga: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, 48(1) should not apply to any person on that side in any conversation about Tobago. Madam Speaker, the fears that we have held about this symbiotic relationship between Trinidad and Tobago for not being able to see beyond the narrow parochialism of party and electoral power and to see instead a new day dawning for those prepared to put Tobago first and, Madam Speaker, we on this side are prepared to put Tobago first.

But, Madam Speaker, it is also important for us to be cognizant of the issues of mistrust, of paternalism, of condescension, of imbalance and inequity that have in part been a component of the relationship between the two islands since their

annexation in 1889. We cannot wish that away and we should not try, Madam Speaker. But today ours is the opportunity to begin correcting that perception of imbalance and inequity that has found root because of the governance arrangements.

And, Madam Speaker, a former Prime Minister, Patrick Manning once famously said, “what Tobago wants, Tobago will get”, and during the course of this debate we on this side have continuously demonstrated that we have listened intently to the voices of those who are most likely to be affected by the provisions of this Bill. We have distilled the concerns that are contained in reams and reams of paper submissions. We have gone through an exhausted JSC process and recognized the right of the Opposition to submit the minority report that they have all towards the objective of giving Tobago what Tobago wants. And through the provisions contained in that JSC report, we are seeking in part to return to the days prior to 1889 when Tobago governed itself and that was the time when Tobago was able to pass and enact laws that were in the best interest of Tobago. That was the time when taxes paid in Tobago, remained in and were spent on what was determined to be the best for Tobago by Tobago.

Madam Speaker, there are three principal provisions that have been up for debate; Tobago’s ability to pass and enact its own laws, its ability to earn and spend its own money and its equal status within the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, notwithstanding everything that has come from that side, to quote the Mighty Sparrow:

“That’s all, that is all, that is all.”

Madam Speaker, under the existing THA Act 40 of 1996, the legitimately elected assemblymen of the Tobago House of Assembly voted into power by the

people of Tobago in a free and democratic process every four years have absolutely no say in the creation, deliberation and passage of laws that impact on the daily lives of their constituents. The Bill that was sent to the JSC which the report is before today, reestablishes the legislative power of the assemblymen of the THA, ascribing onto them the power and authority to make and enact laws that they believe are in the best interest of their constituents. The precise words, Madam Speaker, are:

To make laws for the peace, order and good governance of Tobago.

2.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker, that is the epitome of democracy that is of the people, for the people and by the people. Madam Speaker, this is a significant milestone for the governance of Tobago. If you allow me to quote the current leader of the People's National Movement in Tobago, the hon. Tracy Davidson-Celestine who, on Friday in a report carried in the *Newsday* newspaper, said and this is what I quote, Madam Speaker:

“This is something that we have argued, for perhaps 40 years or more and now we have the opportunity in this arrangement, in this Tobago Island Bill. And it is something that we should not take for granted.

All we can do, whenever we meet in the House, as members of the assembly, is to talk about respective policies that we will want to implement within the respective divisions.”

Madam Speaker, if anybody should know, it would be Mrs. Davidson-Celestine who, but for her brief hiatus as an ambassador, has been a member of that assembly since 2005. But the gravitas of the amendment does not stop there. Mrs. Davidson-Celestine hastened to add:

“...we have...”—and I am quoting, Madam Speaker.“...we have direct access to the President in terms of when those laws are made. We can now have them proclaimed directly by the President without having to go through Cabinet or Parliament...”

Madam Speaker, we could debate this from now until Jesus comes in glory but at some point, we will have to make a decision and now is that point in time. Future generations are going to be unforgiving if we do not seize it and delay out of fear, out of cowardice, political grandstanding or self-serving agendas.

Madam Speaker, moving on to the second item, that of financial independence. Everybody here must understand that at a personal level, that one of the signs of maturity and independence is the ability to earn and spend your own money. At a personal level, we need to understand that. We must understand that. This significant provision in the report and the accompanying Bill is the granting of Tobago its ability to collect or be remitted taxes belonging to Tobago. Madam Speaker, the proposal having come from local government is not entirely dissimilar to what is proposed under local government reform and it will remove once and for all this image that is very often painted, sometimes by those opposite, of Tobago coming cap in hand to beg for funds from central government. Madam Speaker, it removes the anomaly of a legitimately elected assembly not being able to debate its own Appropriation Act, just as we do here with the annual Appropriation Bill. Additionally, Madam Speaker, it also places a more onerous responsibility on the shoulders of Tobago's elected representatives to manage their own moneys, but one which we on this side believe that they are capable of handling successfully.

Madam Speaker, the third issue surrounds the perception held by many that Tobago is not an equal partner in this unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. And

indeed the wording contained in the literature legitimizes that perception as Tobago is described invariably as a ward of Trinidad. The truth is, Madam Speaker, to continue to describe Tobago as a ward of Trinidad is to do a serious disservice to our beautiful sister isle. And, Madam Speaker, without fail, nearly every submission made over the many years of consultation on this matter have unearthed this perception that has been deeply embedded in the Tobagonian psyche, that they are wards of Trinidad and that the actions of successive administrations have only served to deepen that wound. And today, Madam Speaker, through the provisions proposed in this Bill, this PNM administration, led by a proud Tobagonian, will apply the salve that begins to heal that wound.

Madam Speaker, I want to join with the rest of my colleagues on this side in offering my unreserved support for the provision in the proposed Tobago Island Government Bill that will forever vanish from our local lexicon, the words in the Trinidad and Tobago Order in Council, 1898, that provides that the island of Tobago shall be a ward of the colony of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Such a provision, Madam Speaker, if accepted, and we hope—we genuinely hope that it will reverse an anomaly that occurred over a century ago.

Madam Speaker, in closing, it is my considered view that notwithstanding the minority report of the Opposition, the deliberations of the JSC Report must be accepted. I join with my colleagues before in congratulating the Chairman of that Committee, in congratulating the Member for Arouca/Maloney, in congratulating the Minister of Planning and Development, that trifecta of excellence resting in one person, and the draft Bill before this House should be approved. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. Vandana Mohit (*Chaguanas East*): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the

opportunity to contribute to this debate. Madam Speaker, as I begin, I want to deal a little bit with some matters raised by the last speaker. And, Madam Speaker, in listening to the speaker before me, you know, I sat there and I wondered, the way the Member appeared was as though the UNC has no love for Tobago, the UNC does not support Tobago.

But I had to listen to the Member and ask, who does not love Tobago? Madam Speaker, everywhere each one of us in this House go in the world, we describe ourselves as proud citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] So do not come to portray us as haters of Tobago. Madam Speaker, as we contribute as Members of the Opposition here today, we are saying simply to the Government, do not run from the voice of the people of Tobago. And it is simple as that. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I have listened from yesterday into today and Members on the other side, in each one of their contribution, they would portray the UNC as though we do not support any legislation that they bring. Madam Speaker, to the speaker who spoke before, on many occasions, we on this side have put aside our differences to support legislation in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] and we will continue to make that clear, and the citizens are aware of this.

Madam Speaker, when we look at Tobago and what is happening, and you hear the Members on the other side speak as though the People's Partnership Government, the government before them, never did anything for Tobago. Madam Speaker, I can tell you, as a young person who visited Tobago on many occasions, if you speak to young people in Tobago—I have done so and I can tell you that these people have said to me, that the best time for Tobago was when the People's

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Partnership Government was in office. [*Desk thumping*] So be careful. Listen to the voice of Tobago, not only what you hear and sing in your ear, Madam Speaker. We are simply saying, give Tobago what they want. The Member said—the speaker before mentioned, let us give Tobago what they want. We are saying, yes, give Tobago what they want but do it in a manner of care for the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Nobody is against Tobago dealing with their laws, nobody is against Tobago dealing with their finances, but take their steps forward—take this step forward by including their voice, and it is as simple as that.

Madam Speaker, from yesterday into today while listening, many citizens outside who are listening to us as well have come to the conclusion that whilst the Government would like to appear as though they are passionate about the citizens of Tobago and they are working in the interest of the people of Tobago, the citizens of this country are aware that the unprecedented recent times that have gone in the history books of Trinidad and Tobago is forcing this Government to act as though they care about Tobago now, and that would reflect on the recent elections in Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I listened to Lopinot/Bon Air this morning and, you know, I had to laugh because the Member spoke of confidence—placing confidence in the Tobago West and East MPs. You cannot bully us into placing confidence, when these Members they hold portfolios in this Government and they have failed the children of this country, they have failed the women of this country.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I rise on Standing Order 48(1).

Madam Speaker: Objection upheld.

Ms V. Mohit: But, Madam Speaker, some persons—well, not to use “but”, but I understand.

Madam Speaker, going forward, in listening to the contributions, you would have heard that there were placement of a feedback document in the airport, in restaurants, et cetera. Madam Speaker, we have to ask, what feedback mechanism was really used when borders were closed— restaurants have been closed for lengthy periods during the last year, bars have been closed for lengthy periods during the last year, so what feedback mechanism was really used? If you look at Tobago, in terms online feedback, how many people in Tobago have access to this online mechanism of feedback, Madam Speaker?

So when we speak digitization—this Government is preaching digitization and feedback, we really have to ask this question. So do not come to school the UNC on how we treat Tobagonians when it was your Prime Minister who threatened the people of Tobago that they will never be forgiven. When you speak about threat to democracy, that is threat to democracy, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, in this short contribution, I would just like to state that the behaviour, the attitude, the responses, the contribution by Members on the other side have simply portrayed panic and desperation. And do not come to tell us that we do not want to accept legislation yet again, when you should really be admitting that you need to do a better job in your preparation before coming to this House.

Madam Speaker, whilst I have heard on many occasions as well that we on this side are not good for the people of Tobago, and do not listen to us, and Tobago, you will be in danger, in closing, Madam Speaker, I say the only bad thing for the people of Tobago is the PNM. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Ministry of Education (Hon. Lisa Morris-Julian): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I came here excited to be on the right path of history but I must say, I am disappointed by the disgraceful attempts by the

Opposition. It is disgraceful that they clearly did not read the report on the two Bills offered. [*Desk thumping*] It is disgraceful, Madam Speaker, that they believe that a cheat is the best way to serve Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I have heard a lot about consultation, so much so that you yourself, Madam Speaker, asked not to hear that word anymore. But, Madam Speaker, in any consultation, there must be good faith. Any doubt or uncertainty shall be resolved with good faith. Madam Speaker, as the Member for Tobago West said yesterday, nothing. They offered nothing, they came with nothing and they are leaving with nothing because they want Tobago to have nothing. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, unlike so many Members on the other side, I took my time and I read the report. I went through clause by clause and I saw where amendments were made. Amendments were made because the Committee listened to the people, the people of Tobago who contributed.

Madam Speaker, the people of Tobago cannot simply be the person or persons who identify as anti-PNM. There are other voices and they spoke. Clause 5, 11 comments made with regard to the boundaries and it was adjusted. Clause 7, one comment made by the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago, which spoke of the High Court's jurisdiction and that was also inserted, Madam Speaker. Clauses 8 and 5, comments were made, all were considered, speaking in particular to the powers of Tobago to make laws and that was dealt with by the Attorney General.

Madam Speaker, clause, after clause, after clause but you know what I did not see? I did not see the contribution of the Opposition members of the Joint Select Committee. You know why, Madam Speaker? Again, I go back to that word, nothing. Madam Speaker, in the Tobago Island Government Bill, you will

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see the same. Clause 5, three comments were made in reference to the boundaries and was considered by the Joint Select Committee, which has proposed 11 nautical miles.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, these matters have been traversed by Members already.

Madam Speaker: Okay, so I think the objection you are raising is under section— Standing Order 55(1)(b).

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Madam Speaker: All right. And please proceed, Member.

Hon. L. Morris-Julian: Madam Speaker, you see, I am able to quote because I took the time to read. [*Desk thumping*] And in taking the time to read, Madam Speaker, I also managed not to massacre the English Language. [*Desk thumping*] Because you can refer to gunning one, two, three and four, but if you did not contribute, why you must now try to fool the people of Tobago and pretend that you have a say?

Madam Speaker, I spoke to my colleagues in Tobago, and my colleagues assured me that I am on the right side of history. I listened, because the Opposition tends to bring in the dead in the House of Parliament. They love to speak about persons who cannot speak for themselves. They spoke about ANR Robinson, a man who was shaped and formed in the People's National Movement. A man who gave us the greatest justice ever when he rejected UNC in its manifestation and appointed Patrick Manning as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, based on morality. Madam Speaker, Tobago is important to the People's National Movement because it is a partnership. It is a marriage. We would not tolerate the UNC coming as an outside man with nothing to offer but say—whispering sweet

nothings. But even the nothings, Madam Speaker, it does not exist.

Madam Speaker, two islands, one nation, and that is what they are forgetting. Tobago is not a playground. Tobago is our equal and our partner, and this is what we are trying to do. Madam Speaker, I read the Minority Report. They spoke about the process was unfair. Again, the political hypocrisy. How was it unfair, when in 2013, the Member for Siparia led the then UNC government and their cohorts with the leader of TOP, Ashworth Jack, to hijack and disregard the proposal of the John Prince Committee, which was approved by the Tobago House of Assembly in 2011? The Minority Report, Madam Speaker, also suggested that the consultations failed to reach a significant number of people. Madam Speaker, we have heard it four years, 20 venues, a 100 man hours, a 120 stakeholder submissions, and over 6,000 Tobagonian and Trinidadian participants. I challenge anyone on the other side to name any Bill that has had this form and level of deep consultation.

Madam Speaker, they even stated that they did not take the stakeholders seriously. The Joint Select Committee made a number of significant adjustments to the draft Bills based on both oral and written submissions. They spoke of Mr. Orville London, the Chief Secretary, at the time. Madam Speaker, but did they tell you, it was the same Orville London that the Member for Siparia refused to meet for over a year despite him begging and pleading with her to put the people of Tobago first? So, Madam Speaker, the UNC cannot come here today and talk about not listening. I am speaking to the people of Tobago, put pressure on the United National Congress to do what is right by you. The same way they supported the anti-gang, they can support this Bill. They can put the people of Tobago first. They can put not just themselves because, Madam Speaker, in their lust for power,

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they are using words not deeds. They do not care about Tobago. They do not care about your children's children. They do not care about your future. And as for the gentleman in green, and we have been seeing green for the past two days, and I am not afraid to call his name. As a woman who has been constantly, verbally abused and attacked by Watson Duke, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, Esau sold his birthright for a plate of food. Do not allow the PDP to do the same to the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva South spoke about desperation. It is desperate to stamp on progress. It is desperate to impose your will on Tobago. Madam Speaker, when last did the UNC contest a seat overtly in Tobago?—2001. What have you contributed? Madam Speaker, Tobago deserve deeds not words, and the people People's National Movement will do the deed and do what is right by Tobago. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, you are joining the debate at this time?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, your mask?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: [*Inaudible*].

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, am I correct in my understanding that you are exercising the right to reply under Standing Order 46(2)?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: And therefore your time is 60 minutes.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am also assuming that I in representing

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the Member for Arouca/Maloney, and therefore I think I am entitled to ask for a little bit more time on that behalf? I am winding up in my capacity as Leader of the Government Business and also as representing the mover of the Motion.

Madam Speaker: Yes. So I understand Prime Minister that you are exercising the rights of reply under Standing Order 46(2), because the mover would have ceded her right. I understand that. So that, under the Motion that exists, it is 60 minutes.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: How much do I have?

Madam Speaker: Sixty minutes, Prime Minister.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this is quite a strange feeling for me to be doing this at this time. Madam Speaker, but it is also with a sense of history that I take this responsibility to wind up this Motion.

Let me begin by thanking all Members of the House on both sides who have participated in this debate, which one way or the other, Madam Speaker, would be seen as a historic debate. Because, Madam Speaker, if my colleagues on the other side are moved to provide the nine votes that are required to add to our 22 votes, this country would be changed for the better forever. [*Desk thumping*] If on the other hand, Madam Speaker, my colleagues do not provide that support to make this historic movement forward for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, in particular the people of Tobago, history would not be kind to us.

Madam Speaker, permit me a little leeway to anchor my contribution in history. Yesterday I had the opportunity to ask one of my younger colleagues in this House about her date of birth and I was told that the date of birth—

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, just on a point of clarification under 46(2)—
Standing Order 46(2):

“A Minister may conclude a debate or any motion that is critical of the

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Government or reflects adversely on, or is calculated to bring discredit upon the Government or a Government officer.”

This Joint Select Committee’s Report is certainly not critical of the Government, and I seek your clarification in under what Standing Order the Prime Minister is winding up?

Madam Speaker: As I said, and I think it was clear on the record, the Member for Arouca/Maloney has ceded her right under 46(1). The nature of the debate has been critical of the Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And I am sorry I lost my trend of thought there but I will start over, and I trust that, Madam Speaker, I will be given some injury time.

As I was saying, Madam Speaker, I did ask one of my younger colleagues in this House, to whom I have a responsibility, I asked the Member about her date of birth, and the Member told me. And I simply did that because I wanted to be sure that when I say that, this matter before us today has been around this House and outside of this House before the particular Member was born. And it is an eerie feeling, Madam Speaker, to be here treating with this Motion in such a fundamental way and having the participation of a Member who was born after this Motion came alive in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, no one could properly understand this debate, the content of these Bills, the conduct of this Motion, without having an understanding and a sense of the history of Trinidad and Tobago in the last 30 years or thereabouts, to fully understand it. And, Madam Speaker, it is for that reason why I want to say to all Members of this House, and particularly members of the Tobago community who are being told that this Motion is some disservice to them, something that is

backward, something that is unworthy of acceptance and so on, that what we are doing here, Madam Speaker, is adding to a foundation that has been built, one that has been contentious, one that has seen happiness, one that has seen disappointment, and I dare say, discord. In my own case, Madam Speaker, I could say that I have been there from the beginning and it is on that basis, I ask that you tolerate my reflection of where we have come from, where we are, and where this Motion is likely to take us.

3.00 p.m.

Madam Speaker, we came from a period in the '70s, which happens to be the time when I joined the PNM in 1974. Today, I lead that party as head of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and I heard a lot about the PNM in this debate today. I heard a lot about the Prime Minister and even my own name being called in all kinds of capacities and therefore we cannot exclude that from the debate. Madam Speaker, in 1971 there was a "No vote campaign" in this country and a Member for Tobago East won that seat uncontested. Let us start there.

Tobago East won by the PNM uncontested. Five years later, Madam Speaker, that Member lost that seat in 1976. Up to that point, Madam Speaker, Tobago was administered from Port of Spain. And how was that done? It was done by each Ministry focusing its responsibility for Tobago through a Ministry for Tobago Affairs. That Ministry for Tobago Affairs had tentacles in every Ministry in the country administered from Port of Spain. And in the eyes of many Tobagonians and the conversation outside was that Tobago was run by Trinidad from Trinidad and there was this sentiment of Trinidad versus Tobago.

And during the election campaign of 1976 the big issue on the ground where I was present, as a new member of the PNM, having joined the party two years

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before, was that they did not want a Ministry for Tobago Affairs. Tobago deserved better than that, Tobagonians can do better than that and Tobagonians would like to administer their affairs in Tobago. That was the election campaign in Tobago and it sold well because most Tobagonians, the vast majority of Tobagonians are of that view that Tobago can do better for Tobago and for Trinidad and Tobago if Tobagonians are given responsibility and authority on the island within the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, the PNM took a little while to understand that. In fact, some people in the PNM in Trinidad even thought that that was being ridiculous. But it took a while for the politics of that to soak in to the PNM, but time is longer than twine. Eventually, Madam Speaker, the very PNM that had a difficulty understanding that did that within the party when we created a Tobago Island Council of the People's National Movement with autonomy for the PNM in Tobago and that is there operating today, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, that election of '76 that generated the end of the Ministry for Tobago Affairs that nobody wanted in Tobago, saw a conversation for internal self-government led by ANR Robinson who had come out of the PNM and was seeking his political future along that line. Successfully he did so, alongside him was Dr. Winston Murray. That matter ended up in this Parliament and Dr. Murray rooted his argument in the history of Tobago and he raised in this House and on the ground outside this whole question of the return of the Tobago House of Assembly as a replacement for the people of Tobago and that happened, Madam Speaker.

Interestingly, it happened when we thought that it had collapsed in this House politically because the mover, Mr. ANR Robinson, he walked out when he thought the PNM would never agree to it. The mover of the Motion—and surprisingly, the

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friend say, the more things change the more it remains the same. The mover of this Motion today is not winding up this Motion. In 1980 the mover of the Motion for Tobago self-government did not wind it up. It was Winston Murray and Bunny Padmore—go to the *Hansard* and you will see that the Tobago House of Assembly, which came into being in 1980, to satisfy that demand on the street in Tobago, those are the two people in this Parliament who fought, agreed, cajoled and got all the colleagues to agree, surprisingly, when the mover walked out and we had the Tobago House of Assembly. That was 1980 and many people in Tobago thought we have got it. But it can also be shown that progress can be had.

Later on in 1996, another movement was made in this House when the election was held in Tobago were quite different, not in the PNM's favour, but we supported. I was in the Opposition, Madam Speaker. I served three terms in Opposition in this country and on the Opposition Bench this matter of 1996 came up, Act No. 40 of 1996 had the support of the Opposition.

So the creation of the Assembly and the amendment to the law, the upgrading of the law in 1996 had the PNM support. I had to sit here and hear no fights from the other side, wet behind the ears, snotty in the nose, saying that the PNM does not support Tobago as an excuse for them not doing what they do now. The only reason why Tobago may not get what these Bills promised them is because the Opposition today is not the kind of Opposition we had in 1996 to support the Bill brought by another political party. [*Desk thumping*]

But, Madam Speaker, I am not surprised that that is the case, because if you listen to the debate, much of what was said in repetition by my colleagues on the other side, one could only come to the conclusion that they believe that this matter before the House is a PNM matter. I want to rectify that and correct that now once

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and for all for the record. What is before this House today is the work of the entire Parliament, a Joint Select Committee of which the PNM participated. [*Desk thumping*] It had Opposition Members, it had Independent Members and so far, the Government Members and the Independent Members support this Motion with their signature. [*Desk thumping*] They support this Motion, so let us forget this, this is not a PNM matter. And you know interestingly enough, as Members on the other side will try to portray and present this matter as a PNM matter, I heard my colleague from St. Augustine this morning saying that this matter is not about the UNC. So when it is time to obstruct, it is not about the UNC; when it is time to support, it is about the PNM.

Madam Speaker, I want to say to my colleague from St. Augustine, it is about the UNC. Political matters of this nature are about the political powers and persuasion that adjudicate upon them. Go turn on your television right now, Madam Speaker, and you will see huge debate taking place, fundamental debate taking place in the United States. It is between the Democrats and the Republicans. You go, look back at Brexit in the United Kingdom and you will see it, it was between Labour and the Conservatives.

So do not come here today and shirk your responsibility and ask and say it is not about the UNC. This Bill will rise and it will fall on the support or lack thereof of the UNC's nine votes. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot hide from that, you took an Oath of Office and you cannot resile from that now. If you were unfit to take that Oath then tell us so now and create a vacant seat or a bi-election, but I do not think that is so. If it is too much for you to carry on, say so and the PNM will help you. But we can guarantee to the people of Tobago that this matter requires 31 votes and there are 22 PNM votes to be cast for this Motion, [*Desk thumping*] and it

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needs nine more for Tobago's future to be changed.

Madam Speaker, let me at this point dispense with a very disappointing contribution made yesterday by the Member for Naparima who somehow thinks that he impresses his colleagues by being as obnoxious as possible. When the Member spoke yesterday, the Member opened his contribution by attacking the Elections and Boundaries Commission. And he went as far—I do not know if he is authorized to say so, but he went as far as to say, speaking for a leader who is absent in a Motion like this, the Opposition Leader is absent and has nothing to say. I wonder if the people of Tobago understand the meaning of that signal, but the Member spoke for the leader. He said that the Opposition has no confidence in the Elections and Boundaries Commission. The Elections and Boundaries Commission happens to be one of the few institutions—

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker—

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—in this country that has not been undermined. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, 48(6). The Member for Naparima at no point in time imputed anything—[*Crosstalk*]—on behalf of the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Hon. Member: Yes, he said so. It is on the record.

Madam Speaker: Member, maybe you should check the *Hansard*. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I guess he will try to disturb me by getting up and saying that the Member did not say, did not ask where the 15 seats came from and ascribed the 15 seats to the Prime Minister and said that it was the Prime Minister who talk about 15 seats and the Elections and Boundaries Commission

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jumped to talk about 16 seats. And if you do not listen, at least you could read and the *Hansard* will tell you that.

Yesterday, the Member for Naparima ascribed to me in my capacity as a Tobagonian and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago as saying that there should be 15 seats in the Assembly. Madam Speaker, I plead not guilty, while I plead full support for it. Madam Speaker, the first time I heard about 15 seats in Tobago House of Assembly, it was during the consultation that took place in Tobago in the 2014—2017 period. Later on in 2015 I happened to have occupied the position of Prime Minister at a Cabinet and sometime later on, Madam Speaker, a document came from Tobago in legal form and in that form coming from Tobago's consultation, one of the things they recommended in a new Tobago House of Assembly is 15 seats to be elected in the Tobago House of Assembly.

So, Madam Speaker, that was said over and over because one of the first things my colleagues did when they signalled that they would not be cooperating with this advancement of Tobago, they said that the Committee, the only Committee where they had Members on the Committee, they said to the public in the most untruthful way that the Committee had not consulted the EBC as though that will somehow deem the work to be disqualified. Nothing was further from the truth. Members of that Committee knew that the Committee had in fact been in touch by way of invitation for participation by the EBC and that the EBC did in fact speak to the Committee, but the EBC did not get involved in any deep concern. They saw what concerned them.

The Member for Naparima, Madam Speaker, yesterday accused the EBC of taking positions under the Government's instructions and guidance. All the EBC said to the Parliament's Committee, Madam Speaker, not to the PNM, to the Joint

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Select Committee of the Parliament, is that the parish system in Tobago has no basis in law. Those of us who grew up in Tobago would know. I could tell you. The Anglican Church in Mason Hall is St. Peter's Adelphi. But these are church descriptions. The EBC pointed out to the Committee that you could not use a parish to determine what goes into the Assembly because, one, the parishes have no basis in law, and two, the population is not evenly distributed or distributed in any significant way by parish. You come to Tobago, the western parishes are full of people, the eastern parish is full of forest and less people. So the EBC pointed that out and they kept themselves out of the rest of the discussion, left to the politicians. So it was quite wrong for the Member for Naparima to come here yesterday and cast aspersion on the EBC in the attempt to undermine the work that the EBC has to do as we go forward. Madam Speaker, I rest that there for the moment.

There is another Member who spoke about borrowing and Tobago's abuse of the public purse. I wonder if his friends from the PDP heard that. Because one of the big arguments in Tobago from some people who are claiming to be rejecting this approach and these Bills, is that the Bills contain the provision for the Assembly, the Tobago Island Government to borrow, but in that borrowing it requires some element of oversight by the country's Minister of Finance. The law calls for that. But, his colleague here, an erstwhile political brother is saying, who is going to authorize these elements in Tobago to borrow and to bankrupt the country? And he gave reasons why because Tobago always abusing the public purse. The Auditor General Report speaks about something, every Government Department, Madam Speaker, having been in this Parliament for decades, I could find unfavourable comments about every Government Department including the

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Presidency, where the Auditor General find that in terms of management of public affairs, there is need tightening up or there is need for further accountability. But they holding that up and say Tobagonians must not be allowed to borrow. Well, we believe that Tobagonians are responsible people. And if they did not bankrupt Trinidad and Tobago when they were in government, Tobago will not bankrupt Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, many of them spoke about bringing proper legislation, and once we bring proper legislation they will support it. Madam Speaker, we know, if I could, if I was allowed to do it, I could speak about one of them who over and over tells the country at press conferences every two or three days that they will support nothing that the Government brings to the Parliament because they have some kind of grouse. Take an Oath of Office to look after the people's interest without fear or favour, malice or ill-will, but going out there and telling the media every Monday morning they will support nothing that the Government brings here and that is true, you know, Madam Speaker. Because you see—let me just for the record very quickly indicate, let me just run down very quickly, Madam Speaker, that this indication of a lack of support which I sincerely hope that they will change their mind on, this indication for a lack of support for these Bills is not about the Bill, it is not about Tobago, it is a continuation of the record.

Madam Speaker, the following Bills came to this House and the position of the UNC as the country's Opposition where these Bills are required to be put into law for the good, order and the interest and the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, would not support it: The Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Act; Tobago House of Assembly (Amdt.) Act which is in front of us now, the Appropriation Bill, 2021; the Finance Act, 2020; the miscellaneous provisions—

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Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, on a point, Standing Order 48(1).

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Why you “doh”—

Mr. Indarsingh: What is the relevance of what the Prime Minister is trying to bring to the House here this afternoon? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: If you did read the Bill you will understand. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, just in case there is anybody who does not understand what I am saying, I am saying that the expressions in here of lack of support for this particular Bill is not anything new and has anything to do with this Bill. [*Desk thumping*] It is their continuation of the Opposition’s stated position that come high water or Hell, they will not support anything the Government bring. We are bringing this Bill here as Government because we are the Government, I am leading it because I am the Prime Minister, but Tobago is waiting on all of us. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I continue: the Miscellaneous Provisions (Administration of Justice) Act, 2020; Supreme Court of Judicature; Coroners Act; Sexual Offences Act; FATF; the Proceeds of Crime Act; the Anti-Terrorism Act; the Income Tax Act; the Central Bank Act; the Companies Act; the Non-Profit Organisations Act, every one of them, Madam Speaker, they refused to support.

The Public Health (Amdt.) Act in a pandemic, Madam Speaker, the Opposition challenged these public regulations before the court to void the protection that we put in place in law as we are fighting COVID-19. Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act; Interception of Communications Act; the Evidence Act; the Anti-Gang Bill; the Bail (Amdt.) Bill; the Non-Profit Organisations Act; the Revenue Authority Bill; the Income Tax (Amdt.) Act, No.

18 of 2018; the Whistleblower Protection Bill.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on and on and, Madam Speaker, that is the record of our Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago at this time. So I make this point that we are only going to add to that long list of strange behaviour, the Tobago Island Government Bill and the amendment to the Constitution Bill and there are those who will want to accept it as if something wrong with the Bill. Madam, if all of these things were about these Acts, is not something wrong with all of these Acts, it has to be something wrong with those who will support none of these Acts.
[Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, the only thing that is in front of us is the expectation by our friends in Tobago that this Government and this Opposition and the people of Trinidad will do right by the people of Tobago and give them this responsibility to run that part of the country that can contribute so much more to its people, to our people, to our economy and to our national self-respect. Madam Speaker, my colleague from Pointe-a-Pierre got up here this morning. He is the Opposition Chief Whip. You would think that he would lead us into a place of some light. He made one point, Madam Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, one point worthy of note. And the point he made very pointedly, he wanted to know about the paternity of the Tobago Island Government Bill that is before us here today. He wanted to know where it came from. Why it was not laid in the Parliament? And he spoke in such a way that the uninitiated person would feel that he was making an accusation against the Government for doing something underhand.

Madam Speaker, how in Almighty's name could the Opposition Chief Whip come and make an issue, take up 20 minutes of Parliament time to question the

paternity of the Tobago Island Government Bill and imply that this Bill somehow surreptitiously found its way into this Parliament and we are being asked to vote upon it. Madam Speaker, in case he does not understand the Father, or the pedigree of that Bill, that Bill is the work of the Committee that gathered information from the whole nation for three years and determined that these things are to happen to and about Tobago, and to create an island government for the people of Tobago and you had to put it in a codified law in such a way that it can be passed into law in Tobago.

Madam Speaker, how many young ladies, some of them in school uniform want to use pepper spray? And the Government, I as Prime Minister said, yes, you will have it. But after that is said, you know what has to happen? We have to come to the Parliament—

Mr. Ratiram: Madam Speaker, I stand on Standing Order 48(1), please.

Madam Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I would like you to take note of these interruptions because I would like every minute of my time. Madam Speaker, I am giving you an example of the pepper spray issue which is so simple to everybody, but before pepper spray could be made available to any member of the public, it had to go through the creation of an amendment of the Firearms Act.

So, but the same way he could come today to ask where this Bill came from, when the Attorney General came in this House to amend the Firearms Act he could have said the same thing too, because it is an amendment to the Firearms Act that will proceed to give life to the intention of having people have pepper spray. But the Opposition Chief Whip come here to ask questioningly, “suggestingly” as to where this Island Government Bill came from. And, Madam Speaker, I must

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emphasize and reemphasize that the Opposition had three Members on the Committee. This Committee has been meeting since March 2018. And that brings me to the point, Madam Speaker, 95 per cent of what they repeated in this House, in this debate, in various forms and fashion, was about not enough consultation.

Madam Speaker, the consultation on this issue goes back to 1977. It resulted in the creation of a Tobago House of Assembly Act in 1980. Further consultations and conversations took place, it resulted in a new Act in 1996. Twenty-five years later after consultations in Tobago, between 2014 and 2017, greater consultations that took place more than when we were to be independent. When we were supposed to become independent and there was consultation in this country there was a conference, Madam Speaker, at the Queen's Hall—

Mr. Ratiram: Madam Speaker—

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—and from there, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this is getting ridiculous now.

Mr. Ratiram: Madam Speaker, I stand on Standing Order 55(b), “consultation”. All previous speakers have spoken—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: I am on my legs. I am on my legs. Member for Couva North, the Prime Minister may not have been in the Chamber, is replying, closing up in reply and therefore he is entitled to address everything. And also I just want to caution that while Members are entitled to stand up on a Standing Order, there is also something called abuse of the Standing Orders.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I hope that the new Members in Parliament would have learnt something from your intervention because they cannot be that every time I say something they “doh” like or if I am going to say something that he does not like that he jump up and interrupt the

debate.

Madam Speaker, I was saying that there was so much—the lack of support as identified by the Opposition has to do with not enough consultation. I was going down the route of the consultation that took place. By the time the consultation in Tobago which took place in virtually every village in Tobago, it was put into law in legal terms by eminent lawyers and that came to the Cabinet and the Cabinet had it forwarded to the Parliament. And we, this House, all of us agreed to have it adjudicated upon by a Joint Select Committee of the Houses; not just this House, this and the Senate. Members from this House and Members from the Senate, they were driven by the authority of this House to go out, conduct hearings, receive representation, receive memoranda and to come back and advise the Parliament by way of recommendations what should happen on this issue.

Madam Speaker, the Committee that is reporting today is not the same Committee that started out in 2018. There was a change of Government in 2020. There were people who left their position and had to be replaced, and, Madam Speaker, the work of the Committee, from one Committee to another, was saved by the intervention of this House so the Committees can flow one into the other until January of this year. It was January 24th, I think it was, and I want you to note the date eh, Madam Speaker.

Before that, the work of this Committee was mentioned in this House after the Committee was instituted in March 2018. Its work and its progress was mentioned in this House for continuation, Friday, September 2018; December 2018; the 3rd of May 2019; December 2109; July 2020 and January 21, 2021. In January 21, 2021, the Committee was closed to completion of its work and the Committee was authorized then to proceed to report by the end of May 2021. During that time, you

would have heard during the debate how many hours of consultation and who was consulted and where the consultation took place and what was represented to the Committee. But the bottom line is, the Committee was due to present its report, its final report by May 2021, having said so to the Parliament on the 21st of January.

Madam Speaker, I make this point in detail to disabuse all those who believe that this work of this Committee is in fact as a result of the 6:6 tie in Tobago. I heard it said by no less a person than my friend from Couva South who is now leading, he led the debate yesterday for the Opposition. Many others who say that and there are people outside saying it. Madam Speaker, on the 21st January there was no election in Tobago, the election took place after and all of us were surprised by the result of 6:6 and therefore it is not only disingenuous, it is just patently untrue or convenient to some to say that what is happening here now is anything but the ending of a long process. This process in this House started in March 2018 and it was due to end May 21st, when we expected a report—May 2021.

3.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker, it was on that basis when the results came in 6:6 that I as Prime Minister, I went to Tobago and I sat down with the 12 successful candidates and I said to them as Prime Minister of this country, I first told them, I said I am proud of all of you as young people in particular who would have come forward and taken responsibility for Tobago, but you have this political problem here now of 6:6. I pointed out to them that I would encourage them to find a way if they can, if they can, to work together in the intervening period because it appears as though we are going to have to go back to the polls. But having said that, I pointed out to them that in the Parliament was a joint select committee whose work was due to be

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ending in May, and in that Committee it would very well result in sometime soon after some election. So we were on a two-election situation.

I asked them to do the best with that information, either you find a way to work or go back to the polls then, or failing that you could end up going back to the polls. So what do you do? And I left them to work it out, and you know, Madam Speaker, the time has passed. We are now in July you could say and, of course, we are now faced with a report from the Committee, and whatever we do here, if we do anything at all, it will result in Tobago going to the polls. So it is not correct to say that this is as a result of the Prime Minister wanting to do something in the election for Tobago. To have said that seriously means that in 2018 when I brought it here I was looking around corner to see 6:6, and know that bringing it here three years before was for the elections. I might be good, but I am not that good.

Madam Speaker, it brings me to the point of—just for the parliamentary record, I heard one of my colleagues, I cannot remember which one of them, talking about they build hospital in Tobago. Let me just put that down on the record, you all stop saying that eh, because I personally paid a price for that hospital in Tobago. I was put through the wringer. The building of the hospital in Tobago, I was in the Government when you all came here in the Parliament and sought to destroy and damage me. I appeared before a number of commissions because you made allegations against me that were not true. So it was not your hospital that was being built.

It was a hospital being built—I will tell you more than that. It was I who invited the President of the IDB to come to Tobago and took him on that site, and he agreed with me and the IDB provided a loan to build that hospital. You were

nowhere in sight. Of course, by the time it was completed the Government had changed and you put your name on a stone as I could have done in Couva Hospital, but you put the stone there while it was being built. You opened Couva Hospital while it was a construction site, but, of course—so do not say you built the Tobago Hospital. I was the Minister of Planning and Development that initiated that. The construction took place there. The PNM Government awarded the last contract to outfit it. So you all for heaven's sake learn to speak the truth. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, our colleagues on the other side served on this Committee and I heard in the debate that in the last go around when the Committee met, the last Committee you extended, our colleagues sat in that Committee and had absolutely nothing to say. In Tobago we say they have pip, they cannot talk, something happen to their tongue. They just sat there and had nothing to say because they knew exactly what strategy they will pursue, do not commit themselves to anything. Look at this Bill, Madam Speaker. Look at all the clauses in this Bill to do all of these things: amendment to the Constitution giving Tobago the right to make law, giving Tobago access to funding, giving Tobago access to an extended Public Service Commission. They have absolutely nothing to say about any of the specific clauses.

They are so concerned about further consultation, but they could not tell you at all, Madam Speaker, what the further consultation would bring. Is it that we are going to consult further to determine that it does not matter what the Government says? We are going to put a hard boundary between Trinidad and Tobago, and once we do that we lose 4,000 square kilometers of ocean space out there and ocean floor resources out there? Well, let we tell you one time, consultation or no consultation there is nowhere the PNM is agreeing to that because that has to be

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madness. As an archipelagic state we start measuring our boundary from the north eastern corner of Tobago, and if you do not understand that go and ask the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

When you all were in your diapers the Member for Diego Martin North/East, myself, Lennox Ballah, Francis Charles and others, we were on a light table, that was before GPS where it is today. We had to use a light table to make sure that in our border between us and Venezuela, out in the Atlantic Ocean, we did not give away territory because your friends in the NAR did not know anything about that. [*Desk thumping*] Today, there is no difficulty between Trinidad and Tobago because we fought that fight and that is now behind us. Today, you are going to come and us to listen to people. People who have read nothing, are qualified in nothing, who know nothing, are going to tell us put a hard boundary between Trinidad and Tobago, make somebody in Mason Hall feel good, and the result of that, having done as an international action, we lose 4,000 square kilometers of—look, you all could not be serious.

Madam Speaker, I am not surprised that they would not have read anything about that, because, Madam Speaker, when the Parliament sent out this document to Members of the House as they sent all around Tobago and elsewhere, but worse I saw my colleague from St. Augustine saying, “No, they did not send it to us”. Because you know why she said that? Another one was here saying that they got this Friday evening. The usual suspect, my colleague from Naparima, was giving Tobago the story that this document that contains all of the Bill—the document is the Joint Select Committee Report—telling the Parliament and telling the Tobagonians that they cannot really debate it properly because they want more time because they only just got it.

Madam Speaker, these parliamentarians know that the average Tobagonian in the street will not know that this document was on the Parliament's website for them and the world since the 9th of June. [*Desk thumping*] From the night of the 9th of June, every Member of Parliament and the world had access to this document. But a Member of Parliament will come here and say that they just got it and they cannot read it, and a second one say, but I did not get it. I saw one who was sitting on that seat say, no, no, and actually handed the Member a copy and saying yes we got it. So they disown even getting it. So you know they did not read it, but they are advising Tobagonians to reject it. This is a classic dog and the bone arrangement, beyond belief, and that is why they do not have a single amendment proposed to the House.

Madam Speaker, we are talking here about a historic development for the people of Tobago, to give them that power to run the affairs of Tobago. The Opposition is saying they would not vote for it because they need for time and they do not understand it, but they do not have a single amendment to a single clause. [*Desk thumping*] And what is shocking is that there are Tobagonians following them in their foolishness because they figure they are doing the PNM something. All the arguments are rooted in the fact that they feel they are doing the PNM something. Madam Speaker, the only amendments we have in front of us are from two individuals who wrote a communiqué to the Parliament and I will come to that in a minute. But in the meantime, in telling you, Madam Speaker, that Tobago—hear it eh—Tobago does not want this Bill, and as a result of Tobago not wanting it, they are supporting Tobago by also rejecting it on behalf of Tobago and they named Tobago who opposing the Bill you know, Madam Speaker.

They named them, Brother B on Rise & Shine. I just want to tell the person

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who spoke here about Brother B, Couva South, that Brother B who he is in contact with all the time, say that the Prime Minister come to Tobago and talk down to him and to Tobago. I want to let you know that—Brother B, I want you to know that I am a proud Tobagonian whose neighbour in whom he is well proud and you are described as a confusion maker. Madam Speaker, Brother B, [*Desk thumping*] Hochoy Charles, Vanus James, Winford James, Stanley Baird, Farley Augustine, Deborah Moore-Miggins, they named these people as the Tobago not wanting the Bill, and I think it is good for me to say to Tobagonians, and to Trinidadians in particular, it is not only what is said. You need to know the value of what is said by first knowing who is saying it. Because, Madam Speaker, Hochoy Charles is a man who has made a tremendous contribution to Tobago, and Trinidad and Tobago, but there comes a time when your value could be diminished if you start talking things that do not make sense.

Madam Speaker, Hochoy Charles has to be recognized as the Leader of the Tobago Platform for Truth. He is a politician opposed to the PNM. So I am not surprised that he is not supporting what the PNM is advancing. Political difference you could call that. Madam Speaker, permit me to indicate that while my colleagues will not acknowledge the PNM as speaking for Tobago, and coming here and acknowledging and raising Hochoy Charles as speaking for Tobago, let me explain to you how the history goes in this. Under the THA Act of 1980 there were four elections—four. Hochoy Charles featured prominently in that period. There were 48 seats up for grabs during that period speaking for Tobago. The PNM won only seven of those seats during that time. The election result first went—first House of Assembly election, 8:4; next one, 11:1; 10:1. PNM had the one all the time.

Madam Speaker, oh the NAR. After we amended the Act in 1996, after we amended the Act, there were 84 seats up for grabs in seven elections. The PNM won 67 per cent of those seats including 12:nil in 2013. And yet my colleagues will come here and pretend that the PNM cannot and should not speak for Tobago, but Hochoy Charles could speak for Tobago. Madam Speaker, the last time Hochoy Charles is a leader in Tobago leading a political party, one called Platform for Truth, his 11 candidates got less than 1 per cent of the vote, and he himself running as a Member for Parliament for Tobago in a constituency he got 6 per cent of the votes.

Madam Speaker, Winford James, a political analyst, independent analyst, I know him. We were in school together, but we locked political horns in Tobago when he ran and lost his deposit. Well I am not sure if he lost his deposit because my friends do not really lose their deposits. He got 13 per cent of the votes. I think you need one-eighth or whatever it is, but he got 13 per cent of the votes. Today, you would never hear anybody who sees him as the go to independent man, acknowledged that he is in fact an opponent of the PNM in Tobago.

Madam Speaker, his brother Vanus James, Vanus James was on the platform of the PDP in January, but our colleagues come here and saying, Tobago do not want it, “Vanus doh not want it, Winford doh not want it, Hochoy doh not want it”. Deborah Moore-Miggins, calling her name in the Parliament as a Tobagonian who does not want it, and Christlyn Moore. These—Christlyn Moore was a UNC Senator. So all these voices who are parading through their mouths in the Parliament as Tobagonians who do not want it, yes there are Tobagonians and we are proud of all of them, but understand what they are worth, they are the political opponents of the PNM and they think this is a PNM thing so they are opposing it

on that basis and that basis alone. Madam Speaker, who in their right mind in Tobago wants to reject a new arrangement where land management, and deeding, and titling in Tobago is done by the Tobago Island Government. [*Desk thumping*] If you talk to them today, one of their biggest grouses, we have to go to Trinidad for everything.

What this Bill is doing is bringing that major thing to Scarborough so every piece of land in Tobago will fall on the authority of the Tobago Island Government. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, who in their right mind in Tobago will say that the current law says that you are entitled to a minimum of 4.03 per cent of the national budget and this law says, you will get 6.8 per cent, and you are saying no to that you prefer to take 4 per cent. What madness is this? What madness is this, Madam Speaker? Who is encouraging you to say you want a boundary between Trinidad and Tobago, and if Tobago fishermen go beyond the boundary what is going to happen to them? What nonsense! That is a demonstration of a total lack of understanding of your country. There is absolutely no boundary you could put between Trinidad and Tobago to prevent a Tobago fisherman or a Tobago fishing vessel from fishing in the Columbus Channel or throwing a net offshore in La Brea. Stop trying to misled people.

Madam Speaker, the section in the Constitution today as I speak to you which says, that a Minister is a Minister for Trinidad and Tobago, this law will make that fundamental change and retire a Minister as far as Tobago is concerned to all business except those areas that are returned as central government business like Immigration, national security. I do not have the whole day eh. Let me get to a main point here. So my friends— let me tell you all what this is all about in case you all do not know. We spent two days here. Let me tell you what this is all about.

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This is all about trying to pander to people in Tobago who believe that they are on the ascendancy for the control of Tobago. This lack of respect of the PNM in Tobago, and the PNM should have nothing to say and speak for Tobago. I passed through that already you know. During the 11:1 days, my friends were advising me, “Boy, yuh wasting your time with PNM. PNM dead in Tobago”, but I was there the night 12:nil. I was there.

Madam Speaker, let me read for you the Manifesto of the PDP, and the reason why I am doing that is because there is a communiqué sent to this Parliament signed by a fella who is called Farley Augustine whom my colleague from Couva South called him some other thing than other what he was christened as, and Hochoy Charles. They signed and sent a memorandum to this House on the morning of the debate. This document has been on the Parliament’s website since the 9th of June. It has been before the Parliament since 2018, but we got this and thankfully it contains some specifics unlike anything from my colleagues on the other side.

But, Madam Speaker, before I go the content of the document, I just identified Farley in that document as signing it, and he signs here as the political leader because the document says as political leaders living in and serving Tobago. So Farley Augustine identifies himself here as a political leader. To the best of my knowledge, Watson Duke is the political leader of the PDP, but Farley sends this to mislead the House here because he is out there parading as some leader of the PDP while the real leader is hiding. And the reason why the real leader is hiding is because the real leader has the manifesto of the party, but Farley somehow believes that he is a better sell so he writes the Parliament as political leader and signs with Hochoy Charles.

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Madam Speaker, permit me to read for you what was the manifesto of the PDP at the Magdalena Hotel before the last election, and this is Farley:

Because very soon we will cross into 2020 and Tobago has already gotten a vision 2020, and that vision is to get rid of the PNM as your representative in Trinidad, firstly, and secondly, to fight for internal self-government like no one else before.

And I want to take note of that last phrase:

Like no one else before.

Not like Winston Murray, not like ANR Robinson, not even like Hochoy Charles, not like the PNM, like no one else before. To the uninitiated you would not understand the importance of that phrase because what they want no one else before has asked for it. So after Farley came off the stage, on the stage comes the leader, Watson Duke. Listen to how they are now different to those who went before, and I am quoting here Watson Duke at the Magdalena Hotel, their manifesto performance.

Now let me explain to you what that means. It simply means that we don't want Trinidad judicial system. We don't want that.

In other words, Tobago through them, they are saying that they want a completely separate and independent judicial system from Trinidad.

Madam Speaker, I could now as head of this Government and head of the PNM, I have nothing to do with that and that is not the position of the PNM, and I know it is not the position of the people of Tobago. He goes on to say:

We must have our own judicial system.

Madam Speaker, who in Tobago is Watson Duke talking for with that? He goes on to say:

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We must our own High Court right here.

Madam Speaker, what they are saying is that they want their High Court system where they appoint their own judges, independent and separate and apart from the judges in the High Court in Trinidad and Tobago. He goes on to say:

We don't want to share no Immigration control with Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, if you are not sharing Immigration control are you not an independent country separate and apart from? So you could allow into Tobago whoever you want with your own Immigration entry and the people in Trinidad can say or do nothing about it because you are independent. He goes on to say:

We don't want no air traffic control with Trinidad.

Madam Speaker, as I speak to you today, Trinidad and Tobago does not only have air traffic control as air space around Trinidad. We control the air space all the way up, I think, probably up to Antigua. Our Civil Aviation Authority earns significant sums of money for managing that air space of the southern Caribbean. A political party in Tobago is saying they do not want to share air traffic control with Trinidad. Madam Speaker, we must control every bloody thing. And he goes on:

And if it was not clear to you let me tell you this. What I am asking for is secession.

I want to repeat that for all those who have ears to hear.

If it wasn't clear to you—and I am quoting Watson Duke here—let me tell you this. What I am asking for is secession. We need to move away from Trinidad, that we want independence from Trinidad. That is right. We must have our own Prime Minister in Tobago. We ain't want no Chief Secretary stupidity. Let them rock so with that.

That is the leader of the PDP and that is why he is absent in this battle, and Farley has to come and misrepresent himself to the Parliament pretending to be the leader because they cannot come and lead here. And, of course, Madam Speaker, this is why the UNC wants no part of this very progressive piece of legislation because they hope that it will fail, it will annoy some Tobagonians. The leadership that they mentioned here of those persons that they named in the Parliament will be in Tobago stirring up Tobagonians, creating hatred against the PNM, creating hatred against Trinidad, and enough Tobagonians will say they want independence, and Duke could lead them there and UNC would be right in front to give them the independence they need.

Madam Speaker, that is exactly what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today. And if Tobagonians do not see it, as somebody says here before, “doh” wait until night come to take boule-dife to go and look for this you know. Farley is a very disrespectful young man who is pretending to the Parliament, signing his name to the Parliament, pretending to be leader while Duke is waiting in the wings with this. Another one from my district in Mason Hall came on the TV and said, “We don’t want independence, we don’t want succession.” So you do not want his leader then? This is what his leader said. But while he is on Facebook telling people that they want succession, he is coming on the news and saying, “We don’t want succession”. Well I know that the vast majority of right-thinking Tobagonians want nothing to do with this. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, the 60 minutes have now been spent.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: If I may? Sorry. Given the importance of this matter and given the fact that I seceded my time in order for the Prime Minister to close and to make his contribution, I beg to move that the Prime Minister be given 60 more

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minutes to complete. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, immediately in—could I get your clarification, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, I see you are acting as Whip. I know you are a very senior Member and you know these sorts of procedural Motions are put without debate. Hon. Members, the question is that the Prime Minister be given an additional 60 minutes to complete his reply to the Motion?

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, before the Prime Minister, with your leave the Motion has prevailed, but at no point in time there was an agreement as it relates to this particular process. When the Motion was moved, Madam Speaker, there was an agreement on both sides—

Madam Speaker: Could you have a seat?

Mr. Indarsingh:—and the Leader of Government Business is being very—

Madam Speaker: Could you have—Member for Couva South, during this debate, this is the second—

Mr. Indarsingh: There was no agreement as it relates to wind up, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, I will ask you to get up and apologize. If you do not want to apologize, you could exercise another option so that I will not have to do what I have to do.

Mr. Indarsingh: Apologize for what, Madam Speaker? I am seeking—there was no agreement as it relates to this. There was no agreement as it relates to extension and the Leader of Government Business is very aware of this.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, I have asked you to apologize for

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your outburst. This is the second time during this debate that I am on my legs, you have me in view and you continue. So either you apologize or you exercise your option so that I would not have to do it.

Hon. Member: Madam Speaker, can I make an inter—

Madam Speaker: I do not recognize you. I do not recognize you and I do not want anybody assisting me.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, I apologize, but I am—

Madam Speaker: And that is it. That is it. I am prepared to take your apology. If you want to go on, as again I said, you have an option. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I trust—Madam Speaker, could I be advised as to how much time I have left?

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, the Motion was carried for you to have 60 more minutes. It is now 3.58.50.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Oh. I will try not to detain that long, Madam Speaker. But, Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the extension. Not everything in life is planned, and sometimes the unplanned is even as valuable. Madam Speaker, the—

Madam Speaker: Whip, how many people are in this House? Member for Naparima, could I ask you please to take your leave? Prime Minister.

4.00 p.m.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am not surprised at the reaction of some of my colleagues because you see facing facts could be difficult. But I want to go to the communiqué from which they quoted liberally. The communiqué that was sent to this Parliament—

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Mr. Lee: Madam Speaker, I just want to interject, there are nine Members on the Government Bench and they are allowed eight.

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House, please control your numbers, we know what the balance is.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was just saying that I want to spend a few minutes on the communiqué that was presented to the House by the two gentlemen who signed their names to it because the communiqué was liberally used by my colleagues on the other side who indicated that this represents some kind of summary of the objections to what the Bill did not contain and they identified those things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is happy to have that, because if there is anything which requires attention in the way we treat with amendments, this Government, and I dare say this House, is in a position to receive and to amend because this Bill, these reports coming from a Joint Select Committee which is in fact a working committee of the House, this final product will find itself hopefully before a committee of the whole House and could then amend any of the clauses in these Bills. I see my colleagues going home early. I am sorry that I have offended them by quoting the PDP manifesto. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we move on.

There are a number of items identified in the communiqué as things required by Tobago which the Bill failed to address. Let me go through them one by one. Number one, it says that they want an election of a Chief Secretary by the people of Tobago. Now, this is saying that the post of Chief Secretary, separate and apart from it being determined after the election by members of the elected House is saying that they want the Chief Secretary to be elected as a standalone position

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where you vote for a Chief Secretary on election day. I do not know that that is the sentiment of many Tobagonians. It certainly was not part of the discussion going forward, but we could always look at new ideas, and of course, this will require an amendment to clause 19 of the Bill before the House and, of course, 141F, “Appointment of Chief Secretary and Deputy Chief Secretary”. You will have to adjust that.

At one time in this country, there was a discussion about the Prime Minister’s post, or create a—it was called an Executive President. I think it was where you elect an Executive President and that person so elected will appoint people to positions other than the people who have been elected. So you will have the elected people holding accountable unelected people who will hold office. That is a proposal that was floated here at the national level, it is now floated at the Tobago level, but it is simply a proposal and I do not believe it has majority support or any support at all.

Of course, this Chief Secretary so elected, the communiqué from Hochoy Charles and Farley Augustine, they say the Chief Secretary must be empowered to select members of the Executive Council except the deputy and, from outside, other elected members of the Assembly. Now that is a proposal and this will require an amendment to clause 12 of 75B “Composition of the Tobago Executive Council”. I do not know that we want to do that at committee stage.

Two, second point they raised, that the powers of the Legislature to make laws and not by-laws. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is already in the Bill. I hear people saying that the new arrangement confines Tobago to making by-laws. Such persons have not read the Bills. They have not listened to the speakers who speak in favour of the Bill. They have not followed the consultations. And I am surprised

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that two people who signed their names as leaders could write to the House and say that the new arrangements do not allow the Tobago Island Government to make laws when in fact that is one of the major provisions. So it only confirms that they either read and did not understand what they read or they just simply parroting what the Opposition has said. Because we now know that the Opposition did not read the Bill because they do not have to, they had a position before. So that is in the Bill so they did not have to write to us to in the communiqué to tell us. That is in the Bill.

Item three, they want an Executive Council which would possess exclusive and administrative authority over the list of schedule matters which the Tobago Legislature has legislative powers over. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is already in the Bill, clause 12, 75A.

They want the establishment of a Tobago Service Commission. I take it to mean that what they are saying is that they want a completely separate service commission in Tobago to deal with a completely separate public service in Tobago. Because the Bill has provision for Tobago's public servants, whoever they might be at the time, to fall under a Tobago arm which we are now going to add to the Public Service Commission and that will satisfy the need for identifying Tobago's needs. But to say you want a separate public service and a separate Public Service Commission—

Let me speak for a minute to the young people in Tobago. It might be all well and good for Hochoy Charles and Farley to say this because Hochoy had given Tobago much of his good life. He is not as young as he used to be so maybe he has not focused on the future but all those bright people in Tobago, all those bright young women and men who are training themselves and looking forward to

a good career in Trinidad and Tobago, they are nationals of Trinidad and Tobago. Somebody is telling them to fight for and to convince the Parliament to cauterize them in Tobago and they will only have access to public service positions in Tobago. And from a sensible point of view, in a commission, you have to go and appoint a service commission now whose only function will be to function on these Tobagonians who are confined to Tobago. I am speaking here for Tobago young people. Any Tobagonian from Charlotteville to Mason Hall, from Canaan to Black Rock who sees any position in the nation of Trinidad and Tobago that they want to aspire to, they must be allowed to aspire and attain. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, it is Tobago that produced Attorney Generals, Prime Ministers, President, Central Bank Governor, doctors, lawyers, whatever you want and somebody “gonna come” and tell you now that you would change the law to confine Tobago to Tobagonians and only to this space? We do not agree. We heard you, we read it, we just do not agree because we want to preserve for the young people of Tobago a bright future in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, next point, not less than 8 per cent of the national budget. What is this magic figure of 8 per cent? All I will say to this is that unions go out and they ask for 100 per cent, they ask for 20 per cent, they ask for what per cent but at the end of the day, you settle at something which both sides could live with.

The people of Trinidad and the people of Tobago, we believe moving it—the Committee recommends to this House that you move the minimum allocation of the national budget for the service of Tobago from 4.03 per cent to 6.8 per cent. Significant movement, Madam Speaker, and it can be justified as to why it is so. I think previous speakers have done that quite eloquently. But of course, what are we being told? That if we do not get 8 per cent, nothing is good or to be salvaged

from this Bill? Is that what Tobagonians are being encouraged to say?

And of course, the communiqué says they want an ability to access donor funds. That is already in the Bill, clause 31. They want ability to impose taxes and grant concessions. That is already in clause 32, collection of taxes of the Tobago Island Government Bill, 2020. That is already in the Bill. Ability to raise loans on its own credit worthiness. Madam Speaker, that is already in the Bill. That is what the Member for Mayaro was “dissing” and chastising us for, for letting Tobago loose on borrowing. Revenue sharing mechanism. That is to be worked out, it is there in clause 43 of the Tobago Island Government. It is there. Jurisdiction of the Legislature and the Executive must be set out through a clear definition of Tobago. Madam Speaker, a definition of Tobago is provided in clause 5 of the Constitution (Amendment) (Tobago Self-Government) Bill, 2020.

I have heard one of their intellectual leaders saying that they want a definition of Tobago and a bill of rights. Let me just say that nothing here as being proposed, nothing, nothing, is to deny any Tobago child, boy or girl, man or woman, from anything that the nation of Trinidad and Tobago has to offer and every one of us is protected under Tobago and the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution and that is our bill of rights. Every one of us. We are not creating another separate population who have certain kind of rights in terms of bill of rights and the others do not have it. We are all going to be subject to the writ of habeas corpus and until it is changed, we are all going to be subjected to the Privy Council as our final court of appeal and we all are going to be subjected to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago because the nation of Trinidad and Tobago will always have a Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam—sorry.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a total breach of the

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Standing Orders of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second, one second.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I will have no part of it. We are in breach of the—
 [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an abuse of the Standing Order.

Mr. Al-Rawi: What is your point of order?

Mr. Indarsingh: This is an abuse of the Standing Orders by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Listen, one second.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We will have no part of this.

Hon. Member: “Yuh now wake up.”

Mr. Indarsingh: We will have no part of this abuse. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “Yuh now reach.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, if you are leaving, just leave quietly please.

Mr. Indarsingh: This is an abuse of the Parliament’s time. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Ms. Ameen: Total abuse.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members. Hello! Proceed, Mr. Prime Minister.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I was saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the request for a bill of rights for Tobago, the people of Tobago can be comforted that there is no requirement to establish a bill of rights for a people who are being liberated from your colonial master. You are already part of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago and you will continue to be a part of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, protected like every Trinidadian.

I also saw somewhere else in the basket of proposals, separate and apart from the communiqué, where it was being said as another point of view that the concept of equal status cannot be had in the current arrangement of a Parliament

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for Trinidad and Tobago. Many of the people who speak in opposition to these Bills speak about Trinidad as a separate place, a separate country and speak of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as the Government of Trinidad. I want to point out to them there is no country called Trinidad and there is no country called Tobago. There is a country called Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And therefore, whatever the Constitution provides for any person in Trinidad, it also provides to any person in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

So all these kinds of gobbledygook about separate this and you want separate that in the context of this matter about bill of rights and so on, just be careful to understand that we are one nation under God. One nation. While we make separate provisions for the people of Tobago to have autonomy in Tobago, that is done within the context that they remain irrevocably part of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

But of course, I have seen it is said that the Bill is deficient and that of course, that deficiency is identified that the Bill does not have a clause for secession. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Leader of this Government, I know of no such requirement because if ever in the future that situation develops where Tobagonians want to secede, there is nothing in the law that says that they will not be allowed to secede. So the corollary of not having something there to facilitate secession, the corollary to that is if you ever want to secede and of course, there are those who tell you the UN will assist you, the UN is always there and the treaty we have signed as a nation is that people anywhere in the world who require self-determination must be so allowed to proceed. So there is no need for that.

And, of course, in terms of the structure of the Government in Tobago, one of the main proposals that came from Tobago was that we should operate two

Parliaments: the House of Assembly and the People's House. I would not be so unkind as to say that that suggestion came from people who want to get in through a door into a house that does not now exist. But from a common sense standpoint, from an efficiency standpoint, we, in providing support for this Bill, see really no need to have a second Parliament in Tobago because the Assembly is really people. You elect people to go there. And who do they represent? They are representing people who voted for them to represent them. So this "People's House" concept might sound good but it gives the impression that the elected Assembly elected by people is not for the people. It might sound theoretically good, intellectually, intelligent and so on but the point is, do you really need that? We do not think so and the Committee did not recommend it.

And I am not speaking as a member of the Committee, Madam Speaker, I am speaking here as a Member of this House, this House, this Parliament that put a committee to work and the Committee worked with a lot of experts. A lot of experts. A lot of Tobagonians, Trinidadians, foreigners, UNDP. They worked and looked at the world, and of course, Madam Speaker, they came up with recommendations to the House that we should not do that. What we should do is to acknowledge that there could be benefit in having further involvement in the House. One, we expand the numbers in the House to 15 and you add to that 15, 10 elected people of which the majority party, or whoever it is, could elect five councillors, the minority party will appoint three councillors, that is eight and the President in his or her independent capacity will appoint two independent councillors in the Tobago House of Assembly, which very much mirrors the national Parliament. And that gives 10 plus 16, that is 26, because you have the 15 elected, the Presiding Officer and 10 others and that would be the Tobago Island

Government; that will be the Parliament in the Tobago.

Madam Speaker, if you look around the Commonwealth, you will see many examples of that. One thing you will not see, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, my apologies for addressing you as Madam. Mr. Deputy Speaker, please excuse me there. What you will not see is any secretary or a chief secretary heading any executive body in the Commonwealth. I am not aware of that. If it exists, I have to be advised but I think I have been around long enough and I have seen probably all that the Commonwealth has to offer in terms of its structures. I have been to a number of its parliamentary conferences around and training sessions and so on. I have never come across a secretary or a chief secretary and therefore, the term “Premier” is what is Commonwealth parliamentary. If you look through the Commonwealth, you will see Chief Ministers or premiers in similar situations where there are Heads of Government below a national Government or aside of a national Government.

So if you go to a Commonwealth parliamentary conference, as I expect the Tobago Island Government will go, and you say to somebody there that you are speaking or you are attending there as the Chief Secretary, virtually, nobody who does not know about Trinidad and Tobago will know what you are talking about. They will think you are carrying somebody’s brief case. They would not know that you are in fact the honourable head of the government of Tobago.

And that is why I am saying to Tobago, the same way we moved from Chairman in 1980 to Chief Secretary in 1996, I am recommending to Tobago that the Island Government of Tobago be led by a title of “Premier” [*Desk thumping*] and I look forward to the day when Tobago will sit as one of the members of the Commonwealth Governments when they meet as they meet every year or many

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more times and the people of Tobago will have a seat, their Government in Tobago will have a seat there. That is how the Commonwealth works.

A contrary view is that there should be a Senate of 30 people, 15 elected by the majority and 15 by the minority and if there is a deadlock, as there will be, the President will make the casting vote. Now that sounds good but what that means is that every session of that House, the President has to be on standby to go and cast his vote to break the deadlock. We have seen what the 6:6 can do but somebody is telling us that let us try “ah 15:15” with the President to break the deadlock. These are all kinds of proposals “we getting eh know” and these are the proposals that “they chump up” and “they churn up” in the media and make it look as if “Tobago doh want this, Tobago doh wah that and Tobago doh wah this and Tobago doh want that” and what they want. As fast as they offer what they want, we hear it, we see it, we treat with it respectfully but in more cases than one, it cannot stand scrutiny of a robust examination. Cannot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say that the people of Tobago have an opportunity here to support these measures. I am sure that these Bills will not satisfy everybody in Tobago or everybody in Trinidad but even the national Constitution is guilty of that. Are we prepared to say that our national Constitution has the approval of every single person in Trinidad and Tobago? I have a former colleague called Basdeo Panday who was a Prime Minister in this country and every time Basdeo Panday talks, when we are not talking about cricket or something else, he says the Constitution needs to be adjourn and every problem in the country, he says it is the Constitution.

We had mention of a service commission here. I personally will tell you that as a citizen of this country, those Service Commissions as part of our Constitution,

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there are hindrances to good order and good management of this country. So if the national Constitution has those kinds of sentiments coming for shortcomings that we have lived and still living with, why are we taking the position that if this Bill in the eyes of one or two people have what they perceive as shortcomings that we must throw the baby out with the bath water and mash up the bathroom? It is simple because there are people who believe that if this thing succeeds, it will not work for them personally.

I want to say to the UNC, they walked out today, but I trust that they will walk back in at some time. But I want to say to the UNC that they will come across better in the eyes of the public of Trinidad and Tobago if they do their duty and take a position of progress on these Bills. [*Desk thumping*] It is not for me to provide leadership for the UNC. I do that for the PNM. But where the country is concerned, the country needs to be better served. Because I can tell you that I have lived the period of 1980 to 1996, that 15-year period of the Tobago House of Assembly. It brought progress to the people of Tobago. It brought greater self-respect. It brought some more political maturity. But of course, there was a long way to go from then. It is now 25 years we have been dealing with the Tobago House of Assembly Act as it was amended in 1996.

We keep talking about greater accountability, better use of resources, diversification of the economy. This Bill provides for Tobagonians in a Tobago Government to establish in Tobago duty-free aspect of our economy that we can have in Tobago and compete with other areas in the Caribbean. Duty-free brings in foreign exchange. It makes you a destination of choice of persons in the cruise ship trade. It is largely a feature of the northern Caribbean. There is no real duty-free port in the southern Caribbean. Tobago could take that position. How many of you

have been to Saint Martin? How many of you have been to St. Thomas? If we do that in Tobago and market Tobago, that is diversification of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. And who could decide that but the Government of Tobago, the Island Government in Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I heard it said here today by one of my colleagues as they were fishing for things to say to object that the Bill does not create entrepreneurial skills for people and get them involved in business. Madam Speaker, the law does not do that. The law does not do that. The law makes opportunity for that to happen. And if Tobago is making its own law and governing Tobago in a particular way, they could create those opportunities for the many Tobagonians who have an inclination or an aptitude for these things and you will see the growth and the progress of Tobago, and every step Tobago makes forward, it is a step that Trinidad and Tobago makes forward. This is not only about the people of Tobago. It might be said it is for the people of Tobago but it is really for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, as a Tobagonian, my navel string buried in Mason Hall. You do not know how proud I felt when I saw the national Olympics team leaving Trinidad and Tobago and a large contingent were Tobago young people who got themselves qualified to go to the Olympics as part of the national team of Trinidad and Tobago and many of them got there and some of them won medals. That is the kind of nation we want to build, Madam Speaker. So what is this rejection story and this perfection that you are looking for? Whose life in this country is perfect? So because “yuh life is not perfect, yuh go and cut yuh throat or go and hang yuhself?” Or do you look forward to make every day better than the day before? I say to the people of Tobago stop allowing people who have their own axe to

grind, to tell you which wood to chop.

4.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker, they talk about the PNM? Today I speak to the people of Tobago as the proud leader of the People's National Movement, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I mentioned earlier on how the conversation goes. In 1976, when the streets in Tobago were alive and well, "We doh want no Tobago Ministry for Tobago Affairs". "We doh want dat. We doh want dat. We doh want dat." We agree. And I lived, thank God, to see the UNC appoint a Member of their Cabinet as Minister for Tobago Development, the same Minister for Tobago they did not want from the PNM. When the UNC appointed Delmon Baker as Minister for Tobago Development, there was not a word against that from the same people who wanted no part of the Minister for Tobago Affairs. And the only thing that Delmon Baker went down in history for was somebody, some fella, interfering with his nipple in Federation Park.

You understand what I am talking about? It was inconvenient. It was hostility. Tobago Affairs Ministry abandoned and for Tobago people being paid by each Ministry, it must have caused problems. Well, "dey blame" Eric Williams for that. But Eric Williams has left here since 1981. It is now 2021. And we are not about names.

You know, I so know the sentiment in Tobago. As Prime Minister, I have an office in Tobago. I hardly go there. I am in touch with the office on a regular basis because the Member of Parliament for Tobago East, when I appointed that Minister, that Minister was appointed in the Office of the Prime Minister to keep me abreast of what is happening in Tobago, because the Prime Minister going to Tobago to an office, "if I go dey once, they watch meh". "Ah go dey twice, dey

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watch meh good. Ah go dey three times, dey watch meh cokey eye. Ah go dey four times, yuh running Tobago from Trinidad. I know, yuh know.” I ran for election in Tobago in 1981, Madam Speaker, and friends of mine who I played cricket with, “who I do all kinda thing with”, said, “Boy, yuh in Trinidad, yuh not Tobagonian”. “Yuh living in Trinidad.” And they went and voted for James Ogiste. But I could tell people, that is best election that I have ever taken part in, in 1981. I lost by 364 votes. Right? But my friends were telling me the PNM was dead in Tobago. No chance for the PNM in Tobago, Madam Speaker. But I know my people. I knew that.

When others came to them in 2013 and sprayed Tobago yellow in money, \$60 million worth, Tobagonians went out in droves and they voted PNM in, in every seat. And for those who raised in this debate that this is about elections in Tobago, and so on; PNM’s position about elections is very clear. Since 1956 to now, we have fought every election in every seat in this country—[*Desk thumping*]*]*—and we take the results that the people give us. Madam Speaker, that has not changed and it will not change.

But on this occasion, Madam Speaker, there is more than an election involved. In fact, there is no election involved. We need to end this matter after seven years. One of our colleagues here spoke about the arrogance of members of the PNM in the committee. So they want the Committee to meet for another three years. Who says that the Members will be any less arrogant? So, what? As they get older, they get less arrogant? Because as far as you are concerned, if they do not agree with you, they are arrogant. Now, Madam Speaker, they cannot take that seriously. That was simply making up time. They were given half an hour to talk, an hour to talk, and so on, and so on. And therefore—

Well, look, Madam Speaker, I do not want to comment on what happened here today, because that is the Chair. But I am saying, look at how other things have gone, to know how this thing will go. I have every confidence that the same way Tobagonians progressed and benefitted from Act in 1980, to Act in 1996, Tobagonians have demonstrated an ability to make full use of improvements offered to them. And that is why I want Tobagonians to accept this, support it, and expect that the Opposition will support it.

If the Opposition does not support it, I have said so to Tobago, expect that it would not go anywhere. It will not go anywhere because it requires their support. Because it is so far-reaching that it requires the Constitution to be amended. And our 22 seats in this House cannot amend the Constitution. So those who can facilitate the amending of the Constitution ought not to be given a pass for any reason other than they do not want this to happen. Because if they provide the support, this will happen for the benefit of all of us.

Madam Speaker, I do not want to detain you any longer. Permit me to end on this note. I never thought that I would be doing that. But let me do so. Let me end on the note as presented to all of us, you and the rest of the House, especially our colleagues on the other side. There is a letter that was written and published on May 28th. That letter was written by Ramona Ramdial. Ramona Ramdial, for all times, the record will show, was a Member of this House. She was a Minister of Government when Tobago was a part of that Government. The Tobago MPs were a part of that Government. Then, in the Opposition she was a Member of this Joint Select Committee, not the last one here, the one before. But she worked on this matter. She worked with this committee. She worked in this committee.

And as these Bills came to the House in conclusion and she saw and heard

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her colleagues and their performance and their behaviour, and while she was in the Opposition, she was the Tobago shadow Minister. The same person who came here now in that green outfit, who did not come here for the whole debate, came here to disturb the Parliament most uncouthly, she appointed Ramona Ramdial as the shadow Minister for Tobago, for the Opposition period, and what happened then, 2015 to 2020? Ramona Ramdial spoke from these Benches for that five-year period about Tobago, Tobago, Tobago, and she was in touch with Tobago. And hear what she says to her colleagues, Madam Speaker, and I am not going to read the whole thing. I am going to read only two paragraphs about self-government for Tobago. She says:

“Based on my experience and the...process these Bills underwent...a very intense and good job was done by the Parliament in considering every aspect of self-government without losing the fundamentals of the unitary state that is...”—Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, that is Ramona Ramdial, a Member of Parliament of this House, who served in a Cabinet of a Government that was not the PNM. She served as the Opposition shadow Tobago Minister and as a committee member on this matter. She went on to end her text by saying:

“Critics may say the timing is not right, but regardless of the reasons, the Bills are before the Parliament now and if we keep waiting for the right time, Tobago Self-Government may never happen. Too much work has gone into getting these Bills right with the issues involved spanning several administrations. It is in the interest of all Trinbagonians that these Bills become law. If for some reason they fail, the motives of those who would have been responsible for scuttling them would definitely invite further

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intense interrogation.”

Madam Speaker, those are the words of a member of the group that just walked out of this House, a member of the party that is withholding its support, and Madam Speaker, no clearer words could have been spoken to the people of Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I rest my case and I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Having moved, I expect that—

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, I am just giving you an opportunity to put on your mask and to leave the speaking booth.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Oh, I thought you were waiting for a further contribution.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House adopt the Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Constitution (Amdt.) (Tobago Self-Government) Bill, 2020.

CONSTITUTION (AMDT.) (TOBAGO SELF-GOVERNMENT)

BILL, 2021

Order for second reading read.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 66(4), I beg to move:

That a Bill to amend the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to accord self-government to Tobago and for related matters, be forthwith read a second time.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: We can start.

Madam Chairman: All right. So can we take the block and, so like, 1 to 4—?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, Ma'am.

Clauses 1 to 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, I would like at this stage to report that significant progress, and that we report back to the House and return at the wishes of the Leader of Government Business.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to report that the House did meet in committee and we have made some progress without amendments and I hereby seek your leave to resume in committee tomorrow at the appropriate time as moved by the Leader of Government Business.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do adjourn to Wednesday, the 30th day of June, 2021, at 10.30 a.m. At that time we will continue in committee. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is that 10.00 or 10.30, please?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: 10.30, Madam Speaker.

Adjournment

2021.06.29

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.57 p.m.