

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, September 18, 2026*

The House met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from Mr. Marvin Gonzales, MP, Member for Arouca/Lopinot, and Mr. Colm Imbert, MP, Member for Diego Martin North/East, who have requested leave of absence from today's Sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS BILL, 2026*Order for second reading read.*

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie SC): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move:

That a Bill to provide for the establishment of policing districts, the conduct of special operations to combat criminality in those districts and related matters, be now read a second time.

This Government, as promised, has kept its focus, Madam Deputy Speaker, firmly fixed on the horrific danger to public order and to our citizens posed by the networks of criminal gangs that have been allowed to flourish for a decade in Trinidad and Tobago.

We took office after a year of the bloody carnage that saw 626 persons slaughtered in calendar year 2024, and after three consecutive years, beginning in 2022, saw murder rates approaching, 606 in 2022, 580 in 2023, and culminating in 626 in 2024.

A chastened band of the degenerates, in defeat, declared themselves a state

of emergency on Old Year's Night 2024. The next day, the Acting Attorney General said to the media—and this was reported in the *Newsday*, and I quote:

“Young said the SoE was declared owing to intelligence from the police that there would be”—and I quote—“increased and heightened brazen acts of criminal activity with the use of illegal firearms that is going to endanger public safety through reprisal attacks.””

That was said, Madam Deputy Speaker, on 30th or 31st of December, 2024. We know this because it is recorded for all time in the *Newsday*.

Hours after that statement was made by the then Minister—not the Minister of National Security or the Attorney General, and not the Prime Minister, who was photographed, glass in hand, at a social in Tobago—a state prosecutor in gang-related killings, in the employ of my office, was slaughtered on Old Year's Night in Sydenham Avenue, Cascade. He was leaving church with his family after delivering a sermon on the goodness of God when, with clinical precision and obvious meticulous planning—it did not happen just so—a black SUV and a Nissan B15 ambushed his family. A mere 10 feet from the family's vehicle, the gang members, the murderers, jumped out and shot him in the chest seven times centre mass. That was the response of the gangs then in 2024. Their immediate answer to the declaration of their State of Emergency was to do precisely what they themselves said they were attempting to avoid by the declaration.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that one incident, one example—it is but one example of the terror that we escaped as a country; a glimpse of what might have been today had they not been removed from office in 2025.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: This morning I can report to the House and to the country that the individual who is alleged to have commandeered that hit has been

a resident of Tetron since last year, cut off from communication with his network and unable to exhibit the level of contempt for the rest of us that kept those opposite timid, silent and unmoved

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: The security temperature in the country has improved. The figures show it and the statistics do not lie. A moment of pause is not, however, the time for self-congratulations. The Prime Minister, on Wednesday, spoke to the urgent need to continue our task. The Government has not become complacent or lost sight of the need to curtail its war against the gangs, and also to protect and to promote the rule of law on public order.

The Special Operations Bill, 2026, which is before the House today, contains measures that are designed to target the gangs and criminals, not law-abiding citizens.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: The Prime Minister said on Wednesday, and I quote.

“When gangs impose illegal curfews, extort businesses, recruit children and drive families from their homes...”—they—“...attempt to replace the authority of the State with the authority of the criminal gun.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, we on this side will never tolerate that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: The purpose of the Bill before us is to restore public order through new and enhanced security measures, to make law enforcement more responsive to communities where serious crimes are widespread. The end result is to protect the society against serious criminals and to promote a safer country for us all, and consequently, respect for the rule of law.

The Prime Minister in Wednesday's Sitting was at pains to explain that no family should be driven from its home, no geographic location should be surrendered to gangs and that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the defining purpose of our Government. Across Trinidad and Tobago, citizens have lived for a decade in fear of stepping outside their homes in crime hot spots, sometimes even fearful of crossing a street.

Our regional and international reputation for crime and homicide have suffered. A report by CNN, upon the announcement of their SOE in 2024, stated that, and I quote:

“Trinidad and Tobago, population 1.5 million, already has one of the highest murder rates in the Caribbean, along with Jamaica and Haiti, according to the US Government Accountability Office (GAO), while violent deaths in the region are nearly three times the global average.”

Right across the Gulf of Paria, in neighbouring Venezuela, which has been plagued by political unrest and economic crisis for decades, a country of over 28 million, the homicide rate is estimated at one-half that of Trinidad and Tobago. In Trinidad and Tobago, a country of under 1.6 million people, not under invasion, not involved in any conventional definition of war, perhaps since World War II, there was, as I said, a report of 626 murders in 2024, a murder rate twice that of our colleagues in Venezuela.

When one takes into account that we had, at the end of 2024, surpassed the murder rates of countries that are actively engaged in, or which continue to grapple with the after-effects of international conflicts, literal wars and invasions by other countries, one is reminded of the following statement, which I have used in this House before: Peace is not the mere absence of war. Because what we are experiencing here would not be defined, Madam Deputy Speaker, using any

parameters or indicators as peace. True peace brings with it the freedom to fully enjoy life, to raise families and to earn a living without the constant fear of some devastating and traumatic crime befalling oneself or one's family.

When we contemplate living under conditions of peace, we think of children walking to and from schools, or to playgrounds, parents confident that they will return home safely, and we think of women going about their business happily, concerned only about the affairs at hand, without the weight of the risk of being raped, kidnapped, harassed and murdered. With office comes responsibility, and the Government will discharge its responsibility to all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Before 2025, the country experienced a decade of drift, a Minister of National Security, for the most part, who slept practically during every Sitting of this Parliament and said, along with his Prime Minister, that crime was none of his business, an erosion in the quality of life and a diminishing faith in the system of the criminal justice system, highlighted by the assassination of the state prosecutor, and the contempt and impunity with which the gangs operated.

10.45 a.m.

As Government, we accept that we bear a constitutional duty to ensure that citizens feel safe at all times. We do not shirk from that responsibility. We embrace it as a part of the trust imposed in us by the people. It is unquestionable that crime is a complex and multilayered issue. Its solutions must match its complexity. The attainment of peace in conditions of the terror and turmoil that we inherited does not come by waving a magic wand. It does not come overnight, nor can a problem over a decade in the making be solved within 16 months, the 60

weeks that we have been here. This Bill is designed to help the armed forces and the police in crime enforcement while maintaining safety for the entire citizenry.

The Prime Minister in Wednesday's Sitting of the House said, that the proposed legislation will establish policing districts and provide a permanent legal framework for targeted operations against violent crime, gang activity and serious illegal activity. At the onset, I should put on record that unlike the Zones of Special Operations Bill, the Bill that we debate today can be passed by a simple majority. We have examined the constitutionality of the proposed legislative measures, and we consider that the interest of the population in peace and order, trumps the relevant individual rights that might possibly be infringed by the proposed measures.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: One fundamental difference between the two Bills is that clause 4 of the Special Operations Bill, provides for the creation of policing districts as seen in the Schedule to the Bill. These policing districts are to be fixed and certain and can be so designated for any amount of time. It remains the case that any part of this island and Tobago is within reach by the protective forces.

I turn now to the provisions of the Bill in greater detail. Part I of the Bill, clauses 1 to 3, deal with the preliminary matters such as the short title, the proclamation and interpretation provisions. I should like to draw Members' attention to the definitions of "closed area", "cordoned district" and "weapon". Under section 2 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, Chap. 12:07:

"weapon includes a firearm and explosive..."

Part II of the Bill, that is clause 4, deals with the establishment of seven policing districts in Trinidad and Tobago as set out in the Schedule. Trinidad would be divided into six districts comprising one or more municipalities under the

Municipal Corporations Act, Chap. 25:04. Tobago is a single district and that is the seventh.

Part III of the Bill speaks to clauses 5 to 10, that provides for the administration of special operations. Clause 5 of the Bill provides that the Commission must appoint a senior police officer of the rank of Superintendent or higher to lead special operations in a district. That appointment is subject to veto by the Prime Minister. Before raising an objection, the Prime Minister is required to consult three specific officials: The Minister of Homeland Security, the Minister responsible for defence and the Chief of Defence Staff.

In clause 7 of the Bill, there are outlined provisions for the appointment and role of the Head of Military Assistance in each district. The Chief of Defence Staff must appoint a defence force member of the rank of Major or higher to the role, subject again to a veto by the Prime Minister. Again, before objecting, the Prime Minister must consult the Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Police Commissioner. Each Head of Military Assistance manages the military personnel assigned by the Chief of Defence Staff to support special operations in that district.

In clause 8, there is an established reporting guidelines and an accountability framework for special operations and military assistance. The Head of Special Operations and Head of Military Assistance must submit monthly reports to their respective chiefs, Commissioner or Chief of Defence Staff within seven days after each month ends. The Commissioner or Chief of Defence Staff must forward those reports to the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence within three days of receipt. The content of the reports is determined by the Prime Minister following consultation with the Minister. The Prime Minister must submit an annual combined report on these operations to Parliament within three months of the end of each year.

Clause 9 mandates that the Commissioner and CDS should establish joint collaboration protocols and specific standard operating procedures for special operations and military assistance. In clause 10, the Head of Special Operations in a district is authorized to conduct special operations in that district with or without the assistance of the defence force. That clause grants participating personnel the full powers, rights, duties and responsibilities of Constables under the Police Service Act.

Clauses 11 to 23, that is Part IV, form the heart of the Bill. Clause 11 outlines the parameters for declaring and enforcing a closed area to combat serious crime. An:

“...order subject to negative resolution of the House of Representatives...”—would—“declare...”—a closed area—“within a district...”—if—“public safety and peace...”—are—“threatened...”

(a) by—

- (i) escalating...violent crime...or gang-related activity...
- (ii) the prevalence of illegal firearms...ammunition, or...other weapons or explosives...or
- (iii) the control or intimidation...of a local community by a gang...”

And—it is conjunctive—if:

“...ordinary law enforcement measures...”—are insufficient—“to...restore public safety and peace in that area.

(2) Within seven days of the making of an Order...the President...”—must—“deliver...”—a statement—“to the Speaker...”—detailing the—“grounds...”—for—“the decision...”

The Order can be revoked by the President or annulled by a resolution of the House at any time. The relevant Head of Special Operations is empowered to

enforce the closed area using barriers, roadblocks or other security measures.

Clauses 12 to 14 speak to the use of cordons and curfews within a closed area, to regulate movement into and out of a closed area by establishing a mandatory permit system. So, general access or egress from a closed area is strictly prohibited without a valid permit. Clause 13 provides how security cordons are established and managed within a declared area. Clause 14 gives the President the power:

“...by Order subject to negative resolution of the House...”—to institute—“a curfew...within...”—a closed area.

The Order may require residents within a closed area to remain indoors during designated hours unless they obtain a permit. Again, that Order can be annulled by the House or revoked by the President at any time.

Clause 15 grants police officers specialized search and seizure powers within a declared closed area while establishing specific procedural safeguards. It allows:

“...a police officer...”—to—“search any place, vehicle or person...without a warrant...”—based on—“reasonable suspicion...”—of—“an offence...being committed...—previously committed...”—“or...about to be committed.

Officers may seize vehicles, articles or documents deemed useful for preventing disorder or of substantial value to a criminal investigation.

Clause 16 provides for ancillary matters, the storage, retention and return process for property seized during special operations. Clause 17 contains procedural rights, judicial oversight for the arrests—which governs the arrest and detention of individuals during special operations inside or fleeing from a closed area. Clause 18 creates an offence for threatening, assaulting, obstructing or hindering a police officer:

“...member of the Defence Force, or any other person, who is performing a function or exercising powers under this Act...”

Clause 19 establishes a safety mechanism, an escalation procedure for persons held in custody without a court order during special operations. If a person remains detained for 36 hours without a magistrate issuing a remand order to transition them to High Court judge, a mandatory reporting protocol is triggered. The officer in charge of the police station must immediately notify a senior officer at or above the rank of an assistant superintendent and officially log this notification in the station diary. Upon being notified, the prescribed officer is required to investigate the detention circumstances and ensure the persons are brought before a magistrate immediately.

Clause 20 establishes strict guidelines for the treatment, welfare and monitoring of persons arrested or detained during special operations. Detainees would be allowed to receive necessary food, clothing and wellness items. However, any items that could endanger the safety of the detainee, officers or others are strictly prohibited. If a detainee appears to be ill or requires medical attention, the supervising officer must ensure they receive prompt medical care immediately regardless of whether the detainee complains of illness.

Clause 21 mandates and regulates the use of body-worn cameras as far as possible.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: And based on available resources by police officers and defence force members during special operations in closed areas. Clause 22 requires that all:

“Weapons, including the ballistic signatures and ammunition assigned to police officers and members of the Defence Force involved in the special operations...”—must—“be registered with the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic

Science Centre...”—before—“the conduct of special operations...”—in—“a closed area.”

11.00 a.m.

Part V of the Bill, that is clauses 24 to 26, deals with miscellaneous provisions such as applications for permits, the making of regulations and, importantly, we are putting a sunset clause of two years.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Madam Deputy Speaker, I turn finally to address the constitutional issues that would obviously arise in relation to this Bill.

The constitutionality of the Bill, we say, is based on the balance that it strikes between the enhanced security powers granted to the services and the protection of fundamental rights and the rule of law. It allows for temporary security measures, cordons and curfews, to be established or declared in closed areas, but there is a large measure of oversight. While the Bill gives security forces special powers, and warrantless searches under specific circumstances, it is designed to be a limited and temporary measure, and it is distinct from a state of emergency. It does not grant powers equivalent to a state of emergency.

We have examined the constitutionality of limited states of emergency in Jamaica and in Belize. In this regard, we have looked at the cases of *Everton Douglas & Others vs The Minister of National* and the decision last week of the Court of Appeal in Belize, *Jahreem Staine et al. v. The Attorney General of Belize*. In both of those cases, the courts held that the declaration of consecutive states of emergency to treat with crime as a normal crime-fighting tool was unconstitutional.

In the Jamaica case, the court held that the Government had breached the principle of separation of powers by issuing consecutive states of emergency in

late 2022. Now, this is important. The Government in Jamaica did that without seeking parliamentary approval for extensions beyond 14 days, as provided for in the Constitution. We have done exactly that in this jurisdiction. We have come to this Parliament to seek extensions as required by law. The court found in the Jamaica case that that failure allowed their Executive branch unlawfully to usurp a power reserved for Parliament, thus making the declarations void.

In the case from Belize, the Court of Appeal struck down the declaration of the state of emergency for reasons which are not on point with ours. In any event, what is before us today is not a state of emergency; it is a piece of legislation. This piece of legislation is in force in both Jamaica and in St. Lucia and in both of those countries, the legislation has not been challenged and has not been ruled to be unconstitutional.

Now, we accept that the Bill might interfere with:

“a. the right of the individual to...liberty... and to the enjoyment of property...”

—section 4(a) of the Republican Constitution;

“c. the right of the individual to respect for his private and family life”

—section 4(c) of the Republican Constitution;

“9. the freedom of movement;”

—section 4(g) of the Republican Constitution.

Our view is that any such infringement is reasonable and proportionate in light of the cases of Suraj and Suratt. In Suratt, as my friends opposite want to highlight, the Privy Council upheld the constitutionality of the COVID-19 regulations, and they went on to provide a definitive ruling on the interpretation of section 13 and the special majority requirement. In doing so, the Privy Council affirmed its earlier position in Suratt. If you look at paragraph 58 of Suratt,

Baroness Hale opined there that not every piece of legislation that infringes a fundamental right set out in sections 4 and 5, such as the ones that I have elaborated on, which requires a special majority, as long as it pursued a legitimate aim and was proportionate. The Privy Council held that the rights set out in sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution are not absolute and are subject to an inherent limitation, which is a proportionality test, so that where legislation infringes a fundamental right, its constitutionality will be upheld once it satisfies that proportionality test.

However, the Privy Council explained that where legislation infringes fundamental rights and they are enacted by a simple majority, as we shall do today, the threshold for justifying the limitation is higher on the State. On the other hand, where legislation is passed with a special majority under section 13, the court will afford greater deference to the balance struck by Parliament between the restriction of an individual's fundamental rights and the interests of the whole community. Importantly, the Privy Council also acknowledged that judges are not equipped to make certain decisions which are better suited to be made by elected officials who act under the advice of technocrats and experts or based on data and evidence.

This Bill contains numerous safeguards to ensure that it is both reasonable and proportionate. I will highlight some of them. In clause 5(4), there is provision for the training of police officers and members of the Defence Force who are to operate in a district. In clause 8, there is an in-depth system of accountability and reporting. In clause 9, there are protocols and procedures which are established and must be followed by the CoP and CDS to guide the conduct of special operations and the provision of military assistance. There is parliamentary oversight provided for in clause 11. There is an ability to acquire permits in spite of the cordons and curfews, clauses 12 and 13. And, there are limitations and

protections afforded to citizens during searches and seizures if you look at clause 15(2). Of course, there is judicial scrutiny for the arrest or the detention of persons in a closed area. And, in clause 21, there is provision for the use of body-worn cameras during the conduct of a special operation in a closed area.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at the heart of this Bill is our resolve to maintain a safe country for all of our citizens.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: The hon. Prime Minister emphasized at Wednesday's Sitting that this legislation was about the rights of the people who have borne the burden of violent crime: grieving parents, families terrorized in their homes, businesses facing extortion and young persons threatened by gangs. The Government intends to deal with those problems.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: And the Government will accept its responsibility to deal frontally with the gangs which are in our midst.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: We on this side accept that meaningful, lasting change takes time, it takes effort, it takes diligence, and it requires resolve. If we, as a Government, as a people, as a nation, can again recognize how valuable, how precious each life is, we will see that the prize at the end, which is peace, lives and families spared grieving, progress, mental and emotional well-being, all are worth the effort that we are putting in.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: We agree with the words spoken by a political leader 60 years ago, that no problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable, and we

believe that we can do it again. We will build a nation of peace where the weak are safe and the strong are just.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House, and I anticipate the support of each Member opposite.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: I beg to move.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Keith Scotland SC (*Port of Spain South*): Madam Deputy Speaker, that has to be—this has to be the worst Government that has ever—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: I heard the hon. Attorney General—and they parrot this. It is not true to say that the gangs flourished for 10 years under the People's National Movement. The history of this Parliament will reveal that in 2017, when the People's National Movement Government brought the anti-gang legislation in March, it was not supported, and it was after pressure from the population that, in 2018, the Opposition came around and supported the anti-gang legislation. That is the history.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: That is the history. It is not true to say that this Opposition has not supported the Government when it brought legislation that we say was good for Trinidad and Tobago, but this legislation is not good for Trinidad and Tobago, and I will spend my time not name-calling and bussing mark, but explaining to Trinidad and Tobago the foundation where we say this is not good

for Trinidad and Tobago.

11.15 a.m.

They speak of constitutionality. Let me quote from the Grundnorm. Section 14(1) of the Constitution says:

“For the removal of doubts it is hereby declared that if any person alleges that any of the provisions of this Chapter has been, is being, or is likely to be contravened in relation to him, then without prejudice to any other action with respect to the same matter which is lawfully available, that person may apply to the High Court for redress...”

The “is being” is very important because it is mouthed that this sort of temporary nature of certain parts of the provision makes it proportionate. That cannot be true.

“...has been, is being, or is likely to be contravened...”

—means something and must mean something. So that is where we put our stall to say that this Bill is unconstitutional and the fact that they have not adhered to section 13 and put the contravention of sections 4 and 5 in the recital, does not render it constitutional, you know. All it means is they have taken it out, but we will show—and we do not want to spend much time on that because that would be decided elsewhere.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: But what we want to do is to alert the population, and today we speak to the population of Trinidad and Tobago about what we say is a runaway tyrannical government that cannot rule in normal circumstances because these are the facts again.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as of today, the UNC has been in office for approximately 530 days. For those days, 491 of those days, nearly four of every five days, this country had been governed under a state of emergency.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: What have they done? They have used these expansive powers, locked up persons and then, at the end of the day, had to release them, had to release most of them. And here is the most—the unkindest cut of all, up to now we cannot get proper statistics to show how many were charged, how many were detained and how many were prosecuted. The hon. Member for Tunapuna gave us one figure 204; the hon Prime Minister released—and that was what, 4.1 per cent? The hon Prime Minister released a report, under the advice of the hon Attorney General, 61 per cent. Which one is it? How can we rely—if we want to support you, how can we rely on your statistics when they are at loggerheads with each other?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Let me deal with proportionality and Suratt and Suraj is not a cure-all, you know.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Suratt dealt with access to the court for a specific issue. This is not access to the court. This legislation is a sprawling assault on several rights of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. This is not an isolated issue. Suraj was a COVID-19 situation, and unless the hon. Attorney General wants to agree with the former Prime Minister, Keith Rowley, that crime is a mental health issue, a public health issue as Covid. Maybe you want to agree with us now.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Say so, Attorney General, say so. But unless it is there, we say that the Government here already has measures unlike COVID-19. They have the Offences Against the Person Act. They have the Anti-Gang Act, they have the Firearms Act. There are already things in place for this Government to deal with

the same situation that the hon. Attorney General said that this legislation is attempting to cure.

It is then our submission that incompetence should not be a placebo, and it should not be a panacea for unconstitutionality. Use what you have and see if it yields results. But to come time, after time, after time to trample on the rights of the citizen is plainly wrong.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is not merely excessive legislation. It is legislation and a legislative machinery of a runaway and increasingly tyrannical executive. An executive which invokes fear to enlarge its powers, fear. There will be a bazooka coming this way. You will have another—Randall Hector was a friend. We attempted to introduce legislation at a time in the SOE, at a time when there were things happening outside of police stations. And mind you, but for that timely intervention, blood would have flowed in the streets of Trinidad and Tobago. God bless the PNM.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: They would not say that. They would not say that. What this Executive has done is to invoke fear to weaken constitutional safeguards. It is founded upon a dangerous proposition that public anxiety—it is fueled by the public anxiety against crime, and if we do not use this, crime will happen. No, you cannot use and enlarge coercive powers whilst diminishing safeguards by which the powers are restrained. What the Government presents here as decisive action in substance is legal architecture capable of converting entire communities into places where liberty is no longer a right, but a privilege exercised by official permission. Trinidad and Tobago, be careful.

They have now, in the Schedule to the Bill, introduced Part V, “Policing

Districts”. So, throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and I am not seeing Tobago in the House as yet, there are seven policing districts. What happened to St. George East, West, Naparima and Mayaro? You are turning this country into a police state.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: We say turn back from that. So, you now designate seven districts. No longer St. George East, St. George West, Naparima, Mayaro; into policing districts, governed by guess who? Police officers. Trinidad and Tobago do not have any beef with any senior police officers, you know. Be careful, we know this country’s implementation is something that is mechanical every single day. Are you going to place those powers in the hands of police officers in four entire police districts?

Parliament is having its second encounter with these measures. The original ZOSO Bill, we know the fate of that and at least the hon. Attorney General had the gravitas to say we need 19 in the Senate. They are now saying technically, well, the rights will be infringed, but it is proportionate. So we are going with, on advice, I suppose, that sections 4 and 5 rights are not being infringed. We preferred the quasi-upfront approach in the first Bill as opposed to now.

The Government has returned having not relinquished extraordinary powers but having removed the constitutional acknowledgement which previously accompanied the Bill. We say that the removal of it in non-compliance with section 13 does not render the Bill constitutional. That was the point we made because—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC:—the special majority is required because the essential powers remain and here are the specific powers:

That to impose curfews...that to cordon off areas...that to have restrictions

upon movement...warrantless searches...seizure of property and detention without charge...

These are all section 4 rights that are being curtailed.

Most importantly, did you ever consider the value of property that will be affected by this piece of legislation? Who will buy property in areas that are designated a zone? They devalue the property. There is no proportionality argument that could withstand a challenge when we say that the property—follow it, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have your property in one of the districts, yes. It is there, it is going along; it is value X. They come now and they designate this area a zone. What happens to property there? It is devalued automatically. That is a constitutional infringement under the right of property and there is no amount of proportionality argument that can withstand the seals of that.

So let there be no ambiguity about our position. We say we support the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago. We support intelligence-lead operations and the interdiction of firearms and the dismantling of criminal organizations. What we do not support, however, is the dismantling piece by piece, of our fundamental rights and the way of life in Trinidad and Tobago. We are not supporting that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Every citizen's entitlement is to live free. Free from fear and there is a narrow question before this House. Parliament is being invited to enact exceptional legal architecture which the Executive may seal a community, regulate ingress and egress, regulate how you move in, how you move out, how you rush in, how you rush out.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Yes, to regulate that. Authorize warrantless searches, seize

property and detain persons without charge with the assistance of the defence force for periods which the Bill fails adequately to circum— They have not told us how long this would last for. That is the knitty-gritty of the Bill, you know. And you know what is very pernicious about this Bill? They have little slogans, you know. They understand their algorithms. So they say ZOSO. This is “not no ZOSO, you know”, this is important. This is “no-no”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: “You know, ZOSO sounding nice, ent? Sounding nice coming out dey mouth. And people sit down in dey house you say ZOSOZO.” This ZOSO is pressure. Pressure for communities, pressure for old people. Pressure for people who just happen to live in a locale which has a stigma, and what struck me most about this Bill is that I woke up to the papers—not with respect to the mandatory bodycams, which has now been watered down as far as possible and depending on resources and checking on the hon. Member for Fyzabad. But I am told that they are now gathering the data to see which areas will be allocated this nomenclature. One would think that before this was printed on the ink, that that data would have been gathered so they could go to Her Excellency with the data. They have put the cart before the horse. Do you know why? Because they cannot govern without exceptional powers.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: That is it. That is it, Trinidad and Tobago. They cannot govern and most importantly, and the hon. Member Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly will deal with this, they have removed all the social safeguards. All the social safeguards, I think, were under section—clause 25 or 21 of the old Bill where they had all these committees. What about the social interventions, hon. Attorney General? You do not care about poor people?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: “So yuh just lock dem down, yuh lock dem down” without, hon. Attorney General—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: “You lock dem down without, without”—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC:—without, hold on. You lock them down, and at least in the last Bill you condescended, hon. Attorney General, to these social interventions. Where are the social interventions in this Bill? I have perused it, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope you have, and unless I missed it, and sometimes I must say I do, it is bereft. It is gone. So, lock them up, cordon them off without any consideration for social ramifications. Come on, come on, do better than that. Do better than that in Trinidad and Tobago.

11.30 a.m.

These provisions engage the liberty, privacy, property, freedom of movement and the inherent dignity of the citizen. “Is like yuh in jail, but yuh not in jail”. We were told law-abiding citizens have no fear. They have fear. Because what the cordons are—do you know what the actual effect of the cordons would be? “Go there now. Stay here. You cannot leave here now. You need permission to move.” That is like you are in jail. What crime have these law-abiding citizens committed to deserve this piece of legislation? Trinidad and Tobago, wake up, man. Wake up.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: The real enquiry is whether these powers are demonstrably necessary, constitutionally permissible, proportionate in their incidence, and independently supervised sufficiently to ensure that vulnerable communities are

not reduced by geography alone to enclaves of diminished citizenship. In other words, “Because you live there, you are less than a human being. We zone off your area.” I represent areas that others may think fall into that category. We will defend that with our lives on this side.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: There are decent citizens from Low Place, from Sea Lots, from Mango Rose, from St. James, who want to go to work every day uninhibited. They want to see their children go to school and be on time without having to apply for this, apply for that. They want, in the evening, for their children—and they do it safely now, you know. Listen, we—knock on wood—are getting along well in Sea Lots and our areas, John John—tonight I go end a netball competition. We just finished the Icon Cup. Tonight, I go to John John. Midnight, we are ending the netball competition. And next week Thursday, Kareem, I see you down at Beetham.

Hon. Members: “Kareem not here”.

Mr. K. Scotland SC: He is here. He is here. He is here. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the point I am making to you is this: The emergency powers that are being utilized here, the Executive cannot establish it by any means that are objective.

I now go to the issue of emergency powers in substance without emergency safeguards.

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Madam Deputy Speaker, I really would like to engage you without interruption. I now address you on the issue of emergency powers in substance without emergency safeguards. And let me go to certain clauses of this Bill. Part IV of this Bill permits an area to be declared a closed area where public

safety and peace are threatened, and ordinary law enforcement measures are said to be insufficient. Once that declaration is made, residents may require permission to enter or leave their own community. A cordon may be erected. A curfew may be imposed. Homes, vehicles and persons may be searched without a warrant.

Clause 4 is a dangerous clause. Property may be seized, persons may be arrested or detained under clause 17(6) and kept without charge for a further period specified by a High Court judge, with no maximum period stated in the Bill. Call it a closed area, a special operation or a policing district, the legal effect matters more than the label. And the legal effect for citizens living inside those boundaries resembles a geographically targeted emergency powers regime. Yet, the constitutional safeguards that ordinarily accompany emergency powers are absent. There is no equivalent requirement for a formal state of emergency, no carefully limited initial duration for each closed declaration, no affirmative parliamentary approval within a short period, no structured renewal process requiring fresh evidence. What it is, it is a state of emergency inside a community. A rose by a rose—a rose by any other name is? It is still a rose.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: A SOE by any other name is? It is still an SOE. And the hon. Attorney General is very wise. That is why he used the Belize case that deals with SOEs, you know, and the Jamaican case, because he knows that there are siblings in the SOE and this so-called pernicious Bill.

Clause 26 says that the:

“...Act...”—itself will—“...continue for...two years...”

That does not impose a short duration on any individual closed area declared. On the face of clause 11, a community may remain closed until the President revokes the Order, or the House annuls it, or the Act expires.

Worse, clause 11(4) prevents motions to annul from being:

“...brought within three months of each other.”

Parliament should be strengthening scrutiny, not rationing it. That is what it seems that this clause is doing. A statement of reasons may be delivered to the Speaker up to seven days after the Order is made. This means that the restriction can begin before Parliament and affected communities receive the specific grounds. A government majority operating through negative resolution is not a substitute for independent scrutiny or affirmative approval.

Let us move now to what I call the “constitutional infirmity”. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Constitution does not reduce these guarantees to the status of administrative inconveniences or conveniences, you know. Section 4 recognizes, amongst other things:

“...the right to life,”—the right to—“liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property...except by due process...

...equality before the law and the protection of the law;

...respect for...private property and family life;

...equality of treatment from...”—public authorities.

And:

“(g) freedom of movement;”

Section 5 protects citizens against arbitrary detention and/or imprisonment, and preserves your right to be informed promptly of the reason for your arrest.

This Bill directly engages these protections. There is a chasm. There is an erosion, literally, of these rights, and it has been admitted. What they are saying is when it is proportionate. So, these liberties are in consonance with a legitimate purpose, and therefore, proportionate. We say, no.

Look at clauses 12 and 14. They restrict movements through permits, cordons and

curfews. Clauses 15 and 16 authorize warrantless searches and seizures. Clauses 17 to 20 affect personal liberty, access to counsel, medical treatment and the detention without charge. Clause 23 compels disclosure of identity and creates a criminal offence for non-compliance. The Bill contains no express declaration that is to have effect notwithstanding sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution. Madam Deputy Speaker, we say that the exclusion of the homage to section 13 does not render this Bill constitutional, and that is the point I want to make relative to this. We are of the opinion that this Bill presents a profound equality of treatment concern. Formal neutrality in statutory language does not preclude discriminatory incidents in operations. The communities most likely to be declared closed areas are likely to be challenged communities, densely populated and already under intensive policing.

Hon. Member: Challenged?

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Yes, challenged communities because throughout the world, there are communities in every country which face challenges.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: And only a fool will not recognize that. The communities, these communities, some of them, we represent them to this side. The Bill has no objective designation matrix; no published equality assessment; no requirement to consider the effect on children, on mothers, on fathers, on grandparents, and what about the psyche of these persons? What about the psyche of these persons?

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill has far-reaching consequences, but they simply do not care. What they do is they corral us with flaccidity without any prophylactic intervention. That is what they do. That is what they do in Trinidad and Tobago. Wake up, and do not take that. Say no to that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Say no to the phrases, “Everybody wins.” Who is winning now? The communities that will be cordoned off? The 5,400 persons who were held without charge under the PDOs and just released and told, “Go your way. Go on in peace”? Who, Madam Deputy Speaker, is winning now? We say, what about persons with disabilities? What about workers and small business owners who have no mechanisms to guard against discriminatory treatment? Equality before the law is not satisfied because merely a person is caught and living within a certain parameter. It requires fair objective and it requires hard work to run a country as plural and as difficult as Trinidad and Tobago. But it does not require consistent use of extraordinary powers. That is indolence at its highest.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: I go now to closed areas, permits and curfews liberty by administration. Madam Deputy Speaker, clauses 12, 13 and 14 are not minor administrative details. It determines whether a person may go to work, take a child to school, attend a medical appointment, care for their relative, obtain food, meet your attorney, practise your religion or leave an unsafe domestic situation. What happens in the middle of the night when something occurs in a house and somebody needs to flee? You have to get an intervention and a permit before you die?

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill automatically exempts senior public officials and operational personnel, but it does not itself guarantee workable exemptions for doctors, nurses and ambulance personnel. A permit may also be suspended or cancelled. This Bill does not require prior notice. It does not require reasons, or an opportunity to respond, or an urgent appeal before this egregious imposition is placed on people.

The Government must account for the people, those who do not have Internet

access, data plans, identification documents, literacy support or transport. A constitutional freedom cannot be reduced to an administrative indulgence. It is not a favour—yes, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Your original speaking time has ended. Do you require your 15 minutes?

Mr. K. Scotland SC: My full 15 minutes, please, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Sure.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: And for clarity, what time do I end?

Madam Deputy Speaker: You end at 11.59 a.m.

Mr. K. Scotland SC: What time?

Madam Deputy Speaker: 11.59a.m.

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Search, seizures, arrest and detentions: Clause 15 permits the police officer to search any place or vehicle without a warrant on reasonable suspicion that an offence is being committed. Reasonable suspicion operates as a safeguard only where it is anchored objectively. The Bill does not require the grounds to be recorded before; it does not, or immediately after the search. It does not require a copy of those grounds to be provided to the occupier. It does not require special rules for intimate searches; searches of children, digital devices, medical records or even journalistic material.

11.45 a.m.

The seizure power is also too broad. An item may be seized, and what are the means of recovery?

Madam Deputy Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago, wake up. Clause 17 is still more troubling. It says that a person shall not be arrested or detained unless the

Head of Special Operations is satisfied that reasonable grounds exist. How is this satisfaction communicated to the arresting officer? Must it be recorded in the station diary in accordance with section 19 of the police standing orders? Must it be recorded in the station diary book so that we can review it upon any challenge? Where is it recorded? The Bill says that the detained person must be brought before a magistrate immediately or as soon as is reasonably practicable. But clause 19 contemplates a person remaining in custody for 36 hours without a magistrate's Order. That is why, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I started this contribution, I said:

For the removal of doubt, it is hereby declared that if any person alleges that any provision of this Constitution has been, is being, or is likely to be contravened.

What happens within those 36 hours? Are the constitutional rights of that detained individual suspended? Or are they removed altogether? Most significantly, clause 17(6) allows a High Court judge to order further detention without criminal charge for a specified period of time. Where is it reasonably required in the interest of justice for this to be so indeterminate? Is this proportionate? Does it cross the mustard of proportionality? The Bill states no outer limit. No escalating evidential test. The longer you are detained, the greater the evidential burden. No express right to legal representation at the hearing, no disclosure standard under *Ferguson*. No express right, we say, to have an immediate challenge. The Protean expression, the interest of justice, is far too indeterminate.

Clause 20 says an attorney visit may occur during times determined by a prescribed officer and subject to security or safety. I suspect that the judgment of Justice Mohammed that came out three days ago will be instrumental and may very well affect this. We say that this is not the same as expressly preserving the

constitutional right to retain an attorney. So, these are not *Suratt and Suraj* rights. These are expanded infringements of people's constitutional rights. Legal access should not be drafted as a discretionary visit, particularly when you are detained and you do not know why you are being detained. You have no idea when you will be released. At least that should have been mandatory.

What about the body cam issue? How does—skilfully attempted, how do you escape a bold, unequivocal pronouncement that body cameras were and are mandatory under this Act? How? When the truth is, when the truth is, Madam Deputy Speaker, here is what it says—the Government will point out that clause 21 says that body cameras are there to protect the public and police officers. Yes? That is important. However, this is what the Bill says, a police officer or member of the defence force shall:

“...as far as”—is—“possible having regard to”—the—“available resources...use”—a—“body-worn”—camera—“during”—the conduct of a—“special operation in closed areas.”

Trinidad and Tobago, let me repeat this. You put mandatory—let us do a comparator. Mandatory means it must be done. Yes? It says a police officer or the defence force shall, “as far as possible...”—what does that do? It waters down mandatory. And they did not even say the higher standard, you know, as far as reasonably practicable, as far as possible and having regard to available resources. So, all they have to say is—

Hon. Member: They have none.

Mr. K. Scotland SC: —they have none.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: They have none. And listen, or the battery it expired.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the point I am making—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: Here is the point that I am making. It was untrue to say that—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC:—body cameras were and are mandatory. It simply is not true. That is it. This is not merely an Opposition interpretation. This is the operative words:

“...as far as possible having regard to available resources...”

—creates an exculpatory formula in advance for every absent recording. And why would someone of the gravitas of the hon. Prime Minister try to mislead the population like that to say that it is mandatory when clearly the legislation says it is not. It is not. So, the Bill specifies several agencies that may access the recordings but does not state clearly the right to access in a timely manner.

So even if it is worn, subject to available resources, as far as is possible, you still cannot access it just so. This is a creation of something too murky to be allowed and to be supported. The military assistance in civilian policing and the chain of command, the defence force may provide assistance, and we say that that is something that has happened before. Joint protocols and standard operating procedures are not an adequate answer if the public cannot see them. Before the commencement, the core rules governing the identity, command and use of force, arrest support, searches and roadblocks must be established, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I go now to the issue of accountability deferred. Clause 8 sends monthly reports upwards to the executive while Parliament receives an annual report within three months at the end of every calendar year. That leaves Parliament learning about issues one year after. What is the effect of that? The Act should require public quarterly reporting with the necessary operational

redactions at a minimum. You thought that if they were trying to gain our support in this Act, they would do away with the negative resolution and come to Parliament before. That was not done. You know why? Because they just take us for fools. What about the human consequences? Human and civic consequences? We must look beyond the language, and we must identify daily life in Trinidad and Tobago.

A closed area contains homes, groceries, schools, pharmacies, places of worship and businesses. Workers may lose wages because a permit is delayed. Children may miss examinations, and patients may miss dialysis. This Bill contains no statutory duty to maintain access to food, water, medicine, emergency services, legal services or essential work. There is no compensation framework in this Bill. Public confidence is something that is just being eroded. The Opposition is not merely identifying the effects for the sake of doing so. We stand in the gap. And we say there are other mechanisms in place for this Government to govern the country to combat crime.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: The hon. Attorney General spoke for 45 minutes. Up to now, we have not had the statistics. How many gang members were arrested and charged under the SOE? It is a question I asked. Madam Deputy Speaker, I shuddered to ask it as either an urgent question or a question in writing, so I ask it now. Maybe I will get an answer in the debate. How many gang members were charged during the SOE? The minimum architecture of lawful measures requires that the Opposition stands in the gap. We say that there is no guarantee of essential services and emergency access. We say that we thought they would have come with at least written, reviewable grounds for searches. None of that has happened. There are no safeguards, there are no safeguards. And really, body cameras ought

to have been made mandatory, but it is certainly not in this Bill.

In dealing with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, we say that the people of Trinidad and Tobago must not be presented with fear, where we feel that we are living with a knee upon our neck. We are under pressure from this Government, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are under pressure from this Government. Effective policing and fidelity to fundamental rights are ideals that we aspire to. Law enforcement ought to be strengthened and not weakened. And in this Bill, what they are trying to do is to weaken law enforcement and just put seven zones, police in areas and say, "Go lock them down."

The Constitution assumes its greatest importance precisely when public fears make expediency attractive. This is when the Constitution and constitutional rights and morals ought to be upheld. It guarantees these rights, and it exists so that liberty of even the unpopular person, the impoverished community and the citizens residing in an area afflicted by crime does not depend upon the grace or the discretion of the Government of the day. The Constitution protects and does not diminish because of a person's geographical address. That is what this Bill seeks to do.

The Bill asks Parliament to authorize restrictions of the highest order whilst leaving out critical limits to executive discretion. Madam Deputy Speaker, for the Opposition, we say if there is good legislation we will support. But we say no to tyranny.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: We say no to unconstitutionality.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: We say no to hubris.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Scotland SC: And we say no to ZOSO.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Toco/Sangre Grande.

Hon. Members: Ahhh! [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

The Minister of Defence (Hon. Wayne Struge): Madam Deputy Speaker, let me begin where the Member for Port of Spain South ended. He claimed that they are saying no to tyranny, yet he comes into this House—this is not a courtroom where you have to defend criminals, but he is saying no to tyranny and comes into this House to defend the rights of the tyrants, the criminals.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: He comes into this House to defend the rights of those who have been terrorising the majority of our law-abiding citizens.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: So, if he really wants to say no to tyranny, he will support a Bill that is designed to end the tyranny of the criminal class.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: Let me go next to his penultimate point.

Mr. Alexander: Which one was that?

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. W. Sturge: The one where he said twice—he had to repeat himself for emphasis: “There are no safeguards, there are no safeguards.”

12.00 p.m.

Hon. W. Sturge: Because the Bill is replete with safeguards.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: He immediately went to clause 5 and sought to undermine the appointment of Heads of Special Operations, and so on. Madam Deputy Speaker, we are not appointing a lowly constable, like they did with the Interception of

Communications Act—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge:—to interfere with people's rights. We are choosing persons not below the rank of Superintendent to be the head of operations. And you know why we choose someone of that rank? Because this is a person who has passed through the rigours, the fires, and who would not have gotten there, had he been a nefarious character, had he lacked integrity, had he been rogue. So we choose the officers who have demonstrated competence and who have demonstrated integrity. That in itself is a safeguard.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: And this Head of Special Operations, not just him, the officers chosen, the officers assigned to carry out the functions with him, he and these officers, not just ordinary police officers, these officers must be trained in human rights, the use of force, community engagement, and conflict de-escalation. What the Bill does is to ensure that we choose specialist officers who have specialist training and experience, so that they can de-escalate, so that they can properly communicate with the community, so that they are trained in the use of force so that there are no indiscriminate shootings and so on. They know when to shoot, if to shoot, and they are trained in human rights. If we have gone this distance to ensure that these persons are trained, is that not in itself a safeguard?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: And in addition, the officers, they have to pass what is stated in the Act to be the fit and proper test. So they must be officers who are fit and proper, not just any officer. Fit and proper means that they are officers of integrity, obviously vetted, and so on. That is the fit and proper test. That is a safeguard.

Where there is recourse, because you do not always have to have military

assistance, but where military assistance is required, the person to be designated by the Chief of Defence Staff must be an officer not below the rank of Major. Officers of that rank and up are officers who are trained, highly trained. They are not just officers with three or four passes and whose job it is to exercise military might. And there is room for objection if need be. That is a safeguard. These officers, Major, and so on, also have to pass the fit and proper test; also have to be trained in human rights, use of force, conflict de-escalation.

Let me give another safeguard. And, you know the thing is, the Member for Port of Spain South skirted through the Bill, cherry picked—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge:—cherry picked and—listen, is a report to Parliament not accountability? Is that not a safeguard?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: And this is not simply a Standing Order or anything like that. The Act itself makes it mandatory that reports have to be generated, reports of these operations, within seven days of the end of each month, forwarded to the Commissioner of Police and CDS, and so on, who would forward it to the PM and the relevant Ministers, the Ministers of Homeland Security and Defence, within three days of receiving it. There are mechanisms for failure to comply. There is disciplinary action mandated in the Act. Is that not a safeguard to ensure compliance?

The laying of the annual report in Parliament—“yuh know, if we had put three months, yuh know what dey would say? Dey want the report every month. If we did put once a month we bringing the report in Parliament, dey go say we want it every week. If we did put once a week, dey go say we want it every day.”

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: And the short point is, no matter what we do, they would find a reason. Let me tell you why. Their crime plan was “who dead, dead”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: They did not care that their own supporters—

Mr. Alexander: They still do not.

Hon. W. Sturge:—and they still do not—in their own communities were killing each other. They did not care that in their own communities, one street, as I said before, Belleau Road, “cyah go” to the street parallel Serraneau Road. They did not care. I heard a point being made that, what about the shopkeepers in the area? They cannot leave the area. But who do they sell to, not persons in the area? So then how are they really affected?

But let me tell you how they benefit. Because what he did not say, and as a criminal practitioner he must know, is that these same shopkeepers, the reality is, they have to pay tax to the bandit.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: So we are going into the community. We are not ceding authority to the bandit. We are going into the community to ensure that the shopkeeper is able to make his sales and his profits without having to pay tax to the bandit.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: Let me go through some more safeguards. The establishment of joint protocols and standard operating procedures. And you know, the thing is, I looked at the entire Act, and this is just one instance, almost every power in this Act is subject to judicial review, judicial oversight of one sort or another. You can bring challenges if you think it is contrary to section 14 and 13, it does not meet the steps in section 13. The very joint protocols and standard operating procedures

there are mandated in the Act, disciplinary action for those who fail to comply. Step by step, we are doing what it takes. You did nothing, you did nothing for 10-plus years. But now you are coming and objecting, trying to get in the way of those who are doing something.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: You know, the Member for Port-of-Spain South made a point and it made me realize he really did not read this Act. He was saying—

Ms. Mohit: “Watch, Kareem now reach. Kareem now reach eh.”

Hon. W. Sturge: “Oh, Kareem now reach by the way.” His ghost was here before. I did not ask why we were being lied to and gaslighted. Tobago was here from the start, he just stepped out to use the john. “Kareem playing netball at midnight?” Okay. All right.

You know, let us move on to the declaration. The very declaration by the President, that in itself is subject to judicial review. Is it not? Is it not? Silence. And you know, the last time we were here, I cannot remember if it was in this House or in the Senate, we had inserted into all these places, the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister had power to do this, that and the other. You know what they all said? “We doh want the Prime Minister, bring the President. Now we bring the President, they have a problem.” And it is your President.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: So your back is taken care of. The gospel of the PNM will be taken into account when the declaration is made.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, the thing is, the Presidential Declaration is not made in isolation. It is not made in isolation. So, when you are reading for the benefit of the public looking on, you need to not give them part of

the picture, you need to give them the whole picture. So the President, in making this declaration, it is not arbitrary. The President makes the declaration if she is satisfied on reasonable grounds that public safety and peace in the closed area is threatened. So it is not simply that she feels to make a declaration and she makes a declaration. She has to be satisfied. And she is yours.

So it might take a lot for us to satisfy her. But she has to be satisfied. She has to be satisfied that public safety and peace in the area are threatened by escalated rates of violent crime. She has to be satisfied that public safety and peace are threatened by homicides, shootings, kidnappings, gang-related activity, serious crimes, you know. So it is not simply that it is crime. It is crime of a certain type, where it is escalating in a certain community.

Just like happened in Caledonia a week or two ago when “every day a body dropping. How much drop? Four? But dey telling yuh, yuh know what, why the President doh send the statement to Parliament for we to debate it before she issue her declaration?” So whilst we come to debate, bodies dropping and dropping and dropping. You know what? They would like that. You know why? Because misery loves company.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: They failed and therefore they want us to fail. But not so. We will succeed. We are winners. You are losers.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: The President makes the declaration. Another thing, she has to be satisfied that unreasonable grounds and public safety and peace in the area are threatened, if there is a prevalence of illegal firearms in the area. Guns kill people. Or if there is control or intimidation or attempted control or intimidation in that community by a gang.

So it is not simply that she has to be satisfied that it has high crime. She has to be satisfied of certain things that are listed in the Act. If we put such a high threshold, is that not a safeguard? Silence on the other side. “Poor thing. Poor thing. You talk yuh talk. Ah coming for you just now.”

The second worst Minister of National Security in this country’s history; second only to “Fitzherbert Ethel Dread Hinds”. The worst murders in this country we have seen on the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: Because he could not be bothered. Because those persons in Westmoorings, they were not in harm’s way. They could not be bothered. Once they could recuse themselves, make money, send two million on a plane abroad in the dead of night, and so on, they could not be bothered.

12.15 p.m.

He did not care, and then he shows up all of a sudden, every week in Belmont, making a video, shaking hands, “and is de same people over and over, eh”, simply so he could undermine the true Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: The time frame set out in the Bill under clause 11(2) where the grounds have to be set out to Parliament and so on. The power of revocation by the President, if her gospel is not being observed, that power of revocation by the President is a safeguard. So, I do not know what Port of Spain South was talking about when he said there were no safeguards. He gives the impression that the permits and so on, that somehow that would frustrate people and so on. Listen, that it would curtail freedom of movement. I see he has run off from the licks. But is freedom of movement of the law-abiding in these closed areas, the movement not already curtailed? Are they not self-imposed curfews?

He is saying, “Well, de police cud come and seize yuh property”. “De bandits in dat area, de gang leaders, dey not seizing people property?” Most home invasions—if you go right in Grande—“wey yuh feel the invaders coming from”? Right in Bois Bande, “dey coming from not too far in northeastern settlement”. “Poor people robbing poor people.” So, poor people, bandits in one area, seizing the property of the law-abiding in another area. But Port of Spain South is coming to complain about the State seizing property.

Let me tell you what the difference is. In this Bill, when property is seized, you could go before a magistrate. You could make an application to get it back. Before it is seized, it has to be based on reasonable grounds. The owner has to be present. The person in control has to be present. There is a limitation to what could be seized and whatever is seized, the owner, the agent, can make an application to the court. But before it is seized, it must be on reasonable grounds. Anybody who read Dana Seetahal’s seminal work on criminal practice and procedure would know that “reasonable grounds” is a safeguard. So, I do not know what the MP for Port of Spain South was talking about.

Mr. Hosein: “Twiggy [*inaudible*] run.”

Hon. W. Sturge: “Oh, God, Twiggy have him running.” [*Laughter*] When you make your application to the magistrate, the police could say, “Well, we are seizing your property on reasonable grounds”—which is a safeguard. But you know what? You could make an application to the court, and the court could say we do not agree with the police. The court could say there are no reasonable grounds. Is court oversight—access to the court to deal with that same issue, is access to the court not a safeguard? “Ah not hearing yuh.”

Mr. Alexander: “He gone, he in de toilet.”

Hon. W. Sturge: “He in de toilet.” You know what is the difference between the police seizing your property and the bandit seizing your property? When the bandit seizes your property, you can go before a magistrate and say, “I want it back”. “But he complaining, he complaining.” Of course, even without the magistrate, the magistrate might say, “Well, there are reasonable grounds and the police could keep it. But there is also right in the Bill, the Commissioner of Police could say, “Listen, man, it is not necessary to keep the people thing again”. The reasonable suspicion no longer exists. It is not necessary for evidential purposes and so on, and the Commissioner of Police could give it back.

So, all of these avenues are there. If the magistrate, in refusing to give back your property, if you think the magistrate is wrong, that the exercise of her power, her discretion is unreasonable, is her decision not—she being an inferior court, is her decision not subject to judicial review? There are so many safeguards, so I cannot understand how a man who begged me to write on Facebook that he should get Silk, how he could come here and talk that kind of thing?

Ms. Mohit: “Yuh bad.”

Hon. W. Sturge: “Yeah ah bad, ah do it, ah felt sorry for him because everybody else get Silk in the first batch and dey leave him out.”

Curfew—who declares the curfew? The President. The President. You know there was power in the last SOE to ask for a curfew. We did not. We are not onerous. We are not looking to take advantage. What we are doing, is we are looking to target a minority of people who are causing mayhem.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: So, when the President declares the curfew, she herself can revoke it. You can bring a Motion to annul in the House of Representatives, that is a safeguard. You know, and I went through search and seizure, but let me return to

it because you see, the impression being given—not just with search and seizure, not just with arrest and detention, not just with curfews, and not just with cordons. The impression being given, if you listen carefully to the speech of Port of Spain South, is that somehow everybody is at risk. That this is tyranny, that the whole country has to be afraid about the rights for freedom of movement and so on. But when you read the Bill, it is only persons in the declared closed area.

So, only if you are in a closed area and the police have reasonable suspicion that you committed offences, you are committing offences, or you will be shortly committing offences, only then, they arrest and detain. So, it is not simply that everybody in the zone is liable to arrest and detention. That is not the case. That is far from the case. It is not that everybody in the country is liable to arrest and detention. You are liable to arrest and detention if you live in an area that is declared a closed area, and there are reasonable grounds that you have committed offences, are committing offences, or will be committing offences. Only those. So, not the shopkeeper. Not the little child who has to go to school.

Mr. Romain: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. W. Sturge: What is that, Dominic?

Mr. Romain: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. W. Sturge: Right, yes. [*Laughter*] So, it is just a criminal class; it does not affect. You know, the thing is, they act as though some of these rights are somehow being infringed, so let me segue into arrest and detention.

So, if you are arrested and detained because you come within the purview of the Bill, there is reasonable suspicion and so on. You have to immediately, as soon as reasonably practicable, be taken before a magistrate. A magistrate is a court. Is the court not a safeguard? When you come before the court, what does the Bill say that the magistrate has to consider? She has to consider whether your arrest and

detention is justified or necessary or reasonable. I am paraphrasing here, but the Bill is very clear in what circumstances she can continue the detention. Because the magistrate could tell the police, “I doh agree wit yuh”. There are no reasonable grounds. “Let de man go and dais dat.” The magistrate could say, “Well, ah tink de police on to someting”. Find reasonable grounds, and keep you for a specific period, as the Attorney General outlined.

Then, after that period, if you are not released, you are brought before a judge of the High Court, from small church to big church. A judge whose duty under the Constitution is to safeguard your constitutional rights would have to determine whether you are legally being detained. The judge can—if there are reasonable grounds, if the police are on to something, detain you for a certain period of time, specified period of time as the Bill says, or the judge can release you. So, this is not the Government saying you have to be detained for a certain period of time, this is the court saying we are supervising it.

You know the amazing thing is, the only people who need to fear for this thing, I cannot say it enough or let me put it another way: If you know your name might be on the database of CAPA, Crime and Problem Analysis, then you are a candidate. You are a candidate. But if your name is not there, you have nothing to fear.

So, the Bill also goes into other protections. I do not need to go too deeply into body cams and so on. It states in circumstances where it should be deactivated, because everybody knows when you are in a neighbourhood, the police go there; they want information, and if the person knows that your camera is on—“yuh tink dey talking”? “Yuh tink dey talking?” Rightly or wrongly—“dey might be of de impression, boy, I cud get put up”. This video could end up

somewhere else—“and de man who ah ratting on come down de road dey, cud come fuh meh”. So, the Bill is a commonsense piece of legislation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: I am sorry that Port of Spain South, when he glossed over it, did not take the time to point out the actual safeguards, because all he was concerned about was scare tactics. He just wants us to fail like they failed, and they failed spectacularly.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: The Bill, makes provisions for legal counsel, mandates it. Your medical practitioner could visit. Makes provision in the Bill itself, not relying on common-law for food and welfare. Makes provisions that you can be visited by a spouse or family member. I heard a complaint just now about the prescribed officer having certain discussions—those discussions exist for a reason. Because the person you might be bringing might be someone you want to pass information to, to send on the outside. So, the officer must have that discretion, and of course, that is during the period of your detention. All of these complaints can be brought before the magistrate or the judge and dealt with, and they will see whether it was reasonably necessary to exercise the discretion in a particular way.

12.30 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you have 15 more minutes. You end at 12.43.

Hon. W. Sturge: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: Now, before I move on to *Suratt* and *Suraj* briefly—because I noticed the Member for Port of Spain South just did not go into the detail at all.

You know, I should go to that right away, because I was going to the drivel that I had to respond to.

Suratt and *Suraj*, what is *Suratt* and *Suraj*? He gives the impression that we are not complying and therefore, it is ab initio, unconstitutional. *Suratt* and *Suraj* do not say that. There is a presumption of constitutionality. It simply states, if you do not have a certain majority and it is found that one was required, you have a higher threshold to deal with the proportionality test and so on. That is it. So, when looking through this Bill—and I hope—we know who comes after to undermine, and I hope he goes into detail. I hope—because there is no recusal here. I hope when he goes into it, since he fancies himself as a lawyer of some repute, that he would tell us whether or not the measures in this Bill are not rationally connected.

You see, the thing is, in *Suratt* and *Suraj*, the court says, in both Privy Council judgments, that what is looked at is whether the objective to be met is sufficiently important to justify the limitation of a fundamental right. When the President makes her declaration, what are the objectives? Is it not that she has to be satisfied on reasonable grounds that public safety and peace are threatened? It is not just crime. Because the Member for Port of Spain South said, “Why don’t you use the existing laws, the Offences Against the Person Act,” and he listed a whole lot of offences. That is what you were using and you failed.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: So if you failed, do you think we are insane to do the same thing you have been doing and failing at? We have to do something different. And it is not just something different, it is something that is required because of the level of criminality that you left behind.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: So these measures, we say, they are sufficiently important to justify limitations of rights, potential limitations, and potential limitations of the rights of the bandit class. That is who we are limiting, not the rest of the country.

The Privy Council says in their judgement, you have to look at is:

“...whether...”—the measure is—“...rationally connected to the objective;”

If we are going to look for a cache of guns and drugs in an area like Caledonia, should we wait on a warrant to be issued by a JP, knowing from lived experience in the past that Justices of the Peace themselves have communicated to the criminal, “Dey coming for yuh, yuh know, ah just signed ah warrant”? That has happened in the past. Certain persons who are not fit and proper have also, in the past, communicated to the criminal element. So it is necessary that the rights of the bandit to insist on a warrant, that these rights be curtailed, because if we do not do that, we might find a situation where we turn up and the guns are gone; these same guns that are killing people in the neighbourhood, gone, and still available to kill more people.

These are serious times. It calls for serious measures. If it means limiting the right of a small number of the criminal class so that the law-abiding can continue to live, so that they do not become a statistic in the 626 under “Fitz Herbert Etheldred Hinds”, or the 605, or the 500-and-something under Port of Spain South, we are saving lives. Therefore, that is a justification for limiting the rights of the criminal class.

Further, the Privy Council said:

“...whether a less intrusive measure could...”—be—“...used;”

But they used less intrusive measures and it showed that it did not work. So we have to account to the people, to the majority of the law-abiding citizens. We have to protect their lives. If we have to protect our lives and we see that what has been

used consistently—because they do not want to interfere with their own communities. “Dey fraid dey get vote out”. That is all they care about, so that they could come and go down in the canteen and eat two and three plates of food and then leave. Crazy baldhead.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. W. Sturge: The Privy Council has also said that we should look at:

“...whether...a fair balance has been struck between the rights of the individual...”

—and in this case the individual is who? The bandit class, the gangs, not the shopkeeper, not the little boy who want to go to school.

As I say “school”, Port of Spain South talked about the “psyche”. He asked, “What about the psyche of these people?” He talked about two things, “psyche” and “property value”. Well, that was a joke, the “property value”, because he said, “If we declare a place, a closed area, that the property value would fall.” It would fall lower than it already is? The high crime in that area is what caused it to fall in the first place, and it is what necessitates this.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: So if it falls from \$100 to \$10, I do not know if that is a big fall, if it is necessary. But what about the psyche of the little boy who wants to go to school, and all that? You know, that was inflammatory language, appealing to emotions.

But did he ever stop to think, what about the little boy who going to school thinking, “You know, dey want to kill meh big brother, and by de time ah come home tonight de big brother who I just hug and kiss goodbye, tearfully, might not be here”? What about that psyche? What about that perspective?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: So we say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that all of the measures we have put into place are rationally connected to what we hope to achieve. They are proportionate. They are designed to save lives. They are not widespread, targeting the entirety of Trinidad and Tobago. So I do not know why they are coming here to talk about the rights of the bandit class. You know, it tells us what they value. “I see he *Inaudible*] Oh God, ah cyah wait for him.”

Mr. Alexander: “And he bow.”

Hon. W. Sturge: “Yeah, and he bow.”

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. W. Sturge: He said, in relation to when they declared the State of Emergency on December 31, 2024, that if they did not do so—if it was not for that timely intervention, blood would have flowed in Trinidad and Tobago. Well, in spite of that timely intervention, blood flowed in Trinidad and Tobago. That was your last card, and you played your last card and you failed. It seems like everything you all do is a failure, except when it comes to recusal and making money. That seems to be the only thing you want to get into government for.

Let me see, I want to run through quickly—the value of property, I dealt with that. Madam Deputy Speaker, I know I only have a few minutes. I want to make reference to—coming to the end of the Bill, there is a part which deals with the weapons and the ammunition that are to be used by members of the team carrying out the operations. The Bill makes provisions that there is testing and registering and so on, so that there can be accountability—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge:—and we say that is also a safeguard.

He spoke about “gathering data”. You know, the amazing thing is, when he talked about “data”, he made the point that, in 2017, that we did not want to

support their anti-gang legislation. You know what he failed to say? The reason why we did not support it is because you brought no data.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: But we have brought data to show that when—as we have in recent times in the SOE, that when we have disrupted the activities of the gang, the murder trajectory went down—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge:—and that is what we are here to do. We have brought the data, and we are here to show that the data, from what we have had, has shown that we have to disrupt the criminal gangs in their areas, and that is what this Bill is designed to do. Not to disrupt the criminal gangs where Hans is living, or Dominic, but in the area—

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(5), the Member is referring to Members, not by their constituency, but rather their names.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: I apologize.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, Member, you have to refer to them by their constituency.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: I apologize. I did not realize he was so thin-skinned.

So, the reality is, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have brought this Bill because we have the data. We are acting on the data, and based on the data, it tells us that we have to operate in a way where we have to disrupt the activities of certain persons so that we can save lives. The Prime Minister indicated how many lives we have saved since we have come into power, we intend to continue—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge:—and if you are not with us, you are against us.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: But we know, we are confident of what we can do. We are confident in crime. There will be a victory.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Sturge: It would be the victory of good over evil. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, while I recognize you, we will now take the lunch break. We will resume at 1.40. This House is now suspended.

12.43 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.40 p.m.: *House resumed.*

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Stuart Young SC (Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, we are here today in a very hustled debate. A debate that we were given notice of just a few hours ago, less than 48 hours ago, and the country, not just us in this House but the country, was presented with very far-reaching unconstitutional legislation less than 48 hours ago. And none other than the Prime Minister, the absent Member of Siparia, indicated to the population on Wednesday that the debate on a very, very important piece of legislation, a draconian piece of legislation, would take place today, Friday.

Importantly, at the outset—because despite what has been said previously by those on the other side—it is important that we put this in context for the population because very, very many citizens are looking on and listening very

carefully because they are attuned, out of 12 months of suppression via states of emergency, they are very attuned as to their rights, and they are very fearful about this piece of legislation. And I say immediately at the outset, as was said by the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Arima, many months ago, 16, 17 months ago, the PNM Opposition will always do what is right for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: This PNM Opposition will always support legal and constitutional pieces of legislation that are going to better the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We will not support, nor will we stand quietly or go quietly when pieces of legislation are brought, unfortunately, to this House that are clearly unconstitutional and are clearly designed to suppress the rights of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

As those on the other side have become quite apt at doing, they throw out certain phrases and catchphrases. So one that we have heard from the previous speakers—and it came from the mouth of the hon. Prime Minister saying that law-abiding citizens have nothing to fear. Complete rubbish. We have just come out of—and a lot of time was spent on it, touching on states of emergency and the last two years of instances of states of emergency but what the population has witnessed in the last 12 months of states of emergency under this UNC Government, that is in power for 16 months, going to 17 months, 12 of which we have been under states of emergency is that you have witnessed nothing other than a rising tide of dictatorship and a rising tide of suppression of rights, especially in the last 6 months of states of emergency. And there are clear instances and examples given. Even though there are disparaging statistics by those on the other side, there are clear examples of innocent citizens whose rights were suppressed and PDOs

(Preventive Detention Orders) were utilized to detain them during that period of time.

One only needs to carefully look at the history over the last few decades, the global history. Takes us back 50, 60 years ago, globally, to see what pieces of legislation of this sort and this type that a government tries to fool the population is meant to assist law-abiding citizens, and they say is going after criminal rights. What you are seeing is a clear admission of two things. One, the UNC has no crime plan apart from suppressing constitutional rights.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: In the 16 months—this is now the sixth debate in 16 months that they are putting the population through, of pieces of legislation designed specifically and expressly to suppress important, fundamental constitutional rights. And I fear that the population of Trinidad is becoming so numb to the words “constitutional” and “constitutionality” and their fundamental rights being suppressed. That they are allowing the dictatorship to grow and to gallop. It is not creeping. We are in a dictatorship. That is clear.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: Every single week, the only utterance from the Prime Minister is “Ah coming for you, ah coming for this one, ah going and do dis, ah going and do dat” in a fearful manner meant to intimidate the citizens.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: And the 13 of us on this side will stand in the breach for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and we will not permit that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: It is clear that this piece of legislation has great constitutional difficulties. I listened to the previous speakers for the Government, and they are

aware of it. The person who piloted the Bill, the Attorney General, very, very unlike his characteristic nature—because I am waiting for the utterances from those on the other side, where they threaten people and days later, people are then put under Preventive Detention Orders. I am waiting for that to reach to the Privy Council, and I look forward to the day that the *Hansard* reports of those on the other side, including those in this debate today, are scrutinized by the courts. But today you heard an admission, because it is an admission, that the population's constitutional rights are being infringed by this Bill. There is no denial of that. The Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, I will get to him, and it is clear he only practise in a certain type of court. But he is bereft of any constitutional law knowledge whatsoever.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: Yes, the law allows constitutional rights to be infringed but the same Constitution that set out, thankfully many decades ago, our constitutional rights. It is the Constitutional rights of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, in something called “enshrined rights” and “fundamental rights,” that are not supposed to be interfered with unless you follow the Constitution. This Bill requires a special majority, but you see, it is easy to pass a Bill without that in it, and it is only when it goes to court that a court will decide. But it is clear; it is clear and was touched because they know it will go somewhere else. It was touched on.

Our constitutional rights under 4(a):

Our right or—

“...the right of the individual to...enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law...”

—is being breached.

Once you cordon off an area and, worse yet, put curfews on that area, every citizen knows that now your right to access your property is being interfered with. This piece of legislation is dangerous. You look at the wording and what they now call the piece of legislation, and I would read it for the population: The Special Operations Bill, 2026. This is how the Explanatory Note starts, Trinidad and Tobago and those who are looking on globally, concerned about human rights. The Bill starts:

“The Special Operations Bill, 2026 (“the Bill”) seeks to establish policing districts within Trinidad and Tobago...”

Every single square metre of Trinidad and Tobago is now designated by this piece of legislation under a policing district. This, Trinidad and Tobago, is legislating for a police state. And remember that we in the Opposition said that on the 26th of September, 2026, the UNC is passing legislation here today that makes Trinidad and Tobago nothing less than a police state, with a trampling on constitutional rights here of all citizens, not just those who are engaged in criminality.

The issuance of permits for persons to go into what is now called a “closed area,” because that is what they have called it now. They have tried to move away with the psychology of Zones of Special Operations, ZOSOs. This is now ZOSO. They are now calling it a “closed area,” and a closed area can mean anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago. And we will get to who designates it because, again, to stand up here in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, call yourself an attorney and to try to mislead the population that the President, decides anything in this legislation, is nothing short of a complete lie.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: But that is how they do business. That is how they do business. They think by inserting the word “President” in certain areas it is the

decision of the President. It is no such thing, and we will get to that. By designating closed areas and allowing the police, and the police who the Prime Minister decides, inserting the Executive into a decision as to who are going to be the police officers and the soldiers and Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force officers who will operate in closed areas is all that Trinidad and Tobago needs to understand, having just come out of the trauma of the last six months of 12 months of state of emergency, where you had people standing up in this Chamber and threatening citizens of Trinidad and Tobago with PDOs that were then carried out, and the Privy Council is looking forward to dealing with that.

It is ironic, the 2011 State of Emergency was before the Privy Council, the same day that our Court of Appeal was dealing with the State of Emergency that expired yesterday and listening to the warlords question the State's attorneys; Trinidad and Tobago, they asked the right questions. They talked about safeguards and spent a lot of time, as I expect them to, because this piece of legislation they threw measures in there that need to be examined by a court to see whether they satisfied *Suratt* and *Suraj* and proportionality, because just having measures means nothing. It is when you go behind them, and you analyze the measures, that it will be determined whether they are sufficient to protect our constitutional rights. I am putting it on record here this afternoon that this Bill and that imposition of a permit system in closed areas for everyone who resides in or has to enter into or leave a closed area to have a permit is nothing short of what unfortunately is part of this world's history in South Africa with apartheid. This Bill mirrors that. That you have to walk around—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC:—Trinidad and Tobago, as a law-abiding citizen who you just listened to two speakers on that side try to convince you your rights are being

protected, ask yourself this question. Because of a few criminal elements who may reside or operate in an area near to you, the Government and police decide that is now going to be a closed area, a cordoned-off area with barriers and barricades, where they can operate at their whim and fancy without the safeguards of the normal law and your constitutional rights, according to them, you now are required to have a permit to leave your house, to enter.

Something happens; it is your mother living in Morvant, your father living in Morvant or in another closed area, wherever it may be in Trinidad and Tobago, and God forbid, something happens to that elderly person and you as the child, or as the caregiver, need to now get into that cordoned-off closed area. Worse yet, if there is a curfew and you need a permit. So, law-abiding citizens of Trinidad and Tobago understand something: Once they close off an area, according to the law, you can be charged and fined and imprisoned if you breach it; you now require that permit to go in and out.

So, 99 per cent of people in a closed area designated by them on the other side, it is declared to be a closed area, and that 99 per cent of people there are law-abiding. Understand you have to have a permit, and I am telling you, because where this has been applied elsewhere, the criminal element would just pick up and move. So, the 1 per cent would leave the closed area. No criminal in the 1 per cent, apart from the 99 per cent of law-abiding citizens, are going to stay there and say, "Well I am going to operate in a cordoned-off area". That is UNC logic. It does not operate that way. So it is the law-abiding citizens; it is your rights. It is your right that they are trampling on.

So "the right...to...enjoyment of property..."—4(a) under the Constitution. One only then needs to go to 4(c),

"the right of the individual to respect for his private and family life..."

That too is in jeopardy.

“4...(g) freedom of movement...”

How could any self-respecting attorney-at-law stand here and say that this Bill does not infringe on citizens’ right to freedom of movement and then not require a special majority.

We know why they have gone this route of not putting a special majority because they boasted they will pass the legislation. It will pass in the other place. It would be implemented straight away and the safeguards that they talk about are complete rubbish, as well as we will get to the negative resolution. When we explain it to the population. When they tell you, “parliamentary oversight”, there is no parliamentary oversight. And I will deal with it immediately. Because when they say negative resolution and that certain things are subject to negative resolution. Trinidad and Tobago, what that means is once they pass the order, they designate a place, a closed area, a curfew, et cetera; it immediately becomes the law. That is what negative resolutions mean.

What has to happen is that the Opposition, when they become aware—because, of course, it is only seven days later something is sent from the President that comes to Parliament. When the Opposition becomes aware, they then have to file in a committee of the Parliament asking for a Motion to come for debate in the House for a negative resolution and, by definition, the majority. So after all of that, which will take days, if not weeks, because it is the Government who decides when the House will sit and what will be debated. This is what they are not telling you. Where is the parliamentary oversight in that?

And when we come here, and we say, “Listen, this is wrong; you should not have that area as a closed area.” They will hide behind all manner of things, and then they will use their majority to continue it. They have put in the legislation that you

cannot come back with another resolution to challenge it for three more months. And another thing to be aware of, nowhere in this legislation does it limit the time for any of these things, save for that three-month period I just spoke about. So, in other words, make a mockery of it.

2.00 p.m.

Every time you want to challenge something they do, you have to find out about it; you have to ask the Committee to put a Motion on to the Order Paper; you have to wait for the Government to decide we will debate that, you come here, you say what you have to say, and they just say, no. Unlike states of emergency, which are governed by the Constitution, which clearly says, as every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago now knows, because they have used it so frequently and so often, is for a three-month period, and then there is another three-month period decided by the House on majority. If you want anything more than that, both Houses with a special majority, which obviously does not happen.

So, hustle us here today because the state of emergency ended, and the only way they know how to fight crime, and their whole crime plan is to suppress constitutional rights and to give powers for a police State to allow people to be locked up without sufficient evidence. And then they, well, there are safeguards of courts that exist, and they learned that the hard way in the last state of emergency where they thought—and I heard, unfortunately, the self-appointed silk of a Prime Minister saying to the population the court cannot give you damages for an infringement under the state of emergency. And I was like, “What?” Because of the—she did not even remember what is the right phrase—ouster of the court in the regulations; completely false.

The courts have said very clearly, and I will come to it in a very short while, that even with states of emergency where there is a clause that says you cannot

challenge, the courts always have a supervisory role. But as people were bombarding our phones, when they were listening to those on the other side, saying, “Well, you could go to court.” Who has the money to run to court when they decide, “Well, you are the one.” As we hear those on the other side saying right here in the Chamber, who is going to be the other one, threatening this one, threatening that one. And then, next thing, the police reach and lock them up with no evidence. That Trinidad and Tobago, that is what your decision in 2025 in April has brought; that scourge on Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: As I said, this is now the sixth debate for legislation that is their crime plan. Destroy constitutional rights, oppress constitutional rights, take us to court, we will hire lawyers to allow us to continue to lock people up without their constitutional rights. This Bill is dangerous. This is the most dishonest and dangerous government this country has ever witnessed, with petty, petty obsessions. That is all you hear in the contributions on the other side, from the vast majority, not from some.

This Bill is unconstitutional and it is further confirmation of the galloping dictatorship that has befallen Trinidad and Tobago. The PDO statistics bear that out. Over 800 applied for, over 700 graduated. Over 500, almost 600 executed—so 600 persons detained. How many charged? How many charged out of that 500? Just over 200. So, what happened to the other 300 innocent citizens? If they are not innocent, why did you not charge them?

We used states of emergency. We allowed it so that you could put people inside—and as the Privy Council asked in that 2011 case, the Privy Council asked, astonished, saying, “Well, explain something to me. So after 24 hours normally you have to go to a magistrate or a judicial officer to continue to have somebody

detained. You are not allowing that by the state of emergency. You give them 48 hours.” And then they said, “Okay, we understand it is a state of emergency.” The Privy Council then asked the question: “You then have a seven-day period where you could continue to keep somebody detained.” Lady Rose asked, “Should it not be sufficient in seven days to decide whether to charge somebody?” And then Lord Leggatt asked, with astonishment, not even realizing he thought he was making a joke, “So you mean that”—because when you look at the PDO, there is no expiry date—“they could just keep them there? On the last day, they just all come out?” That is exactly what we are witnessing here.

And this piece of legislation is to try and give the Government that power, because they know, as was referred to by a previous speaker, in other jurisdictions the courts have said very clearly that you cannot keep rolling states of emergency. So, they hustle and bring us here in a Bill, that is now allowing mini states of emergency. Mini suppression of rights all over. “Doh waste yuh time with sub judice. I eh going back there.” I am waiting for the decision. That is what I am waiting for, right? Dunces. That is what you are. So that is the UNC style. That is the UNC style. Now what they are introducing is apartheid politics. And to use the expressions that they have used to try and continue to fool the people.

Let us deal now with the President’s role. Because it was very disheartening to hear the previous speaker, on the advice of another speaker, talk about, “Well, the President in the Bill, and you did not want the Prime Minister, so we put the President.” They do not even know, on that side, that when the President’s name is called—and, of course, they have to personalize that as well, personalized attacks on the sitting President, which is against the Standing Order, by the way.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. S. Young SC: Section 80(1) for the dunce on the other side.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, you need to—

Mr. S. Young SC: “Orr, yuh get up now.”

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: You need to withdraw that statement and apologize. That is completely unparliamentary.

Mr. S. Young SC: Withdrawn and apologized.

Section 80(1) of the Constitution, for those who do not know on the other side, including the Attorney General:

“In the exercise of his functions under this constitution or any...law, the President shall act in accordance with the advice of Cabinet or a Minister acting under the general authority of Cabinet, except in cases where other provisions is made by this Constitution or such other law, and, without prejudice to the generality of this exception, in cases where...this Constitution or such other law, he is required to act—

(a) in his discretion...”

The reference to the President, Trinidad and Tobago, in this unconstitutional Bill is not such an instance where the President has any discretion. So everywhere you see the President referred to in this Bill, it is the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago or the Minister. So, in other words, do not be fooled that the President has any role to play in this, apart from a rubber stamp. It is the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago that is deciding everything with respect to this Bill.

So, it is the Government that is deciding these things. It is the Government that will decide if a special operation in a closed area, if there are going to be curfews in those closed areas. It is not the President. And wherever that is referred to throughout the Bill, it is all the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. The Constitution is there to protect the rights of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Today, once

again, we have had an admission by the UNC that they cannot fight crime using the regular laws of Trinidad and Tobago. And the only way they know how to fight crime is via states of emergency, and now this, mini state of emergency type Bill and legislation? The Constitution specifically provided—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Do you require your additional 15 minutes, Member?

Mr. S. Young SC: Yes, please.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: As I say, this Bill has divided Trinidad and Tobago into policing districts; policing districts, because we are now police going to be a police state.

“...the Commissioner..., in respect of each district, will designate an officer, not below the rank of a Superintendent, to be the Head of Special Operations who shall be responsible for, and in charge of, the conduct of special operations in that district. “

So, Trinidad and Tobago, every district now is going to have a police officer who is in charge of that, holding a Major from the defence force, as well, but importantly, and worryingly, whoever those people are, they have to be approved by the Prime Minister. It was Basdeo Panday in the 2000s, as the then Prime Minister, who, along with Manning, took away the veto power from a prime minister when deciding a commissioner of police. But now the UNC, in the normal dictatorial manner, is inserting themselves at these lower levels as to who should be in charge of the districts. Forget that accountability and that reporting, and let me tell you why: You know who decides what goes into a report? You know who decides what goes into a report? Let us look at clause 8(2):

“A report under subsection (1) shall address such matters and contain such information as may be determined by the Prime Minister in writing, after

consultation with the Minister, the Minister with responsibility for defence and the Commissioner.”

It is the Prime Minister who is going to tell them what to put in the report to then report to her. That is how scary—but then stands up here and talks about the report is a safeguard. And you know what is the funny part?

They go on in that same section 8(5) to say:

“A person fails to comply with subsections (1), (2), (3) or (4) liable to disciplinary action.”

So, the Prime Minister is now liable to disciplinary action if she does not tell them what to put in the report? How could that make any sense? But that is the drafting, and that is what is before us. Special operations in policing district. That is determined by the police and the defence force.

Let us now get to Part IV, Special Operations in Closed Areas. This is where they start to insert the President. Madam Deputy Speaker, 11(1), this is now the declaration of closed areas. This is now when they are going to declare areas, such as where I was walking yesterday, that obviously bothers those on the other side who cannot go to their constituency—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC:—and who could traverse to their constituency in a convoy of security for a short period of time.

“The President may by Order subject to the negative resolution of the House of Representatives, declare any area within a district to be a closed area...”

That Trinidad and Tobago is not the President. That President there, according to section 80(1) of the Constitution, is the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago.

But they do not have—I was going to say the intelligence, but I think they know section 80(1) exists—they do not have the guts to face the population and say,

“Aye is we de Government. Is we de Cabinet who going to decide this is a closed area.” They are trying to hide behind a President. It is not the President who decides. The President has no say whatsoever and the courts know that. So that is not a safeguard. It is the Executive deciding who is going to close an area, where they are going to cordon off, where they are going to have curfews, et cetera. Those, those on the other side, those who abuse the PDO system under the last state of emergency.

Let us quickly refer to the cases that were skimmed over by those on the other side. Because they have very, very important language there that is going to go find their way into the courts of Trinidad and Tobago to be accepted by the courts of Trinidad and Tobago. The case from Belize that was decided last week, that basically stopped a state of emergency. That is not what we are looking at it for, you know. We are looking at it to see what does the Judiciary say about provisions such as what they are trying to bring here. And this is what they say. Mil posited, centuries ago—they are talking about an academic—that the State can restrict an individual’s personal liberty, but only to prevent direct harm to others. He recognized that security of the person was essential to individual and social prosperity. He explained that without safety, people lacked incentive to exert effort, innovate, or produce beyond their immediate needs.

So, yes, of course that makes sense. You must be able to pass legislation to protect people. But this is where the court cautioned. Mill also cautioned, however, that the most dangerous threat to life, liberty, and security of the person historically came from tyrannical rulers, so that life, liberty, and security of the person do not require not only protection by the Government, but also protection against the Government and/or what he called tyranny of the majority. Truer words could not be spoken better.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: I repeat it, Trinidad and Tobago, listen to what the Court of Appeal in Belize adopted, and it is applicable today in Trinidad and Tobago, which is why the PNM Opposition is standing in your defence against the tyranny and the dictatorship of those on the other side.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: Mill also cautioned, however, that the most dangerous threat to life, liberty, and the security of the person historically came from tyrannical rulers. So that life, liberty, and security of the person require not only protection by the government—and listen, Trinidad and Tobago—but also protection against the Government and/or what he called a tyranny of the majority.

So, the same negative resolution that they are trying to fool the population, how Parliament has oversight, and the Parliament can do something to stop a closed area or a curfew, et cetera, does not exist. Because of this same tyranny of the majority that we are seeing today. The need for this balance between protection by and protection against the Government continues to ring true today. It came at the perfect time for us to refer to it in this house. He goes on. In the exercise of the powers conferred by the Constitution, however, the Government must have due regard to the human rights of individuals and any infringement upon them must be limited only to the extent necessary to prevent harm to others or the public interest. There is little to no margin for error here.

This is the balance that our Constitution seeks by design. That is what the courts will decide with this unconstitutional piece of legislation. *Suratt* and *Suraj* are dealing with proportionality, but it is these tests and this language that they will look at in determining whether the so-called safeguards are sufficient, and they are not.

Imagine this: Someone in a closed area does not know it has been cordoned off, does not know it has been closed, because all the law requires is that notices be put up on the cordoned areas. So, you inside, you do not. A curfew is declared, you do not know. How are you now to get a permit? And, worse yet, some emergency takes place in your home, some emergency takes place in your home; an electrical problem, a plumbing problem, at the low level, how the plumber and the electrician coming? They now have to apply for permits—and they laugh on the other side. Because you see what they should tell the country is they put in here that they do not require permits.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Young SC: In their exceptions that they will want to argue as safeguard measures, they put in there that they do not require permits.

Let us go on now to also look at what the Court of Appeal in Jamaica said, and what their warnings are that are applicable here today, as well, right? Because in looking at it, what was happening in Jamaica was, again, the ruling of the state of emergency, and the court held there very clearly that you should not do it. But importantly, similarly to Trinidad and Tobago—and you know the type of attitude by those on the other side, with the race element as to where it is a suggestion, and the people who will be inconvenienced by this, et cetera. Let me tell you what the court in Jamaica stated in their judgment, and that will be adopted here very soon.

2.00 p.m.

While we accept that democratic rights may be limited or restricted in order to ensure public safety and maintain public order, the restrictions should be temporary so that affected rights are impaired as least as is reasonably possible. It is unquestionable that the constitutional rights of members of certain marginalized communities will be disproportionately affected, as there is increased policing of

such communities. There is likely to be an erosion of public trust in the Government—exactly as is happening in Trinidad and Tobago—there will be negative implications for social and economic stability.

That is the warning of the Jamaican court, completely applicable here in Trinidad and Tobago as to where those closed areas will be, where the cordoned-off areas will be. This interface between the Executive and the police and the soldiers is an unholy one. We have spent years and decades as a Republic and an independence protecting that separation. All we have seen in the last 16 months is an erosion of that by the Executive. And they are now putting it into legislation that they, through the Prime Minister, should have the right to decide who the police officers are and who the soldiers are, to go to areas, and which area should be a closed-off area. Because, as I said, when you say the President, it means the Cabinet. And as we have heard now in six speeches on suppression of constitutional rights, we have heard from six speeches about a former Prime Minister who is in Tobago calling for a state of emergency with the petty obsession. Six speeches, but now they want to legislate, to insert themselves into the suppression of constitutional rights. How ironical and how hypocritical. And we go on.

And I will close with this because it is important. We have heard about Belize, and we have heard about Jamaica, but the Court of Appeal, in a recent decision, out of the last state of emergency and the last set of preventative detention orders that blew up, this is what they said, because you cannot hide behind national security. The Court of Appeal of Trinidad and Tobago said a few weeks ago:

“While national security considerations are important matters to which the courts must pay regard, on the other hand, the mere invocation and assertion of national security is not sufficient to prevent judicial oversight or scrutiny by a court of the exercise of emergency powers by the Executive.”

And they warned:

“That is because the unscrutinised exercise of those powers could effectively confer a jurisdiction on a Minister to order detentions of persons at will by PDOs even if their issue that is not objectively justifiable.”

Trinidad and Tobago, unfortunately, those in government have broadcast what they intend to do to you, and that they intend to continue suppressing your rights, that they have taken out because of their fear that they would not get a special majority, taken that out and say it is a simple majority. That will be decided. They are telling you that you have to have permits to go in and out of closed-off areas in an apartheid style. But also trying to fool you that if you are law-abiding, you have nothing to fear. You may have nothing to fear about what? About being detained? So your rights are not trampled on, so that you can no longer go freely to and from your home, and they say, “Well, that is for the criminals”. The criminals who are going to move out and migrate anyway, as happened in Jamaica with ZOSOs, as happened everywhere in Trinidad when the police go into an area, and they start to lock an area down. My colleagues will continue to deal with the rest of it.

There is no way that any of us on this side who about the constitutional rights of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, and we do not defend criminals in the manner that was being suggested. Because one thing about some on the other side, every accusation is a confession.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. S. Young SC: And I end with this, on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, there was a poll on a popular radio station this morning that asked the question, whether you would want your residence to be in a closed area. And 84 per cent of the population said no; 16 per cent said yes. To those on the other side who intend to continue to suppress our constitutional rights and to govern by fear,

petty intimidation and vindictiveness, we the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago will remember. We will remember, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Oropouche East.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Madam Deputy Speaker, as a matter of parliamentary history, I may one day enquire as to whether the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West did go over his allotted 45 minutes, even by one or two seconds, because the former Speaker, when we were on our legs, would stop us in the middle of pronouncing a word, not completing a sentence, but she would stop in the middle of us pronouncing a word and say, "Your time is up, sit". So, what I am doing, Madam Deputy Speaker, is to praise you for your patience—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—your commitment to democracy, your commitment to expression and your fairness. Because this is a government that operates that way. It operates that way.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I begin with this matter. I want to tell the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, who had the infamous and unremarkable experience of being Prime Minister for 44 days—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—that howling at the moon would not change anything.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has sleepwalked himself into irrelevance.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And believes that by fearmongering and by putting the population in a sense of fear or anxiety that, somehow, this will catapult his fledgling political career. But I want to assure him that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are very confident that this Government is on the right path as far as dealing with crime is concerned.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And there are several issues I may wish to raise concerning the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and the Member for Port of Spain South because I also sat and heard the Member for Port of Spain South speak earlier in the proceedings. Madam Deputy Speaker, we are at a pivotal and historic moment in Trinidad and Tobago in the battle against the criminal elements. It is a historical moment. This moment is a moment that I think Trinidad and Tobago will remember forever. Our children and our grandchildren will remember this day, this moment and this time. They will remember this Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia who has the courage, the audacity, the political will to bring this type of change.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The 44-day Prime Minister spoke a few minutes ago. But, you know, in 45 minutes or whatever it was, in 45 minutes or whatever, did not advance one policy initiative, one programme, one idea that this country can adopt now to confront the criminal elements. And today I begin by saying that clearly in this Parliament today, one side and this side stand on the side of the law-abiding citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and others stand elsewhere.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: At this pivotal moment we are taking action, decisive

action. And what do they do? They come here and talk about apartheid and permits, who will get a permit, and who will not get a permit. The poster will be by the parlour door—

Ms. John: Nobody is going to see it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Nobody would see the parlour door and the lamp post with the poster and thing. That is what they are concerned with, you know. The most futile, irrelevant, trivial matters of regulations, and not even regulations, of police procedure and so on. They raised that. They are studying the electrician, and the plumber cannot come in. When the electrician and plumber come in, he is dead.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They are studying, well, how come the person to fix the pipeline and so on might not be able to come in there. And let me begin with the biggest issue raised by the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and I think the Attorney General will deal with some of the legal matters later. Because I think there is a fundamental confusion here between the jurisprudence in matters involving a state of emergency and matters involving zones of special operations or special operations areas. There is a fundamental contradiction there, and I think the Member has stepped into that mistake and misjudgement, a mistiming, and miscommunication, and he has missed everything.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We are not dealing with a state of emergency. We are dealing with a new format called special operations. It is not the State of Emergency, and we have the jurisprudence developing on states of emergency. And he is confusing that, because we believe that he accuses some of us on this side of being one way. I do not use words like that, but he may be describing

himself in the mirror. He may be describing himself in the mirror. And posing as a bigshot lawyer who really is pouting in one or two energy seminars across the world.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And nothing is wrong with that. Everyone has to try, you know, to make a living. Nothing is wrong with that. But to come here today to challenge the position of the Bill, the facts as articulated by the Attorney General, Senior Counsel, and a practising, experienced attorney, in the Member of Parliament for Toco/Sangre Grande, the hon. Wayne Sturge.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, I put it to you that the Member is deliberately and wilfully misleading the population. He knows better. He must know better because he presumably can read English.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He is not a dunce. I do not believe what my colleagues here are telling me.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not believe it.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not believe what they are saying. He is not a dunce.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Deputy Speaker, I begin with this matter.
[*Laughter*]

“The Bill provides for the declaration of closed areas within districts where the presence of violent crime, gang activity or illegal weapons threatens

public safety, and where ordinary law enforcement measures are insufficient...”

How hard is that to understand? How hard, really, is that to understand? How hard is that to understand? Madam Deputy Speaker, that is in English. But let me go to the Bill itself because that was the Explanatory Note. Maybe the Bill says something else, I do not know. So, look at it here, clause 11 we are at. Yes, good:

“The President may, by Order subject to negative resolution of the House of Representatives, declare any area within a district to be a closed area.”

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West deliberately, wilfully, and painstakingly announced to the world that the whole district is the closed area. So if you live in Penal/Debe or Siparia, or you live in Port of Spain, now everybody there, all the children, need a permit to come out to go to school and a permit to come back in. Everybody needs a permit. If you are attending a wedding, a wake, anything in the area, you need a permit to come in; you need a permit to leave and creating this, you know, and he knows what he was doing, this sort of fear. The law says any area within a district, not a district. And a closed area could be a few streets. A closed area could be—

Hon. Member: One street.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—one street. A closed area could be his house.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Could be a closed area.

Hon. Members: “Ahh!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, well, we do not know his place of abode.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah, he is a bright fella. So, the first thing is that, please, let us correct the record. A closed area is any area within a district; it is called a

closed area. It is not the whole district, and it is not the seven districts of the country, six in Trinidad and one in Tobago. You do not declare a closed area and say, “Well, it is the whole of Trinidad, the whole of Tobago”. Because the police, operating on intelligence and so on, working together, will determine where you have this serious threat of violent crime, gang activity, illegal weapons and so on. Let me get to the next point—busy, busy, because I know exactly where they are going. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you give me mud and water, I could make them.

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I know where they are going. I know where they are going.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to remind the country that it was a couple of years ago: drugs, illegal activity, ammunition, arms—these are not, you know, matters—illicit trade and holding them and so on, possession and so on. They are not matters confined to any one area in this country, as they would have you believe. Because they are painting a picture that this thing has to do with certain areas, and, “I walked there this morning, and I cannot walk again”. Well, you do not need a permit, you are an MP.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You cannot walk again tomorrow and so on as if, you know, it is a certain area, a certain group of people that we are targeting in this way. But crime is everywhere. Some of you may be shocked to know there was a drug bust on the 4th of December, 2018 at Regents Gardens Westmoorings.

Hon. Members: “Oh!”

Sen. Jeremie SC: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He is not a dunce. You cannot convince me of that. So, there was a drug bust, 04 December, 2018, an alleged seizure of approximately 191.66 kilogrammes of marijuana and 1.04 kilogrammes of cocaine, later reported, combined value of \$3.8 million, in Westmoorings.

Hon. Members: What is the address?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The address I have here is Regents Gardens, Westmoorings. Charges against one Sankar: possession of marijuana for trafficking, possession of cocaine for trafficking, possession of a firearm, possession of ammunition, “da-da-da-da-da”. Co-accused, original bail, \$6 million in bail. Magistrate Rehanna Hosein found the privy fascia case and committed Sankar and the three co-accused to stand trial. A fresh bail in September 2019 was granted, \$1.3 million. Present case position, of course, the matter is before the DPP and the justice system.

But this is a matter involving one Krystiana Sankar. But the point I am making—I do not know who she is, I really do not know who the person is—is that it was in Westmoorings. It was not in a place you all are describing where you want to paint a picture. So, I do not know. Maybe in Westmoorings somewhere there, this could be a closed area. A closed street, a few streets maybe, given what has happened here before. I do not know if there is any relation to anyone in this House. I do not know people’s family business and so on. I am sure the Attorney General is not aware of any family business as well.

But what is also instructive is that this person has also, since, you know, these horrible events, been travelling. Because there is a flight record for the person as well who travelled freely and was allowed to leave the country in 2023, 2025, and, look, 2026, already. Travelling to Venezuela, Venezuela, St. Vincent, Curaçao, and Curaçao, and so on, travelling around presumably on criminal charges

involving possession of illicit narcotics and ammunition and arms and so on.

But my point really is, do not try to say that this thing is targeting a particular group in a particular area when you, well, not you, when people are aware that whether it is Westmoorings, as the Prime Minister said, whether it is St. Clair, whether it is wherever the place is up on that side, whether it is in Siparia, Penal, Arima, wherever, Goodwood Park. It could be, once there is sufficient intelligence, and the police are working together with the defence force, offers the intelligence and so on, could be a closed area. And a closed area is not the whole district, as you would want people to believe.

Then raising an issue of the Prime Minister having power, and the Prime Minister having this power. You know, in the last Parliament, on several occasions we raised the issue where the former Prime Minister Keith Rowley, he was repainting over the Office of the Prime Minister. Every time he spoke, he was national—what? National Security Council Chairman. Everything he did, he was the National Security Council Chairman. “I do that as National Security Council Chairman.” When we all knew that the National Security Council is a subcommittee of the Cabinet. A very sensitive committee, but a subcommittee.

2.40 p.m.

And Dr. Rowley was always doing that; assuming a power as Chairman of the National Security Council. Today, the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North is complaining about the role of the Prime Minister in these matters.

Mr. Elder: Conveniently.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Conveniently. Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the matter raised again, rising tide of dictatorship, innocent citizens, and how you treat citizens and so on. These are Members who locked out Trinidad and Tobago citizens during COVID; locked them out from Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They were begging for food in Barbados. They did not have a piece of galvanize over your head. And they talk about—

Ms. John: And the street in Brooklyn.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and in Brooklyn, in the cold, and they talk about how you treat citizens. Today we must listen to them.

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, and I understand that one or two of these pedigree dogs were allowed to come back during COVID, but they left the citizens outside the border. So this is the height of hypocrisy that we are witnessing today in this debate. The people in this country, traumatized over the last six months. Traumatized by what? By whom? Traumatized by whom? Look, we have the data here. I do not have to remind you, and I do not want to spend too much time with this business.

The murder rate, 2022, 606; 2023, Madam Deputy Speaker, 580; 2024, 626. Madam Deputy Speaker, today we have the murder rate down by 41 per cent from the 2024 period.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, this is what I was looking for, the graph. If you would see a graph, Madam Deputy Speaker, depicting the murder rate in this country—down in 2025, but we can use 2025—370 in 2025, Madam Deputy Speaker. And you look at the height of the last year of the administration of those on the other side, which would be 2024, 626; 626, their last full year in office. Our piece of year in office, 2025—the piece of year we had—370. You understand that? This is what we should be looking at today.

During the last State of Emergency—and I want to make a point for the

record, that the State of Emergency was called for a specific purpose to deal with an existential threat to the security of this country; serious, serious threats to national security, officers of the State that could undermine our democracy, our Government and the state of order in the country.

Resulting from that, we have had some data coming in to tell us about that period that we were under the State of Emergency. And while the Members opposite should be happy that during the period 03 March to 13 September, 2026, of which we have the data, operations included 15,253 operations; persons arrested, 5,865; persons charged, 1,362. And here you will get it because they are asking for it all day. “I hear dey asking all day”, how many persons charged who were under Preventative Detention Orders? Port of Spain South, hello. The Member for Port of Spain South would be happy to know because he was asking all day. All morning he was shouting at the gate, “How many persons charged under the Preventative Detention Orders, who were under those orders?”

Mr. Scotland SC: Gang members

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: It is 264. You can get the information now. And you can file that. You know you can file that instead of howling.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have all the data. Ammunition recovered—hear this, ammunition recovered, 6,439 rounds.

Mr. Scotland SC: How many were gang members?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Do you know 6,439 rounds could kill 6,439 people?

Mr. Alexander: And more.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And more? Well, I am sure the policeman that he is suggests it could be more. But having said that, 6,439 rounds. Firearms, 320 in this little period, 03 March to 13 September, 2026. That is something we should feel good about. We are not feeling good because crime has disappeared. Crime

has not disappeared.

I heard earlier a Member speaking about, “What will happen to the elderly? They have to walk out. They have to get a permit if they have to go out the street and take a walk and the elderly has to go by the shop.” An elderly gentleman, a few days ago, was kidnapped, reportedly, for \$7,000, with his grandson in the car. You are not concerned with that elderly? I do not think they are concerned with that elderly. They are concerned with some other elderly. We are concerned with that elderly who was a victim of crime. And that is what we want to cut out now, by bringing this piece of legislation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They speak about the police cameras. But that is again— is there a term that could go higher than the “height of hypocrisy”? I do not know if there is a term.

Mr. Sturge: Zenith.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The zenith of hypocrisy.

Hon. Member: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, thank you. Thank you very much, MP Sturge, Minister Sturge. The zenith of hypocrisy comes now. The police cameras. We are told that the cameras were procured when the last government was in office, not this Government. How many were procured? 1,000? 100? You are hearing 100 one day, you are hearing 1,000 the next day. How many?

Hon. Member: Plenty.

Mr. Alexander: A thousand, and only some are working.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They were procured when that government was in office. That is the point I want to make. If they had proper supervision over the procurement of that equipment, today you would have had all those cameras

working and with batteries that could last—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—the—“what bunny dey call it?” The Energizer Bunny.

Mr. Alexander: They got it from Toys “R” Us.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They got it from the toy shop. But it was the responsibility of the Government to supervise that, and through a National Security Council that was working. That is their responsibility. Today they ask about a police camera and how long it could work, and so on, but you procured that. It was under you. “When de puppy dog eat away at an electronic monitoring device, you bought it. A little poodle, I think it chew up de band.” You bought that. Today we have to get more, and stainless steel bands and so on. So they raised issues where they were responsible for the failures; directly responsible. And today when we come with this Bill, “dey make noise all over de place.”

Let me see what else he was saying. Nothing much, again. But this morning, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West also engaged us and raised a couple of matters: By putting closed areas, you will devalue the property.

Mr. Young SC: Devalue?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Devalue the property. That is the point you were making? That if you have a closed area, the property value will go down? That is the point? So, what happens now in a killing area? The property value went up? What happens now in areas where they regularly kill, gang violence, all over? The property value goes sky high? And he is asking this question that if you do closed areas, the property value will go down. That is the concern. Not concerning murder, serious crime, ammunition, guns, you know, rounds of ammunition, firearms, weapons and so on; not concerned with that. He is concerned with the

property value.

Madam Deputy Speaker, communities—well, again, they go with this mantra. You will hear all day today—I promise you, you will hear from the other side an unending chorus about the areas being targeted and who are the people, and we do not like these people and we do not like that people. And I just read to you, people from Westmoorings. I just read that for you. So it has absolutely nothing to do with that. And then coming to tell us, we are in murky waters and so on. You know, I want to tell the Member for Port of Spain South, if tonight or tomorrow night, whenever, he has to see netball 12 o'clock in the night, it is because the society is a bit safer today than it was two years ago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I honestly do not think you can go to see netball if the PNM was in power. I do not even think you could play netball if the PNM was in power. Well, if the UNC too. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I leave that there.

The safeguard order now. The Member for Port of Spain North/St Ann's West raised another issue, which, again, I had to rush to my copy of the Bill, unless I am mistaken—and the *Hansard* will bear out who is mistaken or not. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West carried an argument that when notification gets to the Parliament, to the Speaker of the Parliament, through that process involving the President, giving the explanation and so on for a closed area, it has to go to a committee of the Parliament. And then a committee has to—

Mr. Young SC: Negative resolution.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Negative resolution. Negative resolution of the Parliament is simple. There is no committee involved. Negative resolution in Parliament, you get a notification here and you go and file your business within a few days. There is the Standing Order that provides for filing.

Mr. Lee: Twenty-one days.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Twenty-one days you file a Motion for a negative resolution, to negative a resolution. What this has to do with the committee meeting and Parliament convening? You can file any time you want. It will go on the Order Paper and we do that as business; parliamentary business. There is no big issue with that. That has been in our practice here for years and years and years.

Hon. Member: Decades.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Decades. And generally, Opposition Members will file their Motions to negative a resolution within the prescribed time. But that is done so that the action that needs to be taken can be taken. There is a balance. There is a balance in the process that you need the action to be taken immediately. But if it is later proven that the Parliament thinks otherwise, then so be it. But he made a big thing out of that.

“Within seven days of making an Order...”

I am at clause 11(2):

“Within seven days of making an Order under subsection (1), the President shall deliver to the Speaker for presentation to the House of Representatives, a statement setting out the specific grounds on which the decision to make the Order was based.”

This is simple enough. Within seven days, I think, yes. And you will have the explanation. You can file a Motion.

In fact, you can file a Motion on Private Members’ Day to debate anything you want, including why an area is a closed area, what happened in this area, why the Commissioner of Police and the major in the army decided this, why this happened, how is this working. You can file any time. There are instruments

available to you in Opposition to do that. I am not sure they understand that quite frankly.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this matter before us here is a matter that is critical. For the first time in our history—and this has some precedent elsewhere. But for the first time in our history here, you have a situation where, based on advice, we have the Prime Minister and the legal enforcement Ministers, and so on—Attorney General, Minister of Homeland Security, Minister of Defence, Minister of Justice, and so on, have now presented us with a Bill. It deals with the security problem. It requires now a legal architecture capable of a sustained intelligence-driven intervention. This provides, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we will now take this matter of fighting crime, look at it from the perspective of geographic areas by way of districts; look at it at protecting the rights of citizens, including the training of those involved in human rights and communication and conflict management and what have you, dispute resolution and so on. This provides for judicial oversight as well.

So look at the steps the Government is taking: Statutory safeguards, parliamentary protection, training, reporting, judicial oversight of detention, body-worn cameras, protocols, complaint recording and, of course, a two-year sunset clause in 24 months. That is it. We do an analysis and look at and see how, you know, effective has this been, and we move. But the Government is doing something and taking strong action. And the Member for Siparia and the Members of the National Security Council and the Government should be complimented for taking this step; must be complimented.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And it is an approach that also supports another principle called “strategic resource concentration”. There is no need that you go now and

just—I do not want to use extremely violent language. But you do not just scatter shots all over the place and take resources and move them all over the place because you are policing across Trinidad and Tobago. You are now focusing resources where it is needed the most. And that may change. It may change. That is why we have several districts. It may change. It may be this district today; next month, another district.

We are aware—and Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West does not have to tell anybody—the criminal elements, like law-abiding elements too, migrate and move themselves strategically for a different purpose. So this is why we have this district. And this is why this new architecture comes to work with the police and defence force. So you have someone in the rank of superintendent or above, and you have the major or above in charge now of this district with a new framework, specialized training, resources, and they will deal with this matter as the criminal elements migrate and so on.

We spoke about firearms and ammunition, and so on, and there is an evidential link to the Bill, that the seizure of illegal firearms and ammunition, Madam Deputy Speaker, has meant that we have had reductions in murder. All these years we are hearing about illegal firearms coming into this country, weapons, and that is linked to the gang killing and 60 per cent of murders and so on. What did we do? What did they do before? They continued.

You know, today, the Member for Port of Spain South, told us, he said we have laws on the book, offences against the person, and so on, we have all these laws, but we have always had those laws. From Crown colony government, we have had those laws. Those were ordinances and so on. Did they work? When you were there, did they work with the highest murder rate in 2022? Clearly, it is insufficient. Therefore, you have to look for a new framework with the checks and

balances in place. And you have 24 months to do this, you know. We are not doing this for the lifetime. In 24 months, you can assess and see if this is working, this is not, and so on.

So, on what grounds would you object? What motivates an Opposition to object to a government introducing laws for more stringent policing, more coordinated efforts between police and defence force? What would motivate you to do that? To cry that, you know, people will be abused? Let me remind the hon. Member that while 264 persons were charged under the PDO, many of the others are subject to investigations—ongoing investigations. They may not have been charged yet, but they are being investigated. Because the reason they were there in the first place is because they had intelligence. So, this is really a continuation of a very strong stance on crime, on the criminal elements. And the criminal elements are here, there and everywhere.

The small man, as we say, typically, would live in one area, but the big fish, again as we say, typically, would be from the next area. And the Prime Minister has announced this zero tolerance on criminal elements at all levels, whether it is the small man, the big fish, the shark, the whale. Because you cannot continue as if it is business as usual.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, you have 15 more minutes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Deputy Speaker, we also have data to demonstrate the need for district-like—the setting of districts as well. We have data to demonstrate that. And the data is very clear in terms of the amount of PDO applications that have come to the desk of the Minister of Homeland Security;

where they are located in terms of the existing police divisions; and how the police districts now, which are more synchronized with the municipal corporation districts, how that could become an effective tool. Because presumably, the municipal corporations, by district, are smaller than a police division. So you actually—in a way, you are using a magnifying glass and zooming down now on areas that may have some strategic purpose in terms of fighting the criminal elements, where they operate, what they do and how they move.

In terms of—I do not want to get too much into it, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are other speakers that will come after me. But in terms of the overall relevance of this, there can be absolutely no doubt at this time. There can be no doubt as to the importance of this. And I was taken aback, Madam Deputy Speaker, just this morning when I read the newspaper—and I do read the newspaper, and buy it as well.

3.00 p.m.

So, I was taken back, the new Bill raises questions by the *Express*, and in the editorial, it says clearly, while there are questions and so on, and people are free to raise those things, indicated that the new Special Operations Bill, SOB, and the only people who have to sob are the criminal elements and the finances of criminals. The Members of the Opposition do not have to SOB unless they want to. So, the Special Operations Bill laid in Parliament last Wednesday is a more balanced piece of legislation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The SOB includes several safeguards. Several safeguards. They have acknowledged this in an editorial today, that this is balanced, it includes safeguards to protect, and the Act itself is legal, it is constitutional, as the Attorney General clearly this morning illustrates. It is

constitutional. You want a next Attorney General, Mr. Ramlogan is on the compound and will solidify that—that position that this is legal, it is constitutional, there is no violation of the law in that sense. So that the Members opposite have found themselves in political quicksand. That is what has happened today. They are in political quicksand, and there is a famous saying: When you are in quicksand, do not make any sudden moves, because you will go deeper.

Because they are telling themselves that they are not going to support this because they will appear to be on the side of criminals. You will appear that you are supporting the criminal element because you do not support progressive legislation. Some of my friends from the Lower Bench of the Opposition, I can see in their face that they want to support this.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I can see it. Yeah, I can see it. But they have to tow sometimes a very messy line, and they will have to do what they have to do. But you can see on their faces that they are keen to support the legislation. Because Madam Deputy Speaker, they understand that this is designed to protect not only their own specific constituencies but bordering areas as well—their own relatives, their own families. They are also aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the persons who are involved in criminal activity, they are the ones to fear from this legislation. They will be shaking all now. They will be shaking in their boots, trembling at the knees by this discussion taking place today. Because they believe that at 12 last night—was it 12 last night?

Hon. Member: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “Dey believe dat by 12 last night dey gone clear”. “We get tru”. “We back in business”. They are believing that the PNM will support

them. They are believing that the PNM, as of one minute past 12, the PNM supports them, and they get through. But we will not have any of that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We will not have any of that at all. We will not have any of that, Madam Deputy Speaker. I call upon our colleagues opposite to take a strong stance to ensure that you support this measure. We have already dealt with the declaration of closed areas. So, please nobody, do not stand up on the next side and say, a closed area is a whole district and the whole of Trinidad and so on. Please do not do that again and embarrass yourself.

We have dealt with this issue of the notification to the Speaker; you come to the Parliament; the Speaker gets that in seven days; puts it to the House, and you file a Motion to annul. You take it as a public document, so you go and file a Motion for Private Members Day to debate it as well, if you wish. We have spoken at length of the entry-exit permits, and those are matters—they talk as if this is the first time in life we have entry-exit permit for anything. You all remember COVID? You need a piece of paper on your motor car? Yeah, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was a gatekeeper at Piarco.

Mr. Tancoo: He locked out people.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He locked out people, and then brought in the sanctioned Vice-President—

Mr. Young: Careful [*Inaudible*].

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and then led to the deterioration of relations between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

Mr. Young: Careful.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, no, no, and do not run from that. You are the reason Maduro in jail.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You are the reason he is in jail. You are the reason he found himself there. Because of what he and the former Prime Minister were doing—anyway, Madam Deputy Speaker, I leave that right there.

The entry-exit permit. So, again, painting this notion that somewhere will become a closed area. You go to sleep and it is open, and when you wake up, it is closed and you do not know. This is a country where people, if their flight delayed by one hour, they will know. This is a country where people know what is happening in Port of Spain, everybody is on their phone or their children or relative or something. You have radio. You have the police themselves if they are in an area, inform residents and so on. So, we will not spend too much time on that—the areas for curfew. Now, let me get the next point very clear.

Again, talking about curfew, we have had the State of Emergency terminate last night, whatever. There was no curfew, there was none. There were some people in this country who probably wish there was a curfew. Ah, maybe some of your spouses and so on. So, they probably wish that there was a curfew, but there was no curfew. So, this matter of the curfew, this does not mean by the law we are passing today that automatically we will have a curfew. Automatically, we will have an entry-exit permit system. Automatically, we will have the whole country as a closed area.

That does not mean—it means that it is in the law, in the event that you need that type of support, that type of control. You need to limit the movement of people and so on. It is a tool for the declared area, and you can introduce a curfew. But the law is not providing that there will be a curfew. That will be determined, if necessary. We have gone through how much months of the State of Emergency, unless I am mistaken, there was no curfew, none. So, do not assume that the whole

country will be under curfew and every closed area or every district is under a curfew. That may never arise at all. You do not know if and when it will arise.

Search and seizure is an important tool as well is a justification for rapid search and seizure capability. Again, based on reasonable suspicion, and when you go before your magistrate and your High Court judge and so on in the process that outlined here, the lawyers will tell you they will know how to argue their reasonable suspicion issues and so on. If there is malice or something is done improperly, illegally and so on, the magistrate court will know what to do. The High Court judge will know what to do. So, that is that is clear. Arrest detention is 48 hours, I believe it is. High-intensity enforcement, it gives this opportunity as well.

While in this Bill, what is also important, there are several provisions that provide for police accountability in recording matters. If you seize, for example, you have to make proper record and receipt and so on for those persons who are involved. Identifying disclosure as they call it, ballistic registration, and of course, the sunset clause, which nobody raised I think on that side. I think they did not read that part of the Bill. They did not read that.

So that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill is area-specific, threshold-based, time-limited. Detention is subject to magistrate and High Court oversight. It does not recreate necessarily the PDO mechanism. There is a separate position for that, of course. In terms of the criticism raised by those opposite, we would like to indicate to them: This Bill creates a new national operational context. That is really what it does. It is a new context for dealing with the very serious crime, murders, gang violence, and so on. It requires specific, reasonable grounds for a particular area to be deemed a closed area and that is because ordinary law enforcement is insufficient. Because if ordinary law enforcement was sufficient,

we do not need to be here. Why we need to be here if ordinary law enforcement was sufficient? So, so clearly that is a focus of the Bill.

Section 15 requires:

“...reasonable suspicion that an offence...has been committed or is about to be committed.”

It includes statutory safeguards and so on for female searchers, and it includes, of course, dealing with the matter of privilege documents and so on, and seizure reports and receipts. The military involvement and let me get to that because that is the next choir—we will hear a piece of that choir as we go along to—police society, police State, militarizing the society. Look around at history in the world. What history are you looking around with? During the State of Emergency, this country had more party and all-inclusive than any country in the world. What are you looking at police State that people cannot move around, cannot do anything.

I know of no group of people in the last State of Emergency who complained that they could not move around, they could not do this, they could not do that. It was probably one of the best Carnivals, Moruga/Tableland—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—one of the best Carnivals ever. In fact, the Carnival folks may miss the State of Emergency because, yes, they probably had extra security.

Madam Deputy Speaker, militarizing a society, as the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West would want you to believe, that is not in these types of circumstances. First to begin, that is where governments are generally not elected by democratic means. Generally, not—this Government on April 25th—

Mr. Lee: April 28th.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: April 28th? It feels longer than that—was elected by democratic means.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: This Government is democratically elected with a majority.

Mr. Tancoo: Unlike them.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Unlike them—and, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is no issue of militarizing the society. There is a parliamentary democracy, in fact, some people opposite complain that Parliament meets too often, they complain. Parliament meets often here, elected, there is an independent judiciary, and Madam Deputy Speaker, so the issue of militarizing a society does not stand here. The military is helping the police. They have resources, manpower, and so on, equipment, they are helping and working with the police under a statutory framework for the first time in life, I think, for the first time. That is a significant achievement as well, that we should underline in closing.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That it is the first time that the military will work with the police under a statutory framework so, nobody could complain about people acting outside the law. This is the law, and hopefully, this will become the law at the end of today. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member. Member for St. Ann's East.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you very kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I rise today representing the constituents of St. Ann's East, at a time in this country that is pregnant—not pregnant with possibility, not pregnant with potential,

Madam Deputy Speaker, but pregnant with fear and distrust in a government that has proven unruly.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: A government that promised winning, Madam Deputy Speaker, while dragging this country to unprecedented depths, regionally and globally. Madam Deputy Speaker, he played hard. People are frustrated, depressed, hoodwinked by a Prime Minister that promised to love them. Madam Deputy Speaker, allow me to place the Special Operations Bill before us in a wider context. What kind of society is this UNC Government seeking to build, and what is the UNC's preferred relationship with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? This is not about whether Trinidad and Tobago needs police, and I want to be clear. We need an effective police service.

We need police officers who are properly trained, properly equipped, and properly supported. We need the police to confront the gangs, to deal with murder, extortion, kidnapping, violence and there is no responsible parliamentarian, certainly none on this side, Madam Deputy Speaker, who would oppose that. The PNM is in support of policing.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: But the question is, Madam Deputy Speaker, what happens when policing becomes the Government's principal response—the principal response—to problems that are fundamentally social as well as criminal. In this contribution, I am going to play some of our government's policies side by side, and I ask that citizens pay careful attention to the picture that emerges from these comparisons. The citizens will decide for themselves, as they do when they vote, whether the UNC is leading this country down the road of hyper policing. My colleague mentioned apartheid—

Mr. Young: “And dey make ah joke wit it”.

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:—and they laughed. But the citizens of this country must decide for themselves. Our role here as the Opposition is to raise the awareness, to raise the issues, because democracy demands vigilance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will speak to the Special Operations Bill, which is before us now, with the removal of the social transformation component, which was included, though it was poorly developed in the ZOSO. I am going to draw a parallel between that and what is happening in our schools. What is happening in terms of the increase in the police service, the planned expansion, and we are going to talk a bit about that and how all of these things are linked. Because Madam Deputy Speaker, the question is not whether we should fight crime, of course, we must fight crime. The question I want us to consider is how this Government chooses to fight crime? What institutions the Government is building to do that and what it tells us about the society we are constructing?

This Special Operations Bill is not simply a policing Bill. Let us recap a bit what we are actually being asked to debate in front of this Parliament. It is not merely legislation for an occasional emergency. This Bill establishes an entire architecture of policing districts and special operations across Trinidad and Tobago. It is an architecture. Clause 4 divides the country into policing districts. Clause 5 establishes a Head of Special Operations. Clause 7 speaks to the head of military assistance, and clause 10 provides that the Head of the Special Operations may conduct special operations in a district with or without the help of the assistance of the defence force. So, it is clear that the UNC is building an institutional framework for special security operations. This is not fly-by-night. This is not a one-off. The public must pay close attention to clauses 10 to 17.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I placed the link, the parliamentary link, for the Bill on my Facebook page yesterday, and I want to encourage citizens, take a look at the Bill. Democracy demands vigilance. Read it, read it.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Consider what you are seeing there, and the Parliament quite helpfully puts explanatory notes to make it easier to understand exactly what is going on in all the clauses. Read that and remember what has happened to hundreds of persons detained for months under PDOs under this UNC Government, and then just simply release without charge. Months—mothers, and their children, I personally know. People who were just so gutted, lost their jobs, just simply detained and released. No arrest.

Listen to some of the experiences on social media from some of the persons who were just released without arrest, no charges. I invite the public to do that and understand that that is the level of tyranny that the UNC is capable of.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: When somebody shows you who they are, “wat de saying is”? Believe them the first time. It is not the first time that we have seen this from the UNC. It is not the first time you have seen this level of tyranny. So, when we consider this Special Operations Bill, I want our citizens to read it, remembering what just occurred under the SOE.

Clause 10 of the Bill says that:

“... officers...”—participating—”...in special operations...have all such rights, powers, authority, privileges, and immunities...as a constable...under the Police Service Act.” Clause 11 allows an:

“...area to be closed...”

Citizens of this country, born here, restricted in their homes, whenever the UNC believes that public safety and peace are threatened, because my colleague was at pains to explain that the use of the term “President” effectively means the Prime Minister and her Cabinet. It effectively means the Prime Minister and her Cabinet.

3.20 p.m.

So therefore, the closing of an area within a district is done on the basis of the UNC’s belief that public safety and peace are threatened. I ask citizens to remember, just remember what just happened. You heard some conversations taking place. On the basis of some conversations, a grandmother was locked up. Just remember that. Toting feelings. “Somebody geh lock up for dat?” I want us to remember, democracy demands vigilance. It is this same thin-skinned UNC Government that will now have the power—given to them by clauses 11 to 14 of this Bill, they will now have the power to close an area, declare a curfew, and lock you into your home because they, this same thin-skinned Government, believe that there is a threat to public safety and peace.

Once an area is closed, clause 12 provides that:

“...no person shall enter or leave...”—the—“...area without a permit...”—subject to specified exemptions.

You breach that and the penalty is:

“...fifty thousand dollars and imprisonment for one year.”

You, citizen, “who born here”, locked in your home, now requiring a permit, and that is that hyper-policing.

Clause 13 permits the Head of Special Operations to establish cordons, barriers and roadblocks. Clause 14 is where the curfew comes in, requiring you to stay in your premises during specified hours. All of this is on the basis of the

Prime Minister and her Cabinet believing, on whatever basis, that your area is a threat to peace. Whose peace? Madam Deputy Speaker, these are substantial powers, substantial powers.

In clause 15, a police officer conducting a special operation in a closed area can search a place, your home, your vehicle, and search you, without a warrant. Just cast your mind back to all of those who got picked up under the SOE, released without arrest, hundreds of them, without charge; released without charge, no charge. So in clause 15 of this Bill, they could search your house, your vehicle. They can search you without a warrant where there is “reasonable suspicion”, based on whose opinion, that an offence is being committed, has been committed, or is about to be committed. They can also seize the vehicle, any article or document that may assist in preventing or controlling public disorder, or that may have substantial evidential value. The Government is giving themselves a significant new set of coercive powers.

Citizens must ask, “What is the Government doing on the other side of that equation?” Because at this point, we must remember a truth, that you cannot police your way out of a community’s social dysfunction. This Bill contains an elaborate architecture for security intervention, but where is the equivalent architecture for social transformation in those same communities? If we are increasing the Government’s capacity to detect, to intervene, to arrest and detain, then we are right to ask, “How is this same Government increasing their capacity to prevent children and communities from falling prey to criminality?” Because the national security strategy is not a one-sided thing. There must be two sides. One is downstream, and that is the security response, but where is the upstream response, the preventative response? Where is that? That was in the last ZOSO. It

was there at least. It was not well developed; it was not, nor well-thought-out, but at least it was there.

We come back here now for the reformed ZOSO and that is completely taken out. So if we are strengthening the downstream machinery, the security, while the upstream machinery, which is the prevention, is inadequate, what are we going to look like in five years? What exactly is the society going to look like, less freedom, more police, more students locked up, more oppression? This Bill is worse than the ZOSO.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: At least the ZOSO said, “We will secure the community, but we will simultaneously transform the conditions.” As I said, it was not so well thought out, needed some work, but at least they were there.

This current Bill says, “We will establish policing districts, conduct special operations, provide military assistance, close areas, establish cordons, impose curfews, search, seize, arrest, detain.” Where is the protection and the prevention and the transformation, Madam Deputy Speaker? Where is that in this Bill? So, okay, it is not in the Bill, so let us examine the wider government policies then. If it is not here, then it has to be somewhere, because it is impossible that we are saying that all we are going to do is police, but we are not transforming. So if it is not here, let us look at where it is.

Where is the expanded MiLAT? Where is the expanded CCC? Where are the youth camps? Where is the expanded suite of youth training programmes?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Where is the expanded family services to help dysfunctional families? Where are the programmes to give vulnerable parents and single mothers work to take care of their children? Where is the expanded Student

Support Services in our schools? Where are these programmes? Where are all these social safety nets put in place by the PNM since the UNC has come into office? Why have they not been expanded in the same way that UNC is seeking to expand the policing in our schools?

We are having a more normalized police presence in our schools. Our Student Support Services dismantled, not one contract renewed since May 2025. Hundreds of officers out of work, while our children are in school facing police with their hands “stand up” in the air, in an arrest posture in the sun. What is happening with the police service—significant expansion in the police service. The plan of the police service, as published on their website, is to increase the police service by 25 per cent over the next five years; more police, police in the schools, police in the communities. Police posts all over the place. No social work increase, none of that.

So, if you look at all these things, so you have your police in the schools, more police there, you have dismantled student support in your schools, you have an expansion of the police service, and in the Special Operations Bill, which we are discussing now, you have security powers with no social transformation architecture. That has been taken out.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: So if we look at these four approaches of the Government together, they are all happening at the same time. So we cannot just look at this Bill in isolation, we have to look at this Bill in terms of what other things are happening. What other things are the Government showing in terms of their initiatives? Therefore, viewed together, we can see that the movement is coming from prevention, intervention, rehabilitation, and it is much more focused on

detection, enforcement, and containment. So there is a total shift in the policy and the approach of the Government to society.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we must address crime, we must, but there are two ways to do it, and they can work in tandem. They can work together. There is the social and developmental intervention, that is your counselling, your social work, your psychosocial support, psychological support, family intervention, behavioural intervention, education support, and youth development. That is your social, developmental approach to crime fighting, and then there is the approach that this Bill deals with security intervention, police, search, arrest, detention, prosecution. The point is that those two interventions serve two different purposes, and that is why, if a government is seeking to expand one as greatly as they are in this Bill, then they must also show the citizens that they are willing to expand the other.

So that when you are dealing with containment and crime, you also do something to protect your citizens and prevent them from getting there. Because if you are not doing that, then what you are actually doing is creating a pipeline for more and more policing. This Bill before us focuses only, exclusively, on the policing intervention, with absolutely no preventative measures for crime prevention. If we look around in the wider government policies, that is not there either. So exactly what is being done to transform our society?

The Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Community Development, all have a role, along with the Ministry of National Security, in an effective crime plan, a holistic crime plan that deals with containing criminality, as well as preventing it. Sounds like a plan. If the State is adding police capacity, but the social infrastructure for prevention is not there, then we are creating a pipeline of criminality. The State, the Government, we have to

intervene earlier. What kind of society do we want? You see, because this Bill gives the Government great capacity to establish operations, deploy military assistance, close off areas, and so on, and we are comparing that with the school situation, the police situation, and we are seeing clearly, what emerges clearly is this pattern of hyper-policing.

The Government may point to clauses 5 and 7, and they speak about the training of the police to deal with the community members. So it speaks to the training in human rights, the use of force, community engagement and conflict de-escalation. So the Government may say, that even in a closed area, the police are not going in there to abuse persons, but that is not the point of this, because community engagement is a different thing from community development. Community engagement is a different thing from societal transformation, and training an officer to engage respectfully with the community, that is good. But that is not the same, or it cannot substitute for providing social workers and psychologists. It cannot substitute for youth training, youth engagement. It cannot substitute for helping dysfunctional families. It cannot substitute for educational intervention. It cannot substitute for building a pathway away from gang dependency.

One is about how the Government exercises coercive authority, and the other is about how the Government changes the circumstances in which that type of approach becomes necessary, and that really, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the central concern. Because to put the issue as plainly as possible, a strong police service, absolutely necessary; a strong defence force, necessary; effective special operations may also be necessary. No one is saying, no, but a strong police state is not the same thing as a strong society. The two must not be confused.

A strong society is created by social transformation, and this is the essence of what we are saying. Where fewer children are recruited into gangs, fewer students are pushed out of school, fewer dysfunctional families, fewer young people see criminality as their only option for a better life. Fewer communities reach the point where they may have to be closed, and cordoned off, and get permits to go into their own homes as citizens of this country. So I ask the Government three questions, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will ask it slowly, and I am hoping that someone on that side will be able to answer. What provisions are being made for social transformation in this Bill, or even outside of it? I am asking this on the basis of my constituents reaching out to me with their concerns, and I represent them in this Parliament, and so I ask the Government these questions on their behalf.

What provisions are being made for social transformation in this Bill, or even outside of it? What is the Government's measurable investment in the institutions that prevent criminality? What is your measurable investment in Student Support Services, social workers, counsellors, psychologists, youth programmes, and community development? What is your measurable investment in preventing crime relative to your investment in responding to criminality? The third question: When this Bill expires after two years, according to clause 26, what will the Government use to measure success? Will it be the number of arrests, the number of weapons seized, the number of searches, special operations, or will it be fewer murders, fewer gang recruits, fewer children entering the criminal justice system, fewer school arrests? In other words, Madam Deputy Speaker, how is the Government going to measure success, in statistics or in people? Because those are very different measures of success, Madam Deputy Speaker.

A successful society, and any crime prevention initiative, should measure success in people, how our children are succeeding, how our families are succeeding, how our young people are being trained, how our young people may have a second chance. Even if secondary school was not a successful experience, what is their second chance? How our young people that need to escape their community instead of being sent home? How residential alternatives for our young people are being supplied? How we are expanding MiLAT, not just to include boys but for girls who need that support now. Yes, that is what the PNM was doing.

Therefore, the question is, what is the UNC doing?—because I do not see those measures being put in place at all. What do we see, we see established architecture for more police. What about those that need the transformative approach? Security can be used to either control or it can be an element of a wider plan to transform. So if you are going to use security to control, then you do exactly what this Bill is saying here; you close the area, cordon it off, restrict movement, search, seize, arrest, detain. That is when you want to just use security to establish control.

3.40 p.m.

But security as an element of social transformation, means that you are securing the community while simultaneously you are strengthening the resilience of that community. You are saving young children from entering that vicious cycle of criminality so that they do not end up in the prison and they do not end up on the wrong side.

But what is the State's responsibility there? It is one thing to say parents have to do what they have to do, but if parents are not, then what? Because when they end up in the jail, do we not still have to feed and clothe and support them? Is

it not the same taxpayers that have to do that? So why not spend some of that ensuring that the social transformative programmes that the UNC met in place are expanded? Or even if you add something to it, no problem with that. You are in power; you are in charge. But to dismantle all of those programmes, to totally cut our youth off from training, taking away school social workers from our schools, guidance counsellors, diagnostic specialists, special education instructors, then what are we doing?

What are we saying to the young people that need the help from the State? What are we saying to young people that need the Government's input to break the cycle of criminality? What are we saying to them? There is no hope for you? Just go home? And when you go home, you get a permit to go inside, and then you cannot come back out, eh, because you are in a closed area. Madam Deputy Speaker, what is the Government doing to prevent the next generation from needing the very powers that they are passing in this Bill today?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Do you require your additional 15 minutes?

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Yes. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker, are the police becoming the default answer to problems that education and social services were created to address? Is the choice police or nothing? A police officer does not and cannot replace a social worker addressing chronic absenteeism, dysfunctional families and trauma. You know how many children are experiencing trauma in our society? Family members killed, parents killed; these children are in our schools. Close the community all you want, but who is helping these children to escape the trauma and therefore helping them to make wiser choices about their behaviour and education?

A psychologist does not replace a detective. They both have their roles. The question is whether this Government is investing in both sides of the strategy proportionately. By way of this Bill and not just this Bill but the wider initiatives and the policies of the Government, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear that the Government is changing the principle of how this nation deals with crime. And the principle has always been to address criminality, but to also address the transformation and prevent crime.

You cannot secure a community without addressing the conditions within the community. You cannot arrest your way out of unemployment. A patrol does not solve family dysfunction. You cannot search your way out of educational failure. You cannot put a curfew on trauma.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: I do not care how much you police; you cannot police a child into becoming a successful adult. At some point, the Government has to do the work, hard work, along with addressing criminality in changing the conditions in which crime takes root. The PNM is very clear on what we had in place, and that was dismantled by the UNC. The question is, what does the UNC have in place? We have to be careful about creating a school-to-jail pipeline for children who need support. And that is what hyper-policing does. And I encourage every citizen to take a look at it, google what hyper-policing is, and tell me if that is not what the UNC is engaged in.

An effective crime plan involves not just the police, but it is a whole-of-government approach involving the Ministry of Education, family services, youth development, sports, and community development. Because a child who is absent from school becomes an education issue. But if that absenteeism is because of a dysfunctional family, it is a family services issue. And

if the child is recruited by a gang, then that is a national security issue. And if the child commits a crime, then that is a policing issue. But it is the same child, the same child. And that is why intervention from different Ministries, a whole-of-government approach, is important.

So, the only way we can solve crime is by putting a holistic strategy in place, and this Bill is not it. This Bill is not a holistic strategy to solve crime. And there is nothing else that I can point to in the Government's policies, in what they have been implementing, that shows that there is any attention being paid to prevention. This Bill is evidence that the UNC is intent on building a nation that controls people without simultaneously transforming. And the Government has a responsibility to build a society in which fewer citizens become vulnerable to crime in the first place.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, having established that there is a difference between governing a society and merely policing a society, I submit for the consideration of the citizens who are looking on that this Special Operations Bill is simply about policing our society, not governing us, not providing a network of support for those who need it the most, to not become statistics and victims of criminality. The PNM Opposition, Madam Deputy Speaker, categorically rejects the ZOSO Bill in whatever incarnation it comes in, and this current one, we reject that as well.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: The PNM is committed to social transformation even as criminality is controlled. The People's National Movement places people over policing and will not support this Bill.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: We will not support a Bill which would see the basic rights

of citizens trampled in a frenzied attempt to continue to exert control over a population already wearied by the UNC's subjugation through prolonged states of emergency. The People's National Movement stands for the people. It is the first thing in our name. We stand for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: And we once again reject not just the UNC, but their poorly disguised ZOSO Bill that is meant to keep our people in subjugation. The people of Trinidad and Tobago depend on us to stand for them, and the People's National Movement will not disappoint them. Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Couva North.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*] **The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Jearlean John):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to join this debate. I think it was important that there is an intervention because we need to bring some sanity.

Mr. Tancoo: Yes.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: You understand? Because today I think the PNM is suffering from selective amnesia, and it is wrong. It is just plain wrong, because to solve any problem you first have to admit that the problem exists. And we all know inside of here, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we have a crime problem. And the Member who just sat down would have admitted that this problem, in a large part, emerges from some of the same areas over which they preside. We are not saying this with any degree of joy or happiness as a government. We are saying this because a problem exists and we must bring a solution to the problem.

For 10 years, 10 years, those folks sat on this side of the aisle, and they did absolutely nothing.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: For 10 years, they did absolutely nothing. All these things they are talking about, this plan and that plan, where is the measurement? Where are the solutions? Where are the outcomes? What did it solve? Every single morning, another young man going into the grave. And they did—it came to a point where they then started to romanticize the thing. You know, normal people go into a church and they sing “Nearer my God to Thee?”

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]—yeah.

Hon. J. John: No, they were—“Carry me Away”, and they are dancing. They normalized death. They normalized murder. There were guys who were saying, “If I live to be 23 years old, that is a grand old age”.

Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. J. John: “And I am ready to die.” What is your career? “I am a shooter. I am a spotter.” And these folks sat with that, and they agreed with it, and they encouraged it. And today there is a new government voted in by a majority.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: And we are not voted in to do the same thing. We are voted in to do something different. And we are going to do something different. Because perhaps, Madam Deputy Speaker, the most troubling development during that decade was not simply the rise of crime, as I said, but it was the attempt to normalize it. Normalize home invasion, normalize robbery. The crime plan was “who dead, dead”, you know. “Who dead, dead.”

Hon Member: Yes.

Hon. J. John: Because what we are concerned about is that the rich must get

richer.

Hon Member: Yes.

Hon. J. John: “Who dead, dead.” Lives were expendable. So many young mothers could not afford to bury “no dead”. But they had to find that money. You telling me today, are you coming to talk? You all should not talk. Please. You do not have to agree with what we are bringing. But please, have nothing to say. You have lost the right to say anything in this democracy.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: I remember sitting in the Senate, while Ministers on their Bench talking about, “crime was a global phenomenon”. And that was led by their Prime Minister at the time, eh. They said that crime was what—? A public health emergency, so, just accept it. “Take dat and cool it.” We were told that many other countries were facing similar challenges and at that time—I mean, there we were, we reduced to comparison and explanation instead of confronting the crisis with urgency and resolve. Today we have urgency. Today we have resolve. And today we are saying, if we lose one life to murder, it is one life too many. We do not care where they are from.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: “We doh care who they are. I doh care who you are and where yuh from.” It is just one life too many, and we are not going to have it.

So over time, violence, something really dangerous happened, and violence began to feel normal, normal. And that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is precisely why the people of this country rejected them on April 28th, because they are saying, not one more life must be lost. They voted us in, not to do the same thing, to do something different. And that is why we are here today, doing something different.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: And if you have something different to say, do not talk. The people of Trinidad and Tobago voted for leadership with courage and the political will to confront the crime crisis directly. We are not in a popularity contest, you know. We are saying not how many more must die, you know. We are saying not one more must be lost to murder.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: So during the campaign of 2025, we made no easy promises. We did not pretend that the problem would disappear overnight. What we said to the population was simple. Restoring safety would require serious measures and serious leadership. And that is what we bring here to the Parliament today. Serious measures, serious leadership. We are not pandering. And we make no excuses for not playing the fool.

A state of emergency that we have just come to the end of, is not a normal instrument of governance. No administration invokes it lightly. And that is why it was not used as any tool. It was just used to give yourself a breathing space. And you ask, where is the crime plan? “Where is allyuh crime plan?” You tell me where your crime plan was. Everybody stands up here and criticizes, talking rubbish. And nobody says, where is the crime plan? Or what it is, what you all had in place, what did it do? How many lives did it save? You still had 620 murders. So, what did it do? It did nothing much. Okay, admit you tried. “But it eh work.” And if what you tried did not work, do not try and tell us to do the same thing. We are not going to do that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: Madam Deputy Speaker, as we stand here today, on this Abercrombie Street—is it?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. J. John: Good. The youths from Duncan Street dare not go to St. Paul Street next door, you know. And they know that. That is where they are supposed to traverse. “Dey cah go dey.” They are saying, we “cah go dey”. I could walk, you know. “When I go in town, dey does call me boss.”

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. J. John: I go to your constituency. I am invited, and I go. I show up. I do not know if you could go. I will invite you the next time I am going, right?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Hon. J. John: St. Paul Street cannot go to Mango Rose. Beverly Hills cannot go to Duncan Street. You know that. “Dat eh normal.” That is not normal. “Man laying claim to land that dey hah no deed to, but that is normal to allyuh.” How could that be normal? That cannot be normal.

Our little bright young men and women behind artificial cages and boundaries and borders. How is that normal? That is not normal. They cannot even go to a fete down in the west. They have to take a boat, you know. Deputy Speaker. They have to take a boat. They cannot drive on the road.

Hon Member: They will take the ferry.

Hon. J. John: Which ferry? “They can’t go on no ferry.” They have to go on a pirogue to go down there. It is not normal. Mothers cannot walk in peace. Young girls, little children, they stand the risk of being shot. That is not normal. Today we take a stand and we make no apologies for taking a stand.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: The circulation of high-powered firearms across our neighbourhoods is not normal. You know, when we came into government, the

then outgoing commissioner—was it customs, that is what you call it? It is the person in charge of customs, the customs bigwig, the commissioner—

Mr. Hosein: The comptroller

Hon. J. John: The comptroller, that is it—wrote to us and said, she now suddenly grew a conscience. She got consciousness. I say that without any apologies, you know. About three months before she left, said, “Listen to me, I am going—we were examining 150 containers per day”. “We are going now to 60.” Because you know what? Illegal guns and drugs are coming into our legal port. The woman now finds that out as we reach in. Yeah, swear to God.

So she moved that from 150 to 60. Messed up the entire business community. The Minister of Finance, myself, the Minister of Homeland Security and the Minister of Defence, we met. I remember the Minister of Finance begged that professional, like a baby, like a child, said, “Move it from 60 please, to even 85, because we are going to shut down businesses in this country”.

Now, realizes that, what—? They have no scanners on the Port of Port of Spain. They have no scanners on the port of PLIPDECO. Drugs and guns running free. “Weh yuh think killing people. Yuh think is catapult?” No, do not shake your head. “Up to now they ain’t have, and sling shot.” It was guns coming in illegally. I have her letter. We begged her like a child to give us a chance. Up to now, because the port and them, they learned how to suck eggs. You know, it is hard. So PLIPDECO will get theirs in October. The Port of Port of Spain told me in October; now they tell me it is next year, February, because they had this, they had that, they were watching their people and all kinds of “bullshit”. Sorry.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. J. John: You understand, right? That is what is going on. That is what this government encouraged. That PNM. Okay, that PNM. So do not come here now

and tell us what we are doing. What did you do?

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the facts and figures do not lie. Over the past decade, murder rates in Trinidad and Tobago, and the hon. Dr. Moonilal, he spoke about that in some detail. So that declined, in terms of where it moved from 624 murders. You know what is murder? “Murder is—you doh go and tell somebody, murder meh please, I want to dead please”, you know. That is an involuntary act. Nobody wants to beg to be murdered. “Nobody aint want to dead.” 624 in 2024. It fell in 2025. Why? There was one singular action that happened. People voted out the PNM. Voted them out. Chased them.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: And it fell to 369 in 2025. Following sustained security interventions, you understand, and the no-nonsense approach of one Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and Attorney General, the Commissioner of Police, all these Ministers she had.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: That is what happened. That was the single biggest thing, significant thing, to happen in this country.

So the decline is not incidental. It reflects a pattern that has been observed over time when extraordinary measures such as states of emergency are implemented, and law enforcement is given expanded operational space to disrupt organized criminal networks. What are we going to do? We can only use the tools that we have to use legally and constitutionally.

4.00 p.m.

You all are telling us, “Doh use the State of Emergency. Doh use ZOSO, NOSO, whatever.” What do you want us to do? What is your idea? You have come with nothing. All you are saying is, “If ah get back in”—which you will not,

by the way—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John:—“you go bring back CEPEP.” But it had CEPEP for 10 years, and it still had murders. So, we cannot continue to do the same thing and expect a different result. But, of course, that is the prescription for madness. So, in other words, what the Government is doing, it is really short-term stabilization and measures to give us the room to operate. And whatever it takes, we must bring this country back to sanity. We cannot continue to operate like this.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the only time anybody is taking any action is when the UNC is in office, you know. Because between the 2010 and 2015 term, the then Prime Minister, who is the now Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, she had commissioned a study by a professor, a deceased professor—it was chaired by the deceased Prof. Selwyn Ryan entitled: “No time to quit”—“and nobody cyah say—wah he name? Ryan—by any shape or form, is any UNC, all right? He eh no UNC, okay?” And that is how we govern. We take the talent wherever we find it. And they laid a report called: “No time to quit: Engaging Youth at Risk”. And the report examined causes of crime among youth in Trinidad and Tobago, and made recommendations for a reduction in those crimes. So, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar’s zero tolerance and attitude to crime is nothing new. What happened is that following her first term, there were 10 years of the PNM Government who did absolutely nothing, except blame citizens and blame victims alike. Today, I say, “Father, forgive them.” They do not know what they do. Thousands died that should not have died. Today, I think somebody was saying how many lives have been spared since we have been in office.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: Because man marked for death now can get locked up under a

PDO. You have to take the threats off the street. What do you think you got to do? You got to take the people off the street who they have identified as being a threat to society. The same people we are talking about that we want to protect, the aunties who have to go to the doctor and so—you think aunty could go to the doctor now? “Mr. Man putting he hand inside her breast where she hah de money and take it out, hitting her behind her head on Frederick Street and Charlotte Street. Wa yuh think? Yuh think is jokes we have out there?”

Little children cannot go to school. The person who comes into my office to clean—“well, I mean, me eh hoity-toity like de PNM,” so I talk to everyone. I asked, “How yuh going? How yuh son?” Her son is a security guard. “It had ah shooting up, so he could not go to work”, because people are behind these artificial barriers. That is not natural, and we have to admit that to ourselves. It is not natural. People cannot live like that.

So, when that committee—I am talking about then Prof. Ryan again—the report argued at the time:

“...that the male population that is more at risk of directly being caught in the criminal world of drugs, guns and deadly violent crime are of African descent...”

“I eh say so. So, doh come and say I am UNC, so ah targeting people”. It is what Selwyn Ryan said. Prof. Ryan said:

“...especially those who are located in urban ‘hotspots’ such as Laventille.” Unfortunately, because of the PNM’s inaction from when this was written and laid there, I think it was sometime in 2013 to, well, last year, that was allowed to mushroom, and to metastasize, and to normalize. And people accepted that that was the way to live.

“The Committee carried out its investigations with individual stakeholders,

correctional and training institutions,”—so, it was broad-based, you know. It was not narrow—“non-government and government supported organization. It hosted...”—several—“...National Consultations...in Trinidad...and Tobago; executed a full survey on youth and crime, comparing ‘hotspots’ with other areas and held weekly meetings for a period of eight months.”

And all of that was placed on *Hansard*.

So, when it is the then PNM Government showed up on the compound in September or thereabouts, in 2015, that report was there on the desk of the then Prime Minister, the new Prime Minister, waiting for him, you know. “He did not even have tuh dust it off. It was ah new report”. They did nothing. That is what they did. They did nothing then. They did nothing for 10 years, and now want to come here and tell us, “You too sit down and do nothing.”

Dr. Moonilal: Implement the Ordinance.

Hon. J. John: Yeah, implement nonsense. You understand? And sit down and watch people die.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to assure the citizens of this country that what is delayed is not denied. And their time has come. “We eh find that carry me away for a fella that is 23 years old, singing that for him at 25, is anything to romanticize.” We have to nip that in the bud. Everybody must grow to their ripe old age, if it is possible, and go on as far as their ambition and ability could carry them. Every man, woman and child in this country must have an equal chance to prosper. That is what the UNC Government is about.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: And what we are doing here today is saving lives. That is what we are doing. Just like the doctor operating in the hospital right now, we are about

saving lives.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, you see, when they talk about, we are not doing anything, we are cold-hearted and cold-blooded. I do not know where they were when, in 2020, Andrea Bharatt left home—2020, you were in government. That death shocked the country. The then Leader of the Opposition, myself, the hon. Minister Padarath, we went to that funeral. That young lady left home to go to work. She never got back home. That “eh” normal. You cannot watch that as a parent. You cannot watch that as a sister. You cannot watch that as a brother, watch that as a mother and do nothing, and you have the power to do something, including calling a SOE and saying, “Leh we close it down.” We have to get some kind of rationality into this. They just watched that.

Everybody, even our dear friend who is now in the Senate, burned a candle in front of the same building—that is Sen. Phillip Alexander. He burned some candles. We marched. Khadijah marched—sorry, Minister Khadijah Ameen marched. Minister Vandana marched. We marched for that life, and then we attended the funeral.

Ashaki Scott [Sic] Ashanti Riley was not long after. These are young, beautiful ladies in the prime of their lives. She was taking a taxi to go to visit her grandmother. They raped her. That “eh” normal. That is not normal. I do not know if they even caught anybody for that, all right? All they do is jump up—well, they never even go and jump and do anything, you know. They are just watching.

Down where Minister Vandana is, a little boy, in 2022, nine-year-old Jomol Modeste was playing in a savannah. Who was in government in 2022? All these things are to shock us into consciousness, into action, and they did nothing. Nine years old, he was playing in a place called African Grounds. And what they did?

They shot him; nine years old. What could he have done? Their then Minister of National Security, he went down there, and what did he say about little nine-year-old Modeste? “He was in the wrong place at the wrong time.” You all are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: Nine years old. Nothing touched your conscience that he did not deserve to die like that.

I do not know if you all remember—school is supposed to be safe place. Up in Laventille, some gunman opened fire and a teacher is telling them, “Little children go down. Little children go on down.”

Dr. Moonilal: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. J. John: Exactly. “Allyuh have short memories. That is why when we came in here, we came in with a plan, and we came in, and we said, “We are going to give no gunman no safe haven. And we doh care wah you say and wah yuh do.”

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: Caroni/Maloney, two o’clock in the morning, up in the east, up there, Grande somewhere, about two o’clock in de morning—every little girl should be safe in bed; safe in bed—“dey run in dey house and kill her”. She was about six years old. Little Anita Diaz. You know why I know them? Why I could say it like this, like ah recitation? Because I talked about dem in Opposition. I will talk about them, “because I doh want allyuh to rest in peace, because allyuh wicked and bad and wrong”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: You all are wrong. What you all did was wrong. Just watched these people die in vain. Little Anita—what was Diaz doing down in Moruga/Tableland? She was in her mother’s arms with her hair being combed.

And when you are a black, picky head girl like me, we know what that is; to be in your mommy's arms and they are plaiting your hair. That is a safe space. They went in there and shot her and killed her.

Ms. Benjamin: Five times.

Hon. J. John: Five times they shot her.

September 2023, Anita Mohammed. They ran into her house, up in the east somewhere up there, and they killed her four children. "Allyuh forget ah wa?" They killed about two or three teenagers and one preteen. She said, "Dey eh do nobody nothing." Mother was bawling, four children in one shot, while the PNM was in government. "You think dat could ah happen under a Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration? She would ah turn this place upside down."

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: Turn it upside down. Turn it upside down.

Anita Mohammed screamed—and I hope you all will hear her scream in "all yuh" consciousness. She said, "They killed them for nothing." What are you all talking—you all are coming and want us to take that and cool it. Do the same nonsense you all were doing. We cannot do that. Guiltiness must rest on your conscience, on all of our consciences, because we cannot stand by and watch that. I am going through—and these are just people I had picked out. This is—what I am reading from—this is something I wrote years ago, you know. I just pulled it out when they said I had to talk. Ezekiel Paria, 11 years old, he and some were going to a parlor. "We eh grow up big shot like this one here, so we does go to parlor and thing. De boy eh reached the parlor, yuh know, 11 years old". They killed him up in Laventille there, you know? He did not get to get his SEA results. He wanted to become a pilot. He never knew. They killed the boy, 11 years old. These are little children we are talking about.

So, now the Opposition who presided over this are running up and down, talking to themselves and asking about our crime plan, when they never produced anything. “Dey eh” produce a crime plan, crime action, crime conscience, crime nothing in 10 years, right? Just crime, right? So, we are acting decisively to save lives, to ensure little boys and girls can go to sleep, dream big, wake up refreshed and go as far as their ambition will take them. Because for too long, criminal gangs were allowed to grow in strength, influence and brutality.

I remember, I was somewhere up in somewhere Mamoral a day. They asked me to come up there to march for some young lady, 21 years old. “In de rain we marching, yuh know”. Quite up in Mamoral, I find myself marching.

Ms. Ameen: They do not even know where that is.

Hon. J. John: Well, they know. They know. This girl left to go to some mall in San Fernando and never came back—Sharday, or something like that, never came back. The father called me on the phone crying. “Allyuh” ever hear a parent cry for a child? You understand? Called me crying. What could I have done? I just said, “Way you all. Send me ah Waze,” and I gone up. “I matching in de rain, yuh know. Me eh even know de child.” But it just hurt you so much that you had to go on and do something.

So this administration is intolerant of crime, and we have adopted a clear, decisive zero-tolerance approach to gang-related crimes and all other crimes. The Government will not allow this to continue, and in that regard, the Prime Minister and this Government, we are taking this bull by the horns and saving the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister was very clear, and I quote, she said:

“I am not afraid to take tough decisions in the defence of law abiding citizens of Trinidad And Tobago.”

A lot of these are happening right behind there.

I remember a day we were somewhere—I cannot remember, but on social media I started to see some killing in Harpe Place. That is right there behind us in Port of Spain. So, I texted “Twiggy”. I said, “I am seeing there is a murder in Harpe. What happened there?” She started to cry on the phone. She said, “Jearlean, it is not a murder; it is a massacre.” They killed about six people one time, you know. Six people one time while they were in office. My dear, before it had ZOSOs “SOSO”, whatever, we would have put that in a place in Harpe Place if that had happened and we were in government.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Kesar: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. J. John: And one of them was a police officer, all right? So, on and on and on and on—because it was thousands—I think it was about 6,000 people who died by murder whilst the PNM Government was in office, and they did absolutely—“dey eh only do nothing”, they did absolutely nothing. All right? People running up and down for their lives, but those lives did not matter. That is the point. Coming now to talk, they have all the answers. But at that time, those lives were expendable. And we, the United National Congress, are saying, they are not. Every single life is precious to us.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: Every life is worth saving, and we are going to take the necessary action to save these lives. Well, I think hon. Member Young, it was his constituency—I do not know if he put out any statement at the time to condemn it, to be quite honest.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, after 10 years of administrative neglect by the past PNM regime, by whatever they would have said they tried to do, we have

been able to buy time to give the Government, the people of Trinidad and Tobago a little rest space, a little breathing space, and the state agency, tasked with the responsibility for managing crime, to get ahead of the criminal elements in our society.

What is so wrong if murder is down—by what kind of percentage?—

Dr. Moonilal: 41 per cent.

Hon. J. John:—41 per cent? They are acting as if it is a bad thing? Murders are down, people, all you lovely hon. Members, by 41 per cent. What is wrong with that? We cannot be happy, because the other 59 per cent should not die by murder. That is our position. But at least it is down by 41 per cent, and we are trending in the right direction. What is wrong with that?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: “Wat you so vex for?” Why do you want people to die? Do you have a funeral agency? I do not understand it.

Dr. Moonilal: “Dey selling insurance”.

Hon. J. John: [*Laughter*] It makes no sense to me. We should all be celebrating and collaborating, and what you should be coming here to say is, “Well, you know, this Special Operations Bill, this is how you could strengthen it. This is what you could do. In my community, this is what is happening there, and basically these are the ideas I bring to bear.” You are coming to say, “This eh good. That eh good. Nothing eh good.” So what is good? What do you have to offer?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: We have problems. We are admitting we have problems. We are not hiding from it. We have problems. We are the Government by the people, for the people, of the people, for everybody. “We doh wah nobody else tuh dead”. Why are you so unhappy that murders are down by 41 per cent? Why are you vex

with the police? Why are you vex with the attorney? Why are you vex with the Prime Minister for? You should be at her feet, kneeling and thanking her because a lot of lives have been saved in your community.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: So, the other speakers, “ah doh want allyuh tuh come here and say bout Jearlean said”. Forget that. I want to hear what is happening in your communities and how you want to strengthen this Bill. “I doh think de Attorney General will take yuh on, but at least, let us see ah effort, all right?”

Dr. Moonilal: “Ah think dey done”.

Hon. J. John: I do not think so, all right?

So, remember, all crime is bad, but criminal behaviour is not homogeneous. We agree with that, right? Criminals have different motives and accordingly, different behaviours, which forces law enforcement to adopt different approaches. It cannot be one-size-fits-all. We are putting different things. So, do not tell us, “Why you bring this Special Operations Bill?” We bring it because that is one of the tools in the toolbox. The Minister of Homeland will tell you some of the other tools. The AG will tell you some. The Prime Minister will tell you. The Minister of Public Utilities, Minister Ameen will tell you, Minister Vandana will tell you. Because everybody—Minister Michelle Benjamin will tell you. Well, Minister Sobers is busy with the Prime Minister and Minister Moonilal in bringing economic resurgence. Because all these are the tools in the fight against crime.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: All of these are the tools. You cannot just be jumping up and talking about, “Well, all right, CEPEP, CEPEP.” All right, that is lovely, but what else? What else? Give us another idea. Tell us what is happening in your community. We are here to listen. We now have de authority and de access to do

something about it. We are willing to listen to you. Do not just say, “We eh voting for it.” “Wa all yuh eh voting for? You know wa yuh voting for?”

Ms. Ameen: “Dey eh read the Bill”.

Hon. J. John: “Dey eh read the Bill”. I know that. They are confused. Right? Read the Bill. I do not know if they will suspend and give you a little time to read it. Read it and understand it. This is to save lives in your community. This is not not discrimination. This is to give you some time to breathe; that this young person, you know, going to the parlor on a bicycle, will not die. And when that little boy died, Ezekiel, you know what the then Minister Hinds said? “He walking up Laventille, he taking ah spiritual walk”.

Dr. Moonilal: “He taking ah spiritual walk”.

Hon. J. John: Yes. UNC people, please. You all are bright, you know. The guy said, he is taking a spiritual walk. He is at the foot of Laventille, you know; the foot of Laventille, you know, and sleepwalking, and is saying, he is taking a spiritual walk; a little boy is dead, 11 years old. “Come nah, man”. And they are all protected by police, you know, because that is all they like. “Dey like big boy and big girl thing”. No, that is not good enough. He is taking a spiritual walk when little children are dying; dying. That is totally unacceptable. And I do not care where these children are from. “Moonilal eh care. The AG eh care. Minister Tancoo—the Prime Minister doh care where yuh come from or what yuh look like”, all we want to do is save lives and give you an opportunity.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

4.20 p.m.

Hon. J. John: When we put the police in schools, it is to make sure that whoever goes inside there without any behaviour, they cannot damage the children who are going there to learn. There is a method to whatever we are doing. If you have a

better idea, say what it is. Do not come here and cuss and fuss and talk foolishness.

Mr. Hosein: They have none.

Hon. J. John: None. So please spare us, right? We could wrap up this debate now if you have nothing more to say.

Mr. Hosein: They have nothing more.

Hon. J. John: [*Laughter*] So, there is evidence that when gang criminality gets embedded in society, or as some expert would say, when it becomes socialized, it is even more difficult to be eradicated by traditional law and order. But you want a man to go up the road there with a baton, as we used to say long time in Charlottesville, with a “bootoo”.

Mr. Hosein: A “bootoo” and short pants.

Hon. J. John: [*Laughter*] And short pants. No. He is negotiating with a shooter. That is the man’s job description, you know. He is a shooter. These fellas, they are not getting up to go to work when the day comes, you know, but they are getting up to look out. “Them is look-outers”. That is foolishness. And you are accepting that. We cannot accept that as a society. We cannot have the minority preying on the majority. So, some agencies would spend years patiently tracking established criminal networks and so on. We are too small. We do not have all of that time to deal with those things. So, we are saying, as one Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj would say, “We go root dem out like cassava”.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. J. John: [*Laughter*] And who vex loss. So, foolishly [*Laughter*] “alyuh forgetting”—foolishly and naively, the past PNM government considered these budding criminals community leaders and set out to recruit them as part of, you know, all kinds of machinery and thing. But no, what you do is, “you spare the

rod, and you spoil the child”, okay? The lower-income groups of society are the most vulnerable. We know that you know that, and the members of such communities know this and so would look to their government for protection.

So, people are looking to the Government for protection, and we cannot abandon that mission. They know that the solution to their poverty and their tending crime problem is a strategy for sustainable employment, and only the “ten days”, right? These are to be intervention, your strategy, and then you move on. So, step one, what we have done, we removed the PNM Government from office. That was step one.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: We ran them out of town, right. [*Laughter*] “Dey cyah ketch deyself”.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you have entered your additional 15 minutes.

Hon. J. John: I want it [*Laughter*], thank you so much. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: So, that was step one. The people agreed. Move the PNM out of office. So, this has led to the end of state financing and the end of state recognition of criminal gangs and their so-called community leader. Step two, we accepted as the Commissioner of Police—the recommendation of the duly constituted Commission of the police service. “Dey vex for dat too, you know. Dey are vex dat we did not argue”. We did not run down our mouths on anybody. We accepted it. What is wrong with that? We accept that without political interference, as would not have happened in the past. And the current Commissioner of Police has shown to be a warrior crime fighter, and they are

vexed about that too.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: Because their policy is that “man must dead”. They want to be there wringing their hands, “How many more must die,” and sorrow bush. No.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: They like funeral.

Hon. J. John: They like funeral.

Mr. Hosein: Yeah, they like funerals.

Hon. J. John: [*Laughter*] Who is a warrior crime fighter; who, on one hand, would warn criminals not to engage in confrontation with the police and so avoid further body count. On the other hand, he has diligently sent police buses to safely—you know, this guy, when they stopped, when the maxi-taxi people—he sent people out there, so he has a social conscience and so on. So that was step two: to accept the Commissioner of Police.

Step three, we disrupted state funding for such agencies as CEPEP and URP. Step four, we have used the SOE, and under the law of the land, we removed from the public those individuals identified as being associated with criminal gang networks. Step five, we reviewed the state of the nation’s coast guard vessels, given their serious responsibility to preserve life and so on. And you know that that is only residence. So, I would not reiterate the many steps which my colleagues have mentioned except that by turning around this economy, as we continue to do that, we have set the most positive step towards crime reduction and crime suppression in our nation’s history.

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, destroying criminal syndicates has always been tedious and dangerous police work and people associated with that work. It requires dedicated and strategic investigative work by law enforcement. In a

democracy, there is no silver bullet to stop organized crime, especially in situations where the poor are being exploited. And a lot of the poor are being exploited by politicians. They are talking out of both sides of their mouth. There is, however, a good government that is determined to set things right.

When the opportunity arises to speak about the Government's crime plan, it reveals either the ignorance or mischief in regard to what is required in managing a democratic society such as ours. They are deceiving the public into believing that there exists a silver bullet. They want citizens to believe that it is like curing a headache where you take a tablet overnight. We are taking all the steps necessary to ensure that we save lives. But to put the nation's mind at rest, I will let them know that this Government's crime initiative has been incorporated in every single step and in every area of our national life, right, since we assumed governance in this country. And again, we do it without fear or fail.

So, in closing, the Prime Minister has stated the Government's commitment that she will continue to seek cooperation. She will continue to strengthen law enforcement. The job of the Government, with the police and all the other agencies is to dismantle criminal networks and, more importantly, we will not surrender this nation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. John: We will not retreat. We will enforce law, order and safety in Trinidad and Tobago without fear or favour. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Laventille West, while I recognize you, we will now take the tea break. We will return at 5.10 p.m. This House is suspended.

4.26.p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Laventille West.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Kareem Marcelle (*Laventille West*): Madam Deputy Speaker:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: The profound words of Dr. Martin Luther King. Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to stand and enter this debate on this very important Bill relative to the Special Operations Bill, 2026. Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to start with some very profound words—

Hon. Member: [*Laughter*]

Mr. K. Marcelle:—from someone who [*Laughter*]—

Mr. De Vignes: What to say?

Mr. K. Marcelle:—who I respect very dearly. In 2022, this Member had this to say:

“If the removal of the right to bail is countenanced as a solution to increasing crime and violence, then we need to really reflect on whether or not there are any more proportionate responses, which may be less intrusive than breaching someone’s fundamental human and constitutional rights.”

It is—“...a disproportionate measure that is not rationally connected to the objective, that is securing attendance for trial, protecting society and witnesses from risks...

And the more proportionate and less intrusive response could have easily been fashioned, example, reversing the burden of proof for the right to bail, strengthening the criteria for bail using electronic monitoring devices, and imposing more burdensome conditions...Madam President...”—

And I quote:

“...the...”—standard—“...sweep which seeks to deny bail to someone—to anyone charged for an offence in the specified Schedule, regardless of the facts and the circumstances, the strength and quality of...evidence, their age and their antecedence is”— simply—“wrong.”

Those were the profound words of a Member in Opposition that understood proportionality, rationality, protection of the constitutional rights of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and balancing that Act in terms of what a government wants to achieve. And those words, Madam Deputy Speaker, were from the distinguished Member for Couva North.

Hon. Members: Aww! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: At that time, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member in Opposition understood, as we understand now, that there is a balancing act when dealing with crime fighting in relation to the protection of our constitutional and human and fundamental rights. So, when they sit across now in the halls of power, and tell us that we ought not to speak, we say, as you said on the last occasion, we would let Laventille West speak. We would let Port of Spain South speak. We would let Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West speak.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: We will allow St. Ann's East to speak, and we will allow all Members of the elected Opposition to speak because we stand here in the gap, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: We stand here in the gap to say that we support the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service 100 per cent. We support the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force 100 per cent. We support any measures that are rational, proportionate and reasonable in the circumstances to fight against crime. We stand

as a responsible Opposition. The Members opposite, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle:—the hypocrisy of the Members opposite, when they were in Government, and they had the Bail Bill to debate, they had the anti-gang legislation Bill to debate. On some occasions, they stayed home.

Mr. De Vignes: Wayy.

Mr. K. Marcelle: They did not even come to Parliament. They stayed home and did not come to Parliament during COVID for that Bill. Further to which, when there were circumstances where we asked the Opposition at the time to simply support the bail amendment—the police came, and they said that a lot of repeat offenders are continuing to commit heinous crimes against some of the very same citizens that the Member for Couva North spoke about.

And the Government at the time came to the House and asked that persons who have been either convicted or have pending matters of a similar nature in terms of a series of offences pursuant to the proposed Schedule of the Bail Act, in order to keep those persons off the streets. That was a zero-tolerance approach to crime. But you know what? The hypocrisy and hypocritical Opposition at the time, you know what they did? They voted against it. They abstained on one occasion, and they stayed home on the other occasion, Madam Deputy Speaker. Only when pressured, only when pressured, Madam Deputy Speaker, by the business community—

Ms. Mohit: Were you here?

Mr. K. Marcelle: My friend from Chaguanas East wants to know if I was here. I am a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. De Vignes: I was always here.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: I was paying attention to Parliament. Yes, I was on the outside.

Ms. Mohit: How do you know we stayed home?

Mr. K. Marcelle: Because there are cameras, Chaguanas East. Chaguanas East, I do not want to go there with camera. Chaguanas East, please leave me alone, alright. Please leave me alone. Please leave me alone when it comes to cameras.

Ms. Mohit: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(1), this Bill has nothing to do with the Bail Act.

Hon. Members: What?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am hearing the “whats”, yes, Member, it really has nothing to do with that specific Bill. We are debating a new Bill here. Continue Member.

Mr. K. Marcelle: Thank you very kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker. My friend gets a little touchy. I do not know why. I do not know why my friend is getting up and, you know. Madam Deputy Speaker, we have joined that backdrop to indicate that we continue to be patriotic citizens when in government and when in Opposition. We can stand by our track record on this side.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker, earlier this year the Government would have brought the proposed ZOSO Bill. That Bill would have been passed by a three-fifths majority in the House of Representatives and failed in the Senate. That Bill required a special majority. Why a special majority? A special majority because the Attorney General, in his wisdom at that time, knew that if there is any proposed legislation that contravenes a section and interferes with the enshrined rights in section 4 and section 5 of the Constitution, as well as in relation to section 13 of the Act, that in most cases, based on the proportionality aspect, you will require a three-fifths majority, a special majority in both Houses, in order for same

to be constitutional.

Now, there is a whole argument. You will hear one side saying, well, they would call the *Suratt* and *Suraj* case, and they would talk about the proportionality aspect and so on, and that would be for the court to decide. However, we are simply saying firstly, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this Bill ought to have been brought with a special majority clause where it allows for both the House of Representatives and the Senate to approve it by way of a special majority.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: Now, there are some interesting things in this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker. The first I want to refer to is in relation to clause 5 and clause 7 of this Bill. Now, clause 5 and clause 7 treat with the appointment of Heads of Special Operations in clause 5, and in clause 7, the Head of Military Assistance under this Bill. Now, my colleagues earlier discussed, in terms of the Prime Minister having direct influence over the selection of police officers to head these different districts.

5.20 p.m.

So you have seven districts now proposed in this Bill. But the police service already has established positions. They have their established regions and divisions. The Bill refers to, especially in relation to clause 7, that the Commissioner of Police, after he consults with the hon. Prime Minister, can appoint a head of the special operations for that region.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, it also states, apart from the consult aspect, that if the hon. Prime Minister disagrees, then after consultation with the Minister with the responsibility for national security, now the Minister of Homeland Security, the Minister of Defence, and the Chief of Defence Staff, that that person proposed by the Commissioner would not be able to act as the Head of the Special Operations

zone. Now, on the face of it, some persons may say, maybe this is a safeguard. But when you have politicians directly interfering themselves, directly putting themselves in the equation to select the operational aspect of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, then it is a cause for concern.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you have four regions in Trinidad and Tobago established under the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. You have the Assistant Commissioner of Police for Tobago and Eastern. Then you would have the north east division, the ACP in charge of there. You would have the north west division, another ACP in charge of that region. You would also have the south central region. These four Assistant Commissioners of Police would oversee several divisions in each of these divisions established by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Now you have essentially, where an area is considered a Special Operations zone, you would have any—that is what the Bill proposes—officer who is a superintendent rank and over. So you have an Assistant Commissioner of Police already in charge of four regions in the country.

Then you would have, pursuant to this Bill, that any superintendent or senior superintendent or ACP can be appointed in these different seven districts. What you are going to have there, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the Prime Minister, directly or indirectly pursuant to the proposed Bill, selecting, possibly selecting junior officers to the Assistant, to exercise certain powers and authority and control in these regions in a conflicting manner.

Because the superintendent appointed, the senior superintendent appointed, does not have to report to the ACP for that region. The Bill does not give any such clarity.

Mr. Maharaj: “Who say dat?”

Mr. K. Marcelle: And my friend from Aranguez/St. Joseph said it right.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: He said who said it? But which part of the Bill says that the superintendent or the senior superintendent, who is the head of a special operation zone, has to report to the ACP? It simply says that they would be appointed by the Commissioner of Police, they would report to the Commissioner of Police, and they would also have that report forwarded to the Prime Minister. That, Madam Deputy Speaker, to begin with, is a recipe for disaster. It is a recipe for victimization and undermining of our senior police officers in Trinidad and Tobago. I just want to put a marker here.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: I want to put a marker here, Madam Deputy Speaker. Because we may be heading down some very unprecedented and dangerous road when it comes to the administration of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. It is not what we wish. We hope that it does not happen. But this Bill creates an avenue where there is a potential, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the last date of when we sat here, this Bill was introduced. The hon. Prime Minister would have given a statement, and in that statement, before we had any sight of the Bill, would have indicated that body cameras would be mandatory. Not worn sometimes, not worn if there are any possible resources, not worn if the police officers feel to do so in a closed area or in a district, but it would be mandatory.

But before we get to the aspect of the fact that that is in fact subjective, the clause is actually subjective and discretionary, the other aspect of it is what, as we speak, what are the available resources to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service when it comes to body cameras. The Commissioner of Police had a very interesting interview yesterday and I want to quote him for the avoidance of all

doubts.

The Commissioner of Police, Allister Guevarro said, and I quote:

“I’ve always been...transparent with the fact that we only have one hundred and something working body cams at this time. We are currently in the procurement process and, as you all know, the OPR is very strict,”

The Member for Barataria/San Juan should think—[*Inaudible*] The working body cameras are already deployed to the frontline officers.

“The problem with the stock of body cams is that the battery charge is only about one an hour and a half to two hours. So, even if a patrol goes out, by the time you reach an hour and a half, the battery goes dead,”

Now, my friend from Tunapuna, outside the Parliament earlier today, would have made some remarks based on the question asked relative to body cameras, about a loan for 200 million and the procurement of the body cameras and all this. But I saw that the former Commissioner of Police, who I see—I sense is to replace the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande soon—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: “I know they get a lil jijiri recently.” But I saw that the former Commissioner of Police, Gary Griffith, indicated that it was in fact under five million that he as Commissioner of Police, under the People’s National Movement and the PNM would of course have produced, Madam Deputy Speaker, and made the resources available to purchase these over 1,000 body cameras for some less than \$5 million. So, what happened with the body cameras? We do not know. But what was interesting in that statement, because I do not often quote the former Commissioner of Police, but what was interesting was the time for procurement done by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service at that time and the former Commissioner of Police indicated that it was in fact under two months.

Now, this Government called a state of emergency more than six months ago. This Government called a state of emergency more than six months ago, Madam Deputy Speaker. They brought the ZoSO Bill in January of this year. They indicated their intention to bring back some version of the zones of special operations and therefore, there was more than adequate time to purchase the adequate amount of body cameras as per the needs of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and provide them with the resources.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: I see the Minister of Finance “jijiri” with that one. Because it would be reasonable if you are going to bring legislation of this nature that, at basic, there are some things that you can control. You can control, Minister of Finance, if you give the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service the moneys required to purchase their body cameras. You can control that. You can control the allocation as well as the releases for them to do the same. You can guide them as well, concerning the procurement process, if there is any ambiguity. But to have 100-and something-plus body cameras, and come to this Parliament and come to this country and propose as your major safeguard to police and regiment abuse that, there are going to be body cameras, it simply does not make sense, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, they talk about body cameras and the procedure established as well for the police service. But the Act is very vague as to whether members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, at all would be mandatory or not. They said that the Minister of Homeland Security has the ability, pursuant to the Act, to make these different regulations and the operating procedure and to have that implemented throughout.

But at this stage, there is no guaranteed protection that you are going to have

members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force going into these closed areas and these districts, interacting directly with citizens in these confined zones where certain constitutional rights pursuant to this are in fact infringed and not protected and you leave it as is, a free for all, and hope that the Minister of Homeland Security would put in place the respective operating procedures and regulations to mitigate against same. That is not enough, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is simply not enough.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to take a moment to look at—and the Member for Couva North would have looked at a very important report, which I oftentimes refer to, which is Prof. Selwyn Ryan report in 2013. I would implore all Members of this House to really take a look at that report. “*No Time to Quit: Engaging Youth at Risk.*” Because it looks very closely at some of the societal issues facing our young people in Trinidad and Tobago in 2013 and it is applicable even today.

Now, in 2011, Madam Deputy Speaker, the then Prime Minister and the Member for Siparia would have called a state of emergency. It was referred to as a limited state of emergency when announced. And, by way of the Legal Notices, there were different municipal corporations that were listed to have the effect of this limited state of emergency, one, and also to be subjected to that of the curfew.

Now, this Bill has seven districts. District 1, for example, has Diego Martin Borough Corporation, Port of Spain City Corporation as well as San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. And the other districts, it goes on with different municipal corporations with the exception of Tobago being its own district. Now, the Member for Port-of-Spain North/St. Ann’s West looked carefully at section 80 of the Constitution. Because contrary to what Members opposite may want the public to leave with and understand is that the Office of the

President somehow would be the office that is making the decision as to whether a particular place—

Mr. Sturge: Tedious repetition.

Mr. K. Marcelle:—Madam Deputy Speaker, would in fact be a closed area.

Mr. Sturge: 55(1), tedious repetition, 55(1)(b).

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, Member for Laventille West. We have heard about this in extent from the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. So yes, please move on to something else.

Mr. K. Marcelle: Thank you very kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker. That was an introductory one sentence, Madam Deputy Speaker, to get to the point where I am going. So thanks to the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande for his brisk approach. He is trying very hard to keep his job from Gary.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at the 2011 State of Emergency, when last the Prime Minister and her Cabinet had the authority, at least they believe so, to pick and choose which corporations they would consider as the limited spaces for the State of Emergency. When we look, I am going to read from the Selwyn Ryan Report very briefly, Madam Deputy Speaker. At paragraph 1.52:

“A crime hot spot is generally defined as an area containing dense clusters of criminal incidents. It may extend to an area adjacent to one where criminal activity is geographically concentrated and incidents occur on a frequent and relatively regular basis.

Identification of hotspots helps the public safety institutions allocate resources for crime prevention activities. This geographical analysis is usually made based on crime pin maps of reported crime events over a certain period.

During the State of Emergency in August 2011, Prime Minister Kamla

Persad-Bissessar announced a 9am to 5pm curfew in certain hot spot areas which she identified in the City of Port-of-Spain”—PNM corporation—“the City of San Fernando”—now a PNM corporation—“the Borough of Arima”—now a PNM corporation—“the Borough of Chaguanas”—then UNC, and still UNC—

Ms. Mohit: "Wham tuh you?"

Mr. K. Marcelle: “What yuh rushing for, Chaguanas East?”

“...San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation”—PNM corporation, and the Diego Martin...”—at that time was—“Regional Corporation.”

But now Borough Corporation. These areas were listed in Appendix 2 to the Legal Notice, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, these areas are very important for us to juxtapose to the current Bill before us. Because here you are giving, like the limited state of emergency, you are giving the Prime Minister and the Cabinet the opportunity to identify which areas are determined to be closed areas pursuant to this Bill. Now my friend would say, it is repetition. If I go to tell him that although the word says President, it is really the Cabinet.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sturge: Tedious repetition 55(1)(b), and he knows it. “I think he run out of things to say.”

Madam Deputy Speaker: You said it yourself, tedious repetition. Would you like your additional 15 minutes?

Mr. K. Marcelle: Thank you very kindly. Madam Deputy Speaker, they will try a lot to make light of the serious and egregious breach of the enshrined rights of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. But I will tell the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, this is no laughing matter today.

Mr. Des Vignes: At all.

Mr. K. Marcelle: Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, the effects and arbitrary power that is going to be bestowed upon the Cabinet, and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is simply not normal. It is simply not constitutional, if not passed by a special majority. And we have to stand in that gap, Madam Deputy Speaker, when these things arise.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at the clause relative to arrest and detention, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have cases, Madam Deputy Speaker, pursuant to clause 17(1), where, and I will just quote, Madam Deputy Speaker.

“Where a special operation is being conducted in a closed area, a person shall not be arrested or detained unless the Head of Special Operations is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that that person has committed or is in the course of committing or is about to commit an offence.”

5.40 p.m.

Now, that last line, “or is about to commit an offence,” mirrors very close language to the Preventative Detention Orders and the provisions relative to same under the Constitution relative to the State of Emergency.

Now, when we look at the procedure, it speaks about a police officer in a closed area. They specifically put that the Head of the Special Operation must be satisfied, he himself. There is no indication as to a regular police officer or anything of that nature. But what is important is that you have to wait until 36 hours before a senior officer can get involved to determine whether to take you to a magistrate or not. When you go to the magistrates’ court in order to make an application to continue the detention of that detained person pursuant to clause 17

of the Bill, the magistrate can authorize up to a further 48 hours or can initiate an order that the person be released.

It is important, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we pay close attention to the Privy Council decision in *Ramsingh v the Attorney General*, because Lord Clarke in that decision in the Privy Council looked at the procedures, in terms of what is the threshold for when a police officer suspects that someone is committing, or about to commit, or when that person has committed an offence by way of reasonable suspicion, and more specifically, when you arrest that person, what is the test during their detention?

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at—and just hold one second—

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 53(1)(e) and (f). The Members across the hall are just continuously disturbing the Member in his contributions, talking about ChatGPT when they are the experts at that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Absolutely no need for that, Member. Please continue.

Mr. K. Marcelle: Thank you, very kindly. Now—Tabaquite, I do not need your help. I do not need your help, Tabaquite, and I am certain that Oropouche East never asked for your help as well. Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at Lord Clarke in relation to the judgment in the Privy Council, paragraph 10, Madam Deputy Speaker, we looked at the Privy Council, stated that:

The police must justify detention on a minute-by-minute basis.

Madam Deputy Speaker, not on a 36-hour basis, not on a 48-hour basis.

They must be justified on a minute-by-minute basis.

If you have police officers who are now, by way of this Bill, once they arrest persons in a closed area, can now arrest persons up to 36 hours without any need to prove that they have taken reasonable steps within that 36 hours to bring the

investigation to a close and to determine whether they are going to charge that person or release that person, it infringes upon section 4 and section 5 of the Constitution, Madam Deputy Speaker.

When we talk, Madam Deputy Speaker, about these enshrined rights, they seem to believe opposite, that if you talk about constitutional rights and protections and fundamental freedoms, that somehow you are supporting lawlessness. We are not here to support lawlessness, Madam Deputy Speaker. But we are here, just as the Member for Couva North in 2022 stated, to talk about proportionality, to talk about reasonableness, Madam Deputy Speaker, to balance those provisions as the guardian of democracy, as the protectors of the Constitution, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Sturge: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: —as the guardian of democracy.

So, when we come here as parliamentarians and we come as representatives of persons that elected us, I stand here duty-bound as the Member of Parliament for Laventille West to stand in the “gyap” and to indicate clearly, Madam Deputy Speaker, what are—

Mr. Sturge: Gap.

Mr. K. Marcelle:—you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a joke—continuous interruption—“but ears cyah hear and eye cyah see”, and the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande is allowed to “mauvais langue” and talk a set of nonsense over there, loud, loud.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: If he had all that mouth in Toco/Sangre Grande, he could have walked freely before—Member for Toco/Sangre Grande—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Laventille West, what is the relevance?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Please continue with relevance to the Bill and the clauses of the Bill.

Mr. Sturge: “Yuh outta timing boy.”

Mr. K. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I officially seek your protection to have my contribution done in silence and not be interrupted from the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande with his clownish behaviour, please. Not today.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I will ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary statement, please.

Mr. K. Marcelle: That statement is withdrawn, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: You have nine more minutes.

Mr. K. Marcelle: I ask for your protection and intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know you singled out my remarks and asked for me to withdraw it, I ask you to please direct the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Okay, Member, I am asking you to continue with your contribution. I have already ruled.

Mr. K. Marcelle: Thank you very kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. K. Marcelle: Democracy at work, Madam Deputy Speaker, democracy at work. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have in relation to the curfew and these closed areas. Now, there is no clearly expressed threshold for what determines an area to be a closed area. There is no indication. Now, I know the Law Association, on the last occasion, Madam Deputy Speaker, would have given some proposed amendments to the last ZOSO, and looked at some of the areas in which they believed needed some certainty. The Law Association did publish in January

of this year some of the terms that they wished—and I see reappeared in this Bill, that we may need to look at in terms of tightening its language.

Now, whether you tighten it or not, Madam Deputy Speaker, the issue would remain on this occasion whether this Bill really can be considered constitutional, and we on this side simply state that this Bill is unconstitutional, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, similar to the old Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is the frame such as “rampant criminality,” such as “murder,” “gang warfare,” “high or escalating violence,” “threat to the rule of law and public order,” and the Law Association stated, Madam Deputy Speaker, that these phrases are very broad. They risk over-declaration and weakening accountability.

When you have these vague terms, and you have reports similar to that of the State of Emergency, where there are a threat to national security and threat to this one’s life and threat to that one’s life, and you have a state of emergency being declared by a rubber-stamping exercise, Madam Deputy Speaker, this vagueness would continue to allow the continuous breach of the constitutional rights, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Law Association stated, Madam Deputy Speaker, that and they suggested some terms. So, they said that: We suggest that the terms “rampant criminality” and “rule of law/public order” and limbs should be defined by reference to objective indicators such as sustained violent incident rates, documented—

Mr. Sturge: 48(1), there is no “rampant criminality” or any such definition in this Bill. So, whatever the Law Association said in January about definitions in that Bill is not relevant to this Bill in September.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand and I agree, Member, please move on.

Mr. K. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to, in relation to the closed area, please, Madam Deputy Speaker. Now, clause 11 states that:

“The President may, by Order subject to negative resolution of the House of Representatives, declare any area within a district to be a closed area, where the President is satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that public safety and peace in that area is threatened –

(a) by -

- (i) escalating rates of violent crime, homicide, shootings, kidnappings or gang-related activity...”
- (ii) the prevalence of illegal firearms or ammunition, or the unlawful presence of other weapons or explosives, in that area; or
- (iii) the control or intimidation, or the attempted control or intimidation, of a local community by a gang in that area;”

—and, more specifically:

“(b) by the inability of ordinary law enforcement measures to maintain or restore public safety and peace in that area.”

It is on that basis, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I refer to the Law Association recommendations, where there is, in fact, similar language, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, I know my friend at times does not read the full Bill and chooses to go and read some comments on Facebook and so on, when he is running out of time. But I read the Bill—albeit less than 48 hours given to us, read the Bill and came prepared. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we urge the hon. Attorney General to, at

minimum, consider the fact that this Bill requires a special majority and that it will continue to be unconstitutional if we continue in this way.

Mr. Sturge: Tedious repetition.

Mr. K. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Sturge: “But ah objecting, yuh have to take yuh seat—tedious repetition, ah talking. Do de decent ting and take yuh seat, nah, do de decent ting and take yuh seat.” Tedious repetition, 55(1).

Mr. K. Marcelle: This is my last minute of wrapping up. I do not know why the Member is— [*Inaudible*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I really do not think that is the point. You have been repeating yourself. Your time is almost up. Please continue with something else.

Mr. K. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your very impartial ruling and I want to tell you, as I was just telling you, that I was wrapping and urging the Attorney General, as I just did and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity and your very impartial ruling to contribute to this debate, and I thank you very kindly.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Tunapuna.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Homeland Security (Hon. Roger Alexander): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to this Bill. I do not know why I still have to contribute, because there is nothing to really answer. There was a level of confusion placed before us today by persons who probably did not read the Bill—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander:—and like, somehow it happened today again. So, time and time again—let me also say that the people of Tunapuna support this Bill.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Because they understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, the importance of their safety and security, and this Bill is about saving lives. However, let me first treat with some things I heard today. The Member for Port of Spain South. I suggest that he makes every effort this Sunday to attend church so that he can apologize or at least repent. I never said at any stage that 204 persons were charged after the PDOs. He did not hear in the first instance, I said 240, and now it has amounted to just before 260.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: He was not there. He does not understand what happens. Madam Deputy Speaker, also, I heard the Member for Port of Spain South speak about fear—and not just him alone, other Members spoke about the fear that the public has as it relates to this Special Operations Bill, and we have the population so in fear and all of that. But I wonder if the population was not in fear with a murder rate of 624, were they not in fear when shootings and woundings were happening right outside their doors? Were they not afraid when the Member for Couva North spoke about the shooting of young people?

The strange and unusual thing, Madam Deputy Speaker, most of these events took place in the constituencies of persons that we are looking at on that side, and yet they come here and do not want to defend their constituency and their membership.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: The Member for Port of Spain South even mentioned, listen, “We passed the anti-gang legislation”. Yes, you did, but what did you do with it?

Because if you did something with it, we are still seeing where the gangs are running the place, and he himself spoke about fear, together with St. Ann's East. I think the greatest fear is to go out the road and come back, and then somebody is in possession of your home, and you cannot go home ever again. To me, that is fear. When members of the gang units—the gang around took possession of persons' homes and ran them from their homes.

I think the greatest fear is when gang members take possession of your car and you can do nothing about it. I think the greatest fear is when they murder you, they murder members of your family and send you a jersey with the member of the family's face on it and say, "That is all you can do".

You see, while persons would speak to this Bill could speak about all the illegality involved, there is a guy by the name of Roger D. Alexander. He speaks to reality.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: What safeguards—I heard Port of Spain North talking about safeguards and all of that, and "what the children are going to do because there is nothing there", and all that. Let me explain something to you in this House. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is not an offence for a police officer to use an initiative in any part of Trinidad and Tobago where he can help a member of any family or any person in the streets. You do not have to put that in law. That is a humanitarian activity that police do constantly.

So, when you talk about, there is nothing in the law. However, Madam Deputy Speaker, under the Ministry of Homeland Security, together with the Commissioner of Police, we have already spoken to each other, and the Hearts and Minds that is presently engaged in Laventille will be engaged in those areas. We also have, from the PACSO unit of the Homeland Security, the vulnerable youths

that will enter these communities and have conversations with their peers. We also have the School-Oriented Policing Initiative. We will again enter schools in those areas—if you want to call them closed areas, well, we will open up the activity in those areas, so persons will not be afraid anymore to live in their homes.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Community Police Initiative will also be part of the project. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, for the youths, the anti-bullying programme, will also be part of the initiative. So, when you speak about, “we are doing nothing”, we do not have to put it in law for you to understand it. We can treat with it, because nothing is required in law for a police officer to respond in this manner.

6.00 p.m.

Also, coming from my friend on the other side, he too has some initiatives, but we will talk about that on a different day. For my friend from Laventille West, if you understand the structure of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, you will know that police officers must report to the Commissioner of Police, regardless of your rank. At the end of the day, if the Prime Minister has to get a document, it will go to through the right channels. So there is nothing to fear about police officers feeling any way, and feeling this way, and feeling—the only thing the police officers must feel is that constant urge to serve members of the public and save lives.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: We can go on. Again, persons are speaking about—the Member for St. Ann’s East spoke about crime happening all over the place and persons are living in fear too. Another fear factor came from the Member for St. Ann’s East.

I will like to ask a question though: How did marijuana get into our homes? Who put trees in our houses? Your government did that. You put four trees per person. “So yuh see how allyuh sitting dong dey? If allyuh was ah family”, four, four, four, four, four. Four, four, four, four, four, four. That is what it is. And now you are asking questions like, “Why is it ending up in our nation’s schools?” and “Why the youths are behaving how they are behaving?” That is why the Ministry of Homeland Security now has a Parenting Programme to teach the youths and them differently. That programme will also enter into the closed area.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Madam Deputy Speaker, sometimes when I hear those on the other side speak, I wonder if they forgot that I was involved in law enforcement.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: They forgot that I stood, time and time again, and was chastised by those who did not understand what was required and how hard you had to work to achieve the goal. The more things you bring, the more they wanted, but they provided nothing.

Here comes the situation with the body cams. Your government purchased body cams, and I can tell you this much, some of them, if not all of them, were purchased in some little environmental place—I do not know, in the back of some place, because they could not have been bought with law enforcement in mind. However, the price of them was as much as if you are buying something to take to space. Madam Deputy Speaker, they asked about the body cams, so let us discuss this body cam at a level.

In 2022, they bought 130 Huawei's, and after that, they got excited and bought G-Techs, 750. I can tell you, when you put on the G-Tech and you run from here to there, Madam Deputy Speaker, it used to fall off. The clip used to

break. You would not like to hear the sum of money that they spent for the 750. But, however, that is not all. When it came, another firm was operating it, at a cost to the police, millions of dollars. So the police bought it and handed it over to a firm, and that firm manoeuvred it in terms of technology and then charged the police for having it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, everybody wants to have accountability, and we will never shy away from that. I wish I could have purchased body cams for even them in here in order for them to maintain their integrity.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: But, Madam Deputy Speaker, every time we come here, we hear all about the citizens and what is happening, and no mention at all from anyone on their side about the impact the criminal element is having on society. You know why? Because everything that we bring is opposed, from the letter A to the letter Z, however you see it. So you oppose A or you oppose Z.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. R. Alexander: It does not matter, you are just opposing everything. Everything you oppose, oppose, and you are not thinking about the impact that the criminal element is having on society.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to stay too long here, you know, because at the end of the day, there is nothing else to discuss here. What we are asking members of the public for, and what we intend to do as a government, we are not going to stand idly by and watch these gangs run through you and say, “Well, dais small thing.” That is not a small thing to us.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Every life lost is pain and suffering for some family. Every child we lose could have been someone who would have grown up in society and

become something, but we do not see that. We only discuss, “Well, the members of my community do not want this,” and “The members of my community do not want that.”

Now, today I would not shake my own hands, but I have assisted—and not just me alone, I have assisted Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West, Diego Martin West, San Fernando East—well, Trincity/Maloney, you know, you know, you know—

Hon. Member: “She never here.”

Hon. R. Alexander: Yeah—Port of Spain South, Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, Arima, and my good friend down in the corner there, who is supposed to be there—

Ms. Ameen: Diego Martin Central.

Hon. R. Alexander: Yeah, him—and Arouca/Lopinot. I have assisted all of you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: I have assisted you all in such a way that when even your attorney—what is his name on the other side, the one in the Senate?—he did not even understand what was happening. The level of peace that we have brought to certain communities, everybody is wondering what is happening, where that came from—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander:—until, even tonight, Port of Spain South could now go to a different location and see netball.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: What I expect to see as an individual—and I am going down this road because I want you to understand me. My friends on the other side, we are African men and all we do is see murders, rape, robbery, shootings, and all of

that, and when they point their fingers at a certain location, that is all the population see coming from there. What are we doing about it?

The first thing we must do, let me help you, is to save lives. Let us save these persons' lives.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Let us show them a different way. This cannot be the only way. But if we continue to accept what they do and endorse what they do, then we will continue to come here in sit down and you will oppose, and I will continue to come here and we will bring laws, and oppose, and bring laws, and oppose, and bring laws, and at the end of the day, the middle ground is there and nothing will change. But if we show them a different way, we still have the opportunity to make that change.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Do not expect that change to come from any other person, other than you, because they are looking at you.

Some of them do not understand what you can go through, what you could be, how you could become that, because we have given them a one-door policy. Here is the one-door policy we give to them, "Ay, get up on a morning, cut grass." You say, "Clean the drain," and we keep them there. A man told me—in one of the PNM constituencies, a man told him, he said, "Get in accident but save your finger. So doh matter what happens to you, make sure and have this finger when election comes to put it here." So anything could happen, but save your finger, and that is the concept.

When you talk to youths in the area, Madam Deputy Speaker, they will tell you, and they are open with you, "I have no mother." "So who is living with you?" "A lady. She never told me what is right from wrong, but she drops me off at

school.” “What do you do next?” “I take leadership from those in my circle in school. So if dey say to thief ah bag, we thief ah bag,” and they will look at that as support—“They support me.” They like that. Representatives and Members, go out there and change the game.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Because as I said last week, if this continues, we will all be here, probably, for the next 125 years, and there will be no one to replace us. There will be no reason for us to govern this place anymore because everyone would have died. So paint that picture in your minds as we go forward and understand the value of this Bill. Let us first protect our people. Let us save lives.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Let us save communities. Let us save the children in the schools. Let us give them a chance to live and become what they want to become, and not stop them on the way.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Alexander: Someday we might be placed in the book of history as doing something and not just being here. Because the more we are here, and the more nothing is done, things remain the same.

I am not here to criticize, but I am going to tell you this. When you hear people oppose things, sometimes you wait, and sometimes people forget that they once were here and what they would have done to change one life. And if you say nothing, well then, so be it. Let us not be like that anymore. Let us save our people. Madam Deputy Speaker, 600-and-something died; 2017, 2018, 2019, people are dying one after the next, one after the next, and all we are doing is just saying, “Well, let’s clear this up.” Clear up what? How much funerals could we take?

The worst thing I would have seen, Madam Deputy Speaker, was right in Laventille, the two young boys that were shot with school uniforms on. “Allyuh” remember that? They started to run and they did not make it. If that is not enough to change your mind, if that is not enough, and if your constituencies are calling for a certain type of action that will help save their lives, well then, you make a decision, even if you have to separate yourself from the pack.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think I have said enough. I think the nation heard me, and this was real. This was not on a piece of paper that you made up and read all night. This came live, because that is just the way it is. Thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Arima.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. Penelope Beckles (Arima): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I join this Special Operations Bill, 2026, just to make a contribution on a couple of matters, because I do not want to be accused of repetition, because a lot of the issues have already been raised, but I have to respond to a couple of things that were raised.

Let me start by responding to some of the statements made by the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna, because, you know, he said that he assisted everyone on this side, including me. Now, you know, when you make those statements, people start to think of all kinds of things, and I do not know what it is he assisted me with. But I am assuming it has to do with something in the constituency in relation to his portfolio as Minister of Homeland Security, and if he has done that, that is his duty. But I want to put it on record that anything that might be anything “personally assist”, absolutely not. We have to be very careful when we want to show performance, that we have this brush that we paint, and boast about “you

assist”. Because I do not know exactly—he pointed out almost every single person here that he assisted. Interestingly enough, he did not point out any of his colleagues that he assisted; interestingly. So it is only the Opposition that he has assisted.

The first thing that the hon. Minister started with is to say that we did not read the Bill. Now, you know, I kind of get very disturbed when, you know, one of your colleagues in this House could make an accusation to say, “You did not read the Bill.” I am tempted to say certain things, but I think I am going to err on the side of resisting, because it is a very difficult thing when people want to accuse you of not reading. I will leave it there for the time being.

But I also want to say to the hon. Minister that he indicated that the people of Tunapuna support this Bill. Let me just say, the people of Arima do not support this Bill.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: The hon. Minister indicated that 240 persons were charged from the last SOE. I would like the hon. Minister, or maybe the Attorney General to tell us, of those 240 persons who were charged, how many were convicted.

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Ms. P. Beckles: It does not matter, somebody could plead guilty. I mean, why “allyuh cyah allow people—somebody cyah geh charged and geh convicted?” What is it? If nobody—

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Ms. P. Beckles: Say that. I mean, “allyuh make allyuh contributions, listen.” It is simple.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: “I doh understand. Why I cyah ask ah question?” Because that is really the concern of the public.

Let me make it abundantly clear, that the Opposition recognizes the seriousness of all the issues relating to crime, more particularly violent crime. Therefore, the issue really is the seriousness of the crime, the action by the Government, and the outcome. Because all of my colleagues on the other side mentioned several things, but more particularly the Member of Parliament for Couva North, who was at pains to go into details about data, so too the hon. Member for Oropouche East, and to make comparisons in the period when the PNM was in office and when the UNC is in office.

6.20 p.m.

The Member of Parliament for Tunapuna also made comparisons. The Member of Parliament for Tunapuna seems to forget that it was only last year that he retired.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: And therefore, the period when he was a senior police officer, because we are talking about '25, '24, he seems to want to remove himself from that period and only talk about productivity and performance as it relates to after 2025.

The hon. Member for Couva North was at pains to point out all sorts of data as it related to the PNM and, as usual, made the comparison, and again the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna gets up again to say basically the constituency where most of the crime is taking place, as he said, it is all of us on this side.

Ms. Ameen: No.

Ms. P. Beckles: He said it; I have it quoted here.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: He said it. Not only that, not only did he say that, but the hon. Prime Minister said that. That it is in PNM constituencies, and not—several of you all continue to say that crime is only taking place in PNM constituencies.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Ms. P. Beckles: No, “well alyuh—nah, nah, but the people of Trinidad heard it”.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Ms. P. Beckles: No, no, no, no.

Hon. Member: It has *Hansard* for that, you know. **Ms. P. Beckles:** But of course.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Ms. P. Beckles: The *Hansard* is right there, you know. The constituency of persons on that side.

Mr. Alexander: “What it means?”

Ms. P. Beckles: What it means? As you would say, English.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: Constituency of persons on this side. And one of the interesting things is my colleague from Couva North went into detail to point out all these areas, Morvant, ah mean, very specific, in terms of district. You know what is interesting is that the impression that is being created is that with this Government coming into office, all the crime has been wiped away. That is the impression you all want to create. And you know, when I read a couple of months ago about Mercedes Layne in Los Iros, crime is everywhere.

Ms. P. Beckles: Whether it be—we had a double murder in Siparia, a triple murder in Princes Town, you had everywhere in Trinidad and Tobago, so let me just make it abundantly clear, I maintain my position, crime is a very serious issue, and we have said over and over that if the Government brings good legislation we

will support. This piece of legislation is not good legislation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: I always want to make it clear that the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East accused the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. He was saying that the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West basically is saying that all police districts are closed areas, and the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West never said that, and that is a very important distinction because what the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is making clear to the public is that all areas in Trinidad and Tobago are police districts. You see, it is very novel the way they have done it.

So, you take the whole of Trinidad and Tobago, and you make it police districts and then, of course, Tobago. And what they are not saying is, all they have done is use the 14 regional corporations. That is all they have done, very skillfully, and basically bring Trinidad and Tobago down to seven districts. Then, of course, you come to the whole issue of the closed areas and the whole issue of the permits. And where is the concern? The concern is that when you look at what has happened recently under the State of Emergency, what has happened as it relates to the PDOs under this Government. When you look at what has happened, when they were last in Government, and that was the period 2010 to 2015.

You see because Trinidadians and Tobagonians do not forget, and they remember that it was more than 8,000 persons that were arrested by this Government when they were in office during the period 2010 to 2015. And less than 10 per cent were charged. So that the people do not forget. The Trinidadians and Tobagonians have not forgotten that they have not forgotten the recently concluded SOE, and we are talking about yesterday where hundreds of people

again—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: And we listened to the painful stories of persons who were held, whether it was at Teteron or wherever. Not having access to lawyers, not being able to have tribunals and then casually, when the SOE is ended, they simply tell them, “Well, alyuh go alyuh way now.” And you come back now with this Special Operations Bill, which really, in my view, is worse than the State of Emergency.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to share with the public that there are certain persons, of course, who are exempted. Or should I say who do not require a permit. Because of course, you have the closed areas, and then you have the issue of a permit, and it might sound that people are making a fuss about this issue of a permit. But I will ask the Attorney General, kindly, just to give the public—if you have time and if you are willing to—how this issue of the permit will work. Because they talked about digital and they talked about in person.

We also understand that, as a society, that is not as simple as it sounds. So that to the public, the following office holders do not require a permit to enter or leave a closed area because that is something that has not been discussed.

“...the President, the Prime Minister, a Member of Cabinet, a Member of Parliament, a Member of the Tobago House of Assembly...a Member of a Municipal Council...

(b) ...Chief Justice or a Judge...

(c) ...Commissioner or the Chief of Defence Staff...

(d) ...Head of Special Operations...Head of Military Assistance... (e)
...a police officer, or a member of the Defence Force”

The reason why I am saying that is that several people have texted about,

how does this process work and who are the people exempted. Of course, there is in the public domain a press release from the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and we understand in the Constitution that this is a very important matter.

Now, MATT, if I could just be allowed, Madam Deputy Speaker, just to read a bit. They expressed concerns regarding the current drafting of clause 15(3) and (4) of the Bill and the effect it may have on freedom of the press, which, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, is guaranteed under the Constitution. Madam Deputy Speaker, you would recall that section 15(3) empowers law enforcement officers to seize any article or document deemed to be likely to be of substantial value to an investigation. And MATT acknowledged that clause 15(4) provides that:

“A police officer shall not seize –

- (a) any tool of a lawful trade or business; or
- (b) any article or document that is subject to legal professional privilege.”

However, the Bill does not expressly identify journalism as a protected lawful trade, nor does it specifically protect journalists’ devices, materials or confidential source of information. It also does not set out specific procedures governing police access to confidential journalistic material where such material is encountered during a search.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I said, this is not a matter that has been raised, but this is a very important matter because the Minister of Homeland Security spoke about persons taking your car and taking your house and a lot of other things. And we understand that part of the problem in this society is the fear that is created by a lot of persons who live in communities.

The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago, of course, is also making reference to an amendment as it relates to clause 4, and from what I am seeing

here, it appears that the Government would have received copies of this particular document. But it also leads me, of course, to raise the issue raised by both the hon. Member for Couva North as well as the hon. Member for Tunapuna because both of them made reference to guns and guns, and how they come into the country and all of those things.

The hon. Member for Couva North made reference to containers and containers that are coming into the port, I think, in February and probably later this year, and the Member was at pains to point out the discussions that the hon. Member, together with the Minister of Finance, had with who I assume is the head person that is responsible for the containers at the port.

Now, what the hon. Member and Minister of Works and Infrastructure did not say, in February of 2025 to be exact, the hon. Minister of Finance at the time commissioned new, non-intrusive inspection mobile X-ray scanners, and that is February 2025. And if I may again, with your leave, just read an article that says the Government purchased four large-scale high to medium energy mobile X-ray scanners from Smith Detection Group, assembled in France.

Dr. Moonilal: [*Inaudible*]

Ms. P. Beckles: Yeah, well, I cannot help but repeat—

Ms. John: [*Inaudible*] on the port.

Ms. P. Beckles:—what I am hearing my colleague from Oropouche East talking about, that is some kind of corruption. But it is okay. You all can say whatever you want to say. The bottom line is that I want to see if they can deny this information:

“US \$12.9 million (TT\$87 million)”

Two of the four mobile units are stationed at Port of Spain, while the remaining two are deployed to Point Lisas.

So is the hon. Minister of Works saying that none of those scanners are there? Because the impression that is being created, as usual. Then they make the point, “The PNM ain’t do nothing and the PNM ain’t do nothing.” But absolutely no credit for those four scanners.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: Save and accept to say if those four scanners have mysteriously disappeared.

The other matter that I would like to raise really has to do with what happens if it is that a person fails to comply with clause 12. Now, clause 12 is the one that deals with:

“reasonable excuse...with a condition...”—“...a permit...”—constitutes an offence punishable—“...on summary conviction to a fine of fifty thousand.” So it is whether or not the public is aware that this is a matter for which you can find yourselves in very, very serious difficulty.

One of the other sections, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I will not be too long, really, has to do with the issue of searching without a warrant. And it is a matter that is causing grave concern for a lot of members of the public. And as I said before, whilst it might look simple and sound simple, and you have things in place and you can go and get your permit if you want to go here and there, we all know that is not the case. And whilst it might appear to be a joke when people talk about business and the impact of business in those communities when you have these kinds of interventions, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a very serious matter.

So, it says, therefore, that clause 15 vests police officers conducting a special operation with the power to search any place or vehicle within a closed area without a warrant. To exercise such power, the police officer must have a reasonable suspicion that an offence is in the course of being committed. And one

of the areas that the Attorney General spent a lot of time—and I would not say a lot, but he spoke a lot about safeguards. Not only him, but other members spoke about safeguards. Because that is really one of the main concerns of the public: safeguards. And yes, you have parliamentary oversight, and you have the whole issue of, as they talk about protection during the search, judicial scrutiny, and again, I am coming down to my point about this whole issue of the use of body cameras, which is very important to members of the public.

Now, I had the opportunity to listen to the answer given by the hon. Member for Tunapuna when he was asked what the situation is as it relates to the cameras, asked this evening before coming to camera, and he said, “We will work with what we have.” Now, if we listen to the hon. Member today, the hon. Member gave us information as to what took place in 2022; he talked about the defective cameras. If you run from here to there, you know. Basically, whatever was purchased was non-functional and a waste of time.

This Government should make it abundantly clear to the public what their policy on body cameras is.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. P. Beckles: It is either they agree with it, or they do not agree with it. Because it cannot be that, you know, you use this language that basically says, well, you know, if it is possible. Body cameras are important, and it is a matter in Trinidad and Tobago which we have been tiptoeing over for a very long time. But having regard to what is taking place, specifically as it relates to crime in our country, the Government, particularly now that we have this piece of legislation which is going to be in place for two years because you have a sunset clause, the public should know what is your position.

Okay, you come and say that you were not happy; you come and say that it

costs so much money, but you do not tell us how much money it costs. Tell us whether you have ordered body cameras, because it is discussed; it is in the legislation here as what you intend to implement, and therefore the people of Trinidad and Tobago should be told what the position of this Government is as it relates to that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say that it is not sufficient for this Government to tell us and use comparative data on crime. It is not sufficient, and it has now become customary that their justification is always what we did not do and what they are doing. They must ask the public whether the public feels safer in terms of what this Government is implementing, and I am saying that is not our position. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

6.40 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Fyzabad.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development (Hon. Davendranath Tancoo): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is not my intention to be very long, at least in terms of responding to the comments of the previous speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, the single point made by the Member for Arima in addressing the issues that are being raised on this side is to speak about the legacy of the former PNM administration. And, in the contribution, in terms of the fight against crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago, over the nine, almost 10 years that were in office. The only thing that the Member could have referred to was an order for four scanners. That was the total performance that the Member for Arima could have referred to. That was the only commentary that she could have made to speak about the performance of the PNM administration, 2015 to 2025. That is an

abysmal confession of failure. One would have expected better from the Leader of the Opposition, and one would have been sorely disappointed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me begin by confirming that I, as a representative, not like those on the other side, as a representative of Trinidad and Tobago, as somebody who stands to speak on behalf of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, not just constituencies, but citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—I also represent the good citizens of Fyzabad. I want to advise, clearly, that the constituency of Fyzabad and the right-thinking citizens of Trinidad and Tobago support this Bill.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Tancoo: Because you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, they can hem and haw, criticize and condemn, but this Bill, this Bill before this House, which has been piloted by the Attorney General, the Special Operations Bill, 2026, is really about one thing. It is about improving the security of Trinidad and Tobago. It is about protecting citizens. It is about protecting the lives and livelihoods of the men, women and children that live in this country. Why then would the PNM be so vehemently opposed? Why is it then that every Member on that side has already stated their position on the Bill?

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, usually, when you come to Parliament, we come to Parliament with the intention of trying to convince the Opposition to do the right thing. When we come to Parliament, we come to Parliament to offer a solution to a problem. That is what this Bill is about. It is an offer of a solution to a problem. But two Members here before would have spoken to the fact that none of them, none of them, none of those Members opposite could have come with one single proposal of how to improve this legislation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Tancoo: Not a single PNM member, not a single PNM Member of

Parliament, and they would like people to believe that they speak for their constituents, “eh”. They want to convince the population that they speak on behalf of their communities. But this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, is not just for communities. This Bill is for the country. If you look at the lists in the appendix, Madam Deputy Speaker, the list of the policing districts, it is Trinidad and Tobago. It is all of Trinidad and Tobago. We heard one Member just now identify, somehow, that this was supposed to be, somehow, targeted to specific areas in their communities. Madam Deputy Speaker, let us go in the opposite direction. What would happen if we do like what the PNM wants us to do and do nothing? What would happen? If we are to look at the legacy of the PNM, of all the times that they spent in the office with the billions of dollars that went through their hands, what did they do? They spoke about CEPEP. They talked about URP. They talked about this. They talked about that. They talked about other things that they did. And, yet, despite all of the things that they did, crime escalated to record levels in this country. You know why? Because they were continuously doing things that led to failure.

Now, when we have something here—we have a Bill here, which we believe will seriously address the issues constraining the police and will seriously address some of the issues dealing with crime and criminality. Now, when we bring something before the Parliament, they choose to oppose it. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my conviction, it is my view, that the PNM Members of Parliament, those persons on that side—and they do not speak for the PNM, because nobody knows who speak for the PNM because the PNM is in such disarray.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Tancoo: They do not even know who their leaders are.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a fact, now, that Members opposite are

petrified of any actions that will stop crime. It is a fact. They protested, vehemently, against increased police presence everywhere. The Member for St. Ann's East made it appear that increased police presence is a criminal offence. But that is their policy. Because under their hand, when the PNM was in Government, they sabotaged the police service. The Member for Laventille West, "Oh, we support the police service." That is absolutely untrue. The police service was short-staffed by 1300 persons; 1300 police officers under their watch, for a decade. Under this Government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, we are righting that wrong.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Tancoo: But there is more. Coastal areas were left without border protection. Somebody here said it earlier. We had drugs, guns, ammunition, human trafficking; all of that was being facilitated. You know why? Because they sabotaged coastal protection services. They sabotaged the coast guard. There was no equipment. There were no coast guard vessels. Minister Sturge could confirm that. For nine years, they sabotaged the security and safety of this country. You know what they had said? That guns were coming from neighbouring countries, et cetera.

They forced, Madam Deputy Speaker, citizens to live under situations where we were operating under an undeclared state of emergency for nine years. In high-crime areas, people are petrified to go out. They were living in self-imposed prisons. They were afraid to go to the groceries. When you see six o'clock and dark started to come, people were afraid to go outside. And then April 28th, 2025, and a new dawn arose. New light shone in this country.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Tancoo: And the manifestation of that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the

fact that crime has gone down. According to those Members on the other side, including the Member for Arima just now, “Crime is everywhere. Crime is everywhere. Crime is everywhere.” Of course crime is everywhere. It was worse off when you were in office and doing nothing. At least Members on this side are trying, vehemently, to address the problems and the shortfalls that exist.

The same Member for Laventille West; same issue: “We support the police service.” The police service, when we came into office, did not have guns. They were exchanging guns. They did not have bulletproof vests. They did not have vehicles, and they did not have human resources. That is how the PNM showed love to the protected services of this country. And, while that was going on, members of the police service were being shot and killed outside there.

I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a sense of shamelessness and pure hypocrisy for those Members on the opposite side to try to present themselves, somehow, as attacking this Bill in defence of citizens. Because it is not in the defence of the average law-abiding citizens, you know, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is not them. Because this Bill is designed to protect those very same law-abiding citizens.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the only persons who should be afraid of something like this, the measures in this Bill, are people who are involved in criminal activity, and their friends, family, and financiers. Maybe that speaks to why Members on the opposite side are extremely concerned about this. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain South said, and I quote:

We are under pressure under this Government. We are under pressure under this Government.

—and he was referring to this Bill. And if, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I just indicated, this Bill targets criminal and criminal activity, maybe the hon. Member for Port of Spain South should look a little bit closer to why he must be afraid. It

was interesting, too, that the Member for Port of Spain South spent a lot of his time talking about the PNM's anti-crime plan. You know what his version of the PNM anti-crime plan was? The PNM anti-crime plan was netball at midnight. That was their PNM anti-crime plan. Well, it did not work. It did not work. And, it will not work because east cannot go to west and north cannot go south in those areas. So that midnight netball, that is just old talk. That is just mamaguy, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Well, I do not want to address the Member for Port of Spain North; the failed former Prime Minister, failed former, former Minister of National Security, failed former, former Minister of Energy, he gave his tabanca full reign. Full, full reign. The hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was busy explaining how criminals think. How criminals think, "They are going to leave from here and go somewhere else." And, again, I guess, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West knows exactly how criminals think. Maybe the Member for Arima should find out why he knows, so intimately, how criminals think.

The Member for Laventille West, again, he said, "We would stand by our performance. We would stand by our performance." He said "we", that meaning them, are a responsible Government. Madam Deputy Speaker, the numbers do not lie. My Prime Minister, on a previous occasion here, provided some statistics to show that crime under PNM had escalated significantly, and that was the performance that they are proud of. Under our watch, it has drastically declined.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I support this Bill for another reason: Crime affects every aspect of society and it affects me as Minister of Finance in other directions. It affects me personally as well. I was heartened to see Fyzabad highlighted as one of the areas listed here. It is specifically under the Siparia Borough Corporation as one of the policing districts. Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that those Members

opposite did not want police posts. I would appeal for a police post in Fyzabad, because the good citizens of Fyzabad deserve increased security. The good citizens of Fyzabad deserve heightened police presence. They deserve protection, just like the good citizens of all of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is an OECD study called the “Macroeconomic impact of crime”. This is a substantial study conducted in 2026, published in 2026. A lot of this I do not need to go into, because I think the history has proven already that crime affects investment. Crime affects business. Crime affects revenue generation. So, when, under the PNM, we had crime rising, we had, interestingly, a contraction of the GDP, a contraction of the output of our country, and that, too, happened largely because we were losing. In fact, in one year I believe we lost US \$44 billion worth of foreign direct investment, because people were simply not interested in coming. As a matter of fact, businesses were closing and leaving the country. We were losing foreign direct investment because Trinidad and Tobago had become unattractive because of the high levels of crime.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with your leave, I would like to quote this study, and this study is available online for those who like ChatGPT, read the original documents. I quote Madam Deputy Speaker, from page six of the study, a Macroeconomic impact of crime. A stocktaking of evidence-based approaches. I quote:

“Beyond its direct human and social toll, crime undermines investor confidence, raises the cost of doing business, weakens public finances, erodes trust in institutions, dampens tourism and fuels outward migration, thereby weakening growth prospects. At the same time, crime leads to increasing fiscal pressures as governments need to increase spending on law enforcement, security, and the social and health services associated with crime. Taken together, these channels make rising crime a macro-relevant

challenge, as its effects extend well beyond public safety, shaping a country's investment climate, labour market dynamics, fiscal sustainability, and growth prospects. Crime imposes substantial economic costs that extend well beyond its direct and human toll, impacting a wide range of economic outcomes, from public finances to long-term growth. By increasing uncertainty, weakening institutions, and diverting public and private resources away from productive uses, crime can undermine economic growth and development. In addition to these direct effects, crime can also generate indirect impacts through behavioural responses, with fear and perceptions of insecurity amplifying Economic reactions to crime-related shocks.

Businesses face higher operational costs than otherwise, as crime undermines property rights and investor confidence.”

The study goes on, Madam Deputy Speaker, to point out several specific examples of how crime negatively impacts the growth of a country, not just in terms of social measures, but in terms of the actual financial contribution, the actual gross domestic product, and the output of a country. Madam Deputy Speaker, the issue here is that this study is one of several. The information, the data, all support the findings of this study, which is that crime has a negative effect on economic growth over the short, medium, and long term.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, if that is so, should not any right-thinking citizen see it as their duty to support crime-fighting measures? My Prime Minister, my Prime Minister, has indicated before, and it was mentioned by my colleague, Member John, that this Government will deal frontally with the threat of gangs operating in our country. We will not stand back and do as Members opposite have done, twiddle our thumbs while people die.

It is sad, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I expect one of my colleagues opposite to stand up and talk about a member of the public that came into his office and gave him a story of some sort. Because he is really good at the stories. Madam Deputy Speaker, less than a month ago, I had a visit to my office by somebody.

Mr. de Nobriga: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. D. Tancoo: “Ahh?” No, no. This one I can give you names. This one I can give names. This one I can give you names. I am not playing this game, Sir. I had a member of the public come into my office on constituency day because, unlike my colleagues opposite, I am not afraid of seeing the public. So, member comes in, her brother was murdered. Her brother was murdered. Her brother was 19 years old and was murdered—this is in Fyzabad—because he did not join a gang. The fact is that Members opposite like to create the perception that they alone are affected, and it is confusing and concerning to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, because a murder creates not just one victim. A murder creates a multiplicity of victims; friends, families, and colleagues around are also negatively affected.

7.00 p.m.

Earlier this year, a young man in the constituency of Fyzabad was carrying money to pay for his children, to give to his wife—his ex, well, his children’s mother, as we say in Trinidad, in Fyzabad—and he was murdered. The children are affected. His immediate family is affected. There became a sense of fear in that community, and Fyzabad is a closely knit community, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think Fyzabad constituents will be grateful to see more and more police presence.

Increased police presence is not about the creation of a police state, as the Member for St. Ann’s East wants us to believe. It is about accountability. Madam Deputy Speaker, clause 22 speaks to accountability. Clause 22 requires the registration of

weapons, including the ballistic signature and ammunition assigned to police officers and members of the defence force involved in special operations, to be registered with the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre. This is a clause that is important because clause 22 speaks specifically to the context of the rest of the Bill, which is about accountability and transparency.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is replete with examples that have consideration for accountability and transparency. In fact, the Attorney General went into great detail highlighting those, and I think the Member for Oropouche East also provided information to show how this Bill is filled with examples of transparency. Madam Deputy Speaker, like I said, it was not my intention to be long because I think that there have been a lot of substantial points made on this side. And the only thing that I expect—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Tancoo: And the only thing that I expect from Members opposite is to stand again—one Member said they were standing in the “gyap”—is to stand again—

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. D. Tancoo:—to criticize and condemn but add nothing to the debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my prayer, it is my hope that the Member for Arima and the Member for Diego Martin Central, who is acting Chief Whip in the absence of the Chief Whip, would see things a little bit differently, would somehow find a patriotic bone in their body—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Muster the courage.

Hon. D. Tancoo:—thank you—muster the courage, have the testicular fortitude—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Tancoo:—to stand up for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago for once in

their life.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. D. Tancoo: For once in their life. This Bill is a substantial movement forward to protect citizens, to protect the businessmen. Madam Deputy Speaker, do you know that crime is now a factor of production? Consideration for crime is a factor of production? When I was growing up and learning economics many, many, many, moons ago, factors of production were land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship. That was it. Now we have to add to land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship, consideration for crime.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when last did you go to a grocery and not see a security guard standing where the cash registers are? We are getting to a point now where you have to have that in your little parlours too because there are robberies all over the place, Madam Deputy Speaker. And the PNM wants us to sit down on our hands and do nothing, like they did. They want us to do nothing. Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope, I pray, given the high financial and economic cost of crime, given the massive social cost that we have had to experience, Madam Deputy Speaker, given the fact that we already have proven, even without these, that this is the one Government that knows how to treat with crime and is willing, has the political temerity, and the political will to confront crime. We have already started. We have already started. They have proved they cannot do it, and now they want to make sure that we do not do it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I give you and the population the assurance that this Government will not stop. We will continue to take measures to attack crime at the source. We will continue to take measures against criminals and criminal activity, including white-collar crime criminal activity. Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House. I believe in my heart of hearts, I am convinced

beyond measure that this Bill can work wonders, can substantially improve the Government's fight against crime and criminality. And I plead with the Members opposite to do the right thing. Like I said, do the right thing and support this legislation. Madam Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Christian Birchwood (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to enter this debate, this very important debate. I want to make something abundantly clear from the outset. We in Laventille East/Morvant—

Hon. Members: Support.

Mr. C. Birchwood:—we reject this Bill.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: I would also like to make another thing abundantly clear. We do not reject this Bill—

Hon. Members: [*LLaughter*]

Mr. C. Birchwood:—because we do not support the TTPS, we do not reject this Bill because we do not support the defence force, we do not reject it because we do not believe in giving law enforcement the support and infrastructure to effectively carry out their very heavy mandate, and we certainly do not reject this Bill because we do not believe that the State must not burden the responsibility of protecting innocent people. Madam Deputy Speaker, Laventille East/Morvant is my constituency, and it is my responsibility to speak on their behalf. That is what they elected me to do. So, I can be honest about my constituency. We are a constituency that—we have crime like many other constituencies in here. Yes, we do. Like all.

I come from a community and a constituency where law-abiding citizens, like

everyone else in here, have to live alongside the criminals. We do. But I also come from a community where thousands of ordinary citizens, 99.999 per cent of the people from the constituency, wake up, they go to work, they get their kids dressed, they get them to school, they open the businesses, they run the businesses, they go to their respective houses of worship, they play football, they play basketball, and, well, while we are on the topic of basketball, I want to give a particular shout-out to the Caledonia Clippers.

Hon. Member: What is that?

Mr. C. Birchwood: The Caledonia Clippers—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood:—who are currently going east, west, north and south in this country, representing that very same Caledonia that my good friend from Toco/Sangre Grande cannot muster up one positive word about them for probably 16 months we are sitting here now, cannot muster up one good thing to say about the people of Laventille yet. So, I will take the responsibility. They are currently going around Trinidad and Tobago beating every team, east, west, north and south. And I would also like to give a shout-out to the Mohawal Birds as well.

So, it is clear that there are a lot of positives that come from these communities, but I digress. These people, they raise their families, and they contribute to this country like everyone else in this House. They are not criminals. And they are certainly not criminals just because of where they are located, where they live.

Mr. Sturge: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: And that, ladies and gentlemen, Madam Deputy Speaker, that distinction is the heart. It lies at the heart of my objection to this Bill.

Mr. Sturge: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, before I go any further, I would like

to seek your protection from Toco/Sangre Grande—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Birchwood:—because he cannot help himself. I know that there is a saying that sometimes you must keep your mouth closed and let people believe you are a fool as opposed to opening it and just confirming it. I seek your protection.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I do not believe there is any significant disturbance, so please continue.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: [*Laughter*] Thank you for that ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. Now, when Parliament gives the State these extraordinary powers, as we have heard throughout the day into the night, over a geographical area, we must expect extraordinary accountability as well. That is not a weird thing to request from the government. Our problems to solve are a unified one. But we must ask ourselves, what powers are we giving to the State, who will exercise them, against whom will they exercise them, under what safeguards, as we have heard throughout the day, and for how long? That, to me, as the Government will have you believe, is not being soft on crime. That is asking the pressing questions on behalf of your constituents who may stand to suffer based on this Bill. And that, by the way, is the representatives doing their job, exercising the job that the people sent them here to exercise.

The Government presents this legislation, this framework for public safety, crime reduction and community development. Now, we must admit some of these elements present themselves in the Bill. It proposes special operations in defined geographical areas, enhanced security measures, curfews, cordons, searches, arrests, detentions; all of these elements have been ventilated throughout the day

here. Madam Deputy Speaker, what happens to the ordinary relationship that exists between the citizens who are deemed as a zone or an area of special operations and the Government? What happens to that relationship? What happens inside that relationship?

Madam Deputy Speaker, the declaration could last up to 180 days with extensions. I need to remind the people in here that 180 days, that is not a weekend operation. That is six months of operations. That is six months that people are exposed to. That is six months of a special legal regime affecting the daily lives of people who live and work in that geographical area. And that requires extreme levels of safeguards. As much as it might have been belittled throughout the day when we asked the question, it is required.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have heard who decides that a community might be the recipient of these zones. We have heard. We want to know who does the selection, and we also heard that. On paper, it refers to the President, but we know that the information still flows from the Executive. Therefore, the power lies with the Prime Minister and the council. So, we have to bring integrity and track record into the conversation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Because as far as track record goes, this is the same Prime Minister and Executive that once told the people that a radar posted in Tobago helped them to locate drugs in the Caroni swamp in Trinidad—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood:—and the manufacturers had to come out and say that that is impossible.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sturge: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(1), I think my friend has run out of

things to talk about, so he is talking about radars and everything. Nothing that has anything to do with this Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I agree, Member. Please, maintain your relevance. There are many clauses to discuss.

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, that is no problem. I sat here quietly and listened to Tunapuna say the exact same thing Couva North said, and nobody said anything. But I digress. I will move forward.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have to bring integrity and trust into the conversation because the relationship between the people and the governance and the police is suffering. And it has suffered. Therefore, we have to really and truly—

Mr. Sturge: Madam Deputy Speaker, 44(10), the Member did not seek leave to read his speech.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, leave is granted for you to read certain parts of your speech that are necessary.

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not know who told this guy here that I have a speech, but I do not know who told him that.

Mr. Sturge: Madam Deputy Speaker, he has to refer to me as the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande.

Mr. Young SC: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I clearly remember the Member for Diego Martin North/West asking the Attorney General to refer to him as the Member, so I will have to agree with Toco/Sangre Grande that he has to be referred to as the Member.

Mr. Young SC: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), on the Member for

Toco/Sangre Grande for persisting in irrelevant and tedious repetition of his own arguments.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I believe that is a misinterpretation of the Standing Order, overruled. Member, continue.

Mr. C. Birchwood: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I did not realize it had this many speakers in the House, but I digress.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot hear myself, with the microphone, so could you please control this Government? Please, please, I am asking kindly.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, let us allow the Member for Laventille East/Morvant to continue to relative silence.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, the conversation throughout the day, nobody made reference to integrity and trust. Nobody did. We could go to the *Hansard*. Nobody did that. So, these reckless interferences, all it is doing is further irritating the public. They need to be responsible with how they act inside of here.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: This is not a playground. And if you need a big-lined copybook and some crayons to go in the corner, you can do that too.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, we must understand that the

independent process that should occur before these areas are placed under these extraordinary powers is necessary. We must. We must ask ourselves, where is the published evidential threshold? We must ask ourselves, where is the obligation to demonstrate that regular policing has been tried, it has been exhausted, and it does not work. So far, this Government has operated within extraordinary powers for almost their entire tenure. There is nothing for us to judge.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Absolutely nothing. We do not know what you operate like outside of extraordinary powers.

7.20 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we must ask ourselves, what is the requirement to demonstrate why existing criminal justice systems cannot adequately support us in our fight against crime? These questions have not been asked. And furthermore, this is further solidified with the fact that their Member for Barataria/San Juan stood outside the Parliament and he said that we have all the legal framework that we need, when he was speaking against the SOE that the People's National Movement wanted to implement. So, in one instance, we have everything we need, and in the other one, we do not, because you implemented it.

Madam Speaker, these are not theoretical questions. They must be addressed. Because the people who live in these boundaries, they will not be in a position to choose whether this Government selects them as a zone. They will not be able to choose if they are put under curfews. They will not be able to choose or vote for if their homes, their vehicles, their properties are seized or searched. The State makes that determination. Therefore, the Parliament must take this seriously.

I want to get into how serious cordons can be in constituencies like mine. Because these cordons come—they could come with curfews for up to 72 hours. And any

breach of that, as we heard earlier today, is \$50,000 and a year imprisonment. Madam Deputy Speaker, imagine if a regular civilian is caught in that crossfire. Where is he or she finding that? What is going to happen to them if they actually face a year imprisonment?

I mean, I could draw from my own experiences. I could recall being a young student, putting myself through school part-time—going to school part-time, working full-time, while this Government had a curfew in place in the first SOE in 2011. And I could recall how that made me feel as a young boy, scampering after class to get a taxi—I was not driving—feeling the pressure, feeling like a criminal, going to school. Could you imagine that? Law-abiding, trying to come up and out of poverty, but you are feeling like a prisoner because of a curfew. And you could sit there and “steups”. I do not expect you to understand.

Mr. Des Vignes: They do not live there. They do not know.

Mr. C. Birchwood: They do not live there and they do not know.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: I do not care where you are living, once you know I am not working WASA.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, perhaps one of the most important provisions in this Bill is my concerns with respect to searches. This Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, it provides for warrantless searches. And once again, we have this terminology, “reasonable suspicion”. Who determines what is reasonable suspicion, Madam Deputy Speaker? You know, I understand why the police may want these extraordinary powers. I am not denying that because at times, they may

want to act quickly. But there is a difference between giving the police these extensive powers and creating an environment in which ordinary citizens, they feel the State can easily intrude upon their privacy, intrude upon their space.

So, allow me to ask you all to just conceptualize something with me here. Imagine you just got home from maybe a family or a work lime, for example. This is Trinidad, we do that. And you get home, you park your vehicle in your yard and you probably have a little to-go bag, you did not eat all your food. You come out with your bag, you rest it on top of your car, and when you look around, a police vehicle is in front of your property, telling you that they got a report for a stolen vehicle.

Now, we do not have to imagine in here, all of us are Members of Parliament. But I will say it anyway, imagine you are a Member of Parliament. So, you respectfully go and have a conversation with the officers. Let them know who you are, identify yourself in a respectful manner, and you still get accosted, verbally abused in front of your place, so much so that the people that know who you are, who you live around, they come to explain to the officers, “Let us not go down that route.”

Now, the caveat, you are a Member of Parliament. Furthermore, you live in Trinidad. You know people. You get a phone call from somebody, because they would have heard about an altercation from the officers, only to hear the officers made a report that they stopped a vehicle on the Lady Young, in front of your house, where you are already parked in your yard. That is what was reported. They stopped a vehicle on the Lady Young.

So when we say “safeguards”, Sir, this is what we are talking about. This is the reality of what we live in these constituencies that are overlooked, because it is something so real and overlooked. I do not know if it is because many of you sit in

your ivory towers and you look down, that you really and truly do not see what is happening on the ground. And just for the record, I do not have to imagine that. It actually happened.

I heard the good Member for Toco/Sangre Grande say he is a victim of crime.

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Sorry, my apologies. The Member for Fyzabad saying that he is a member—not a member, sorry, but he is a victim of crime. So, this is just a simple example of what happens in these constituencies, which is why an abundance of caution should be taken at every juncture.

Another question that I do not believe I heard asked on the Floor today: What happens if something goes wrong? What happens? Suppose a citizen is lawful—an innocent citizen is unlawfully searched. Suppose his property is seized, detained, and all of his concerns thrown away under the clause that reasonable suspicion existed. Therefore, the operation was necessary. We must remember and we must hold to heart that necessity, it cannot be a substitute for accountability and it must not give way for reckless behaviour at any juncture or any point in time. Safeguards, once again; safeguards.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another thing that is consistently overlooked. You see, my community, my Laventille East/Morvant, we cannot afford another label. We cannot afford that. That is why I take this responsibility seriously and I take what I am doing here right now seriously. Because there is an imminent danger when we begin to equate a geographical community with crime. There is a danger in that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: I could give you another example. You could imagine again. Imagine that same young person I told you to imagine earlier, goes to school, he

gets all his qualifications, work experience, and he applies for a job. He gets the interview, goes into the interview room, and he completely blows the shoes off of the entire interview panel, until one question is asked: “Where you come from?” And he now has to whisper under his breath, “Laventille.” He had to say it soft. And then, all of the jovial interaction, it turns into interrogation. Suffice it to say, “yuh doh get a call back again”. Once again, these are the lived experiences that come with labelling communities wrongfully.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: There is an imminent danger when a neighbourhood becomes known primarily, specifically for its crime statistics. There is a danger when children grow up in an area, being told that their community is dangerous, is violent. Obviously, you are planting an unintentional seed, and they are going to be fighting battles that could have been prevented had somebody spoken differently about their community at a particular time. We must not accept the position, and we will not accept the position that Morvant should be treated as a synonym for crime.

So, we could take a look at the regulations of the past SOE, and we could even take a look at how that might impact this special operations that we are currently here debating. Now, I noted on Wednesday, while the PM was addressing the media, she made it clear in very few words—very slurred, but I understood—that they made the original legislation with a rider to reduce the likelihood of the State being sued. That, to me, emphasizes the dangers of this Special Operations Bill, if, indeed, that rider is still present. Because imagine invoking an SOE that has the propensity to cause fatal harm, and it encourages the use of deadly force to persons, obviously by law enforcement, and you seek to go the additional mile to protect yourself from facing judicial review or action from those who have treated

you unfairly. To me, I hope Trinidad and Tobago is listening, but that is premeditation of the highest order. That is premeditation.

And there is one example that I will draw for you again. So let us, once again, imagine you are driving along the way, and out of nowhere, a heavily-tinted vehicle pulls up behind you and starts to give you lights; unmarked, there are no bearings of any official symbol. So, you, in an abundance of caution, pull to the side. This person then begins to overtake you, staying in the lane that you are driving in, and probably in 100 metres, you both come to a traffic light.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Do you require your additional 15 minutes, Member?

Mr. C. Birchwood: Yes, thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: So, you come to a traffic light. This person, unidentified, then comes out of the vehicle—not donned in any official gear, no badge to see, comes out of the vehicle, does not identify himself, and begins to accost you, begins to threaten you. And, ladies and gentlemen, we do not need to imagine. This is a real-life experience lived by the Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant.

It gets better. Now, imagine he demands your documents after you have identified yourself—no, sorry, you have not identified yourself as yet. He demands your documents, takes your information after he has verbally threatened you, after he has accosted you and treated you—used the most derogatory and unnecessary language, takes your information, and it is only after he identifies who you are, gives you back your stuff, and drives off without saying a word. Now, imagine that person after you—but before he drove off, imagine you have to request or demand that this person identify themselves, only for them to threaten you and say, “I am Senior Superintendent”—and I would not call his name. I only make mention

of that because today we heard the hon. Member for Toco/Sangre Grande say that they are not going to be relying on any low-level constable as their safeguard. It is only senior superintendents they will be relying on. Is that not one of your senior superintendents behaving in that manner? Where is your safeguard? That is the problem, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Sturge: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am on my legs. I am on my legs.

Mr. Sturge: Madam Deputy Speaker, he is quoting piece of the law. It is not just a senior superintendent. It is a superintendent trained in human rights.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, please continue.

Mr. C. Birchwood: Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not ask for an interjection. That is the safeguard that was behaving how he was behaving on the road. So if that could happen to a Member of Parliament—Madam Deputy Speaker, it should not even matter if it was a Member of Parliament. If it was a regular man on the road, imagine what would have happened if he did not find out that I was an MP. Madam Deputy Speaker, woe be unto that person. And yes, it happened in Morvant. That is why I am on my legs here tonight, speaking on behalf of the people. That is why I am on my legs. It is because it is the average man who is going to face that. It is the average man who are accustomed facing that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We need safeguards. We do not need laughter and smug remarks from the Government. And I have had enough of that for the night.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: Imaginary? No. You know what is a good thing, Madam Deputy Speaker? When I write my report, they would know imaginary because I have a video as well. I have the proof and the evidence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am not afraid of them. That is the problem. And I will fight for the small man. That is the problem. I will fight for the small man.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we must remember, and we must ask: What exactly is the exit strategy for this that they are forcing upon the society? What is the exit strategy? Let us just say you impose a zone, 180 days, suppose no extensions, and the operation, after six months, comes to an end. What happens? Does the crime go away? Do the gangs disappear? Does the poverty go away? Does the unemployment disappear? Does the infrastructural shortfalls in the constituencies disappear? Do you actually dismantle any criminal organizations or reduce violence? No. No, you do not. You do not. What you have done is prolonged it because you have not gotten to the root cause of what the problem is. You have not gotten there.

7.40 p.m.

In the last six months, Madam Deputy Speaker, there have been approximately 18 killings in Laventille East/Morvant. In the previous six months, there were 10, and in the last six months of the PNM administration, there were approximately 10. So, what does that show? There is an increase in the middle of an SOE. So, if you plan to bring this Special Operations to Trinidad and Tobago, which is supposedly the little brother – one would say the proverbial little brother – of a state of emergency, how do you think that is going to solve the problem? It is not. “De big brudah didn’t work; yuh bring de lil brudah”.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think I have ventilated every single point, and I have shown, not just these tackles here, not just these, but Madam Deputy Speaker, the population will see, and they will know the problem. They will remember, Madam Deputy Speaker. They will remember.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: They will remember. So, laugh. You laugh, that is no problem. But you will remember that I rejected this Bill in these halls on everything that I would have said here previously. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I, representing Laventille East/Morvant, take immense pride in that, and I know the people of my constituency, unlike many inside here. I actually know mine.

So, I, once again, with impunity, I reject this Bill. I reject it—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Birchwood: —and I call upon this Parliament to pursue a crime strategy that is firm against criminals, effective in protecting citizens, accountable in the exercise of their powers, and committed to the long-term transformation of the communities that need the investment. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Tabaquite.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*] **The Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (Hon. Sean Sobers):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for recognizing me tonight, to contribute on the Special Operations Bill, 2026. I needed to indicate that this is what we are actually debating. There has been a lot that has been said by many people opposite us on ZOSO, on state of emergency, on all manner of things that are totally opposite from what is currently before us, which is the Special Operations Bill, 2026.

I will begin essentially where the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant left us. I appreciate some of the things that have been said by the hon. Member. I do not think many of us in this Chamber, save and except for a select few, grew up in certain neighbourhoods with certain prestigious titles attached to them or tethered to them for the duration of their lifetime. I am proud to say that I am a San Fernandian-born citizen, coming from Skinner Street in Mon Repos, which is

not an affluent area by any means necessary. Some of these lived realities that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant spoke about, and the Member for Laventille West spoke about in their contribution, those are lived realities by many of us in this House.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: When the Member opined about persons in his community having to live next door to criminals, we know about that. Because we know that those are situations that exist currently—[*Interruption*] Please, Madam Deputy Speaker. Because we know of those realities, hence the reason why, in terms of a proper, robust crime-fighting strategy, the Special Operations Bill of 2026 was born—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers:—to protect those persons who live next door to criminals; to protect those persons who are in positions where they cannot do much more for themselves other than trying to reach out to the robust Trinidad and Tobago Police Service that we have, but a police service that is willing, ready, and able to fight crime, but requires legislation to do so.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: Madam Deputy Speaker, I was a Member of the other place at one point in time, and the former, former, former—I do not know how many formers he was back then—Attorney General brought several suites of crime-fighting legislation to both Houses of Parliament, saying that if it is we did not pass any of these Bills today, the country will fall down.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: It was a tapestry of legislation, crime-fighting legislation, and all we kept asking—because we supported many of those Bills; it is on the record, it is

on the *Hansard*. Many of those Bills, we kept asking: How do you intend to effectualize the legislation? How do you intend to effectuate these things if we pass them today? The same Member came to the House in the Senate as well too and told us, when it had DNA, 6,000 DNA kits and so many gang members, when it comes to anti-gang legislation—because the hon. Member for Port of Spain South spoke, and he continued to ask Members on this side, how many gangsters they locked up, how many people under anti-gang legislation. We told you back then the legislation was not efficient, that it required certain other aspects to be combined with it to give it its teeth so that it could be effectuated by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Officer to arrest people. It is not easy to do so, to prove somebody is a gang member, and we said that. Many Members in this House said that, both in this House and in the other place.

So, when you are asking us, with all due respect, Port of Spain South, “how many gangsters you locked up under the anti-gang legislation?” You have to blame yourself for that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: You have to blame yourself for that. So, it is really, as the hon. Member for Toco/Sangre Grande said, “the zenith of hypocrisy”—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers:—to stand in this House and ask us those types of questions.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: [*Inaudible*] the swearing in, Burkie went President house.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. S. Sobers: The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant also spoke about evidential thresholds as to why it is needed and these extraordinary crime-fighting processes, and what about the normal processes? The normal processes are there;

they are in place, and I will get to that, because there is this constant mantra from many Members opposite. I really hope it is not intentional, to mislead the public and not to mislead this House, that there are many safeguards within the Bill, number one, and many safeguards that exist in the civil realm to treat with these situations.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: But clearly, for senior counsels on that side who ought to know better, they are not informing the rest of the Bench. They are not informing the rest of the Bench about detainee and conversion. They are not informing the rest of the Bench that police officers already retain the power to search and seize and arrest persons if they have reasonable suspicion of a crime is about to happen, is going to happen, or has happened already; that they can get into a House without a search warrant under what you call “hot pursuit”. All of these things exist already. So that when you run around the place making it seem, “Chicken Licken, the sky is falling”, there are no safeguards at all, and police “cud do all kinda tings, all manner of tings but yuh standing with de police,” but just on the next hand you blaming them as well too, or cast aspersions on their conduct, that is the zenith of hypocrisy.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: My dear friend and hon. Member from Laventille East/Morvant and let me tell you: Criminals in this country are extremely different. Criminals in this country—and we have spoken about this at length, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but regionally and internationally. What we are dealing with in the Western Hemisphere are criminals that are not motivated by ideology. We are dealing with criminals that are motivated by profit, and criminals who are motivated by profit are far more dangerous than those that are motivated by

ideology. That is why a responsible government must take extraordinary measures to deal with those extraordinary circumstances.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: That is to answer your question: what are those extraordinary circumstances? It is the amount of murders that took place during your tenure as an administration for 10 years; thousands of lives lost, and not a single, tangible crime-fighting effort to deal with those issues brought at the CARICOM and regional level. The best thing to come out of Trinidad and Tobago at that point in time was to declare crime a public health emergency. We are on record still for that.

It is embarrassing sometimes for me to go as the Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs at CARICOM meetings and hear those things being peddled about Trinidad and Tobago. No other Caribbean country supported that particular set of nonsense that was peddled.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: But we are supposed to be proud of that? Not this side. That is squarely bolted to the chest of the PNM and the past administration. I make that abundantly pellucid any time I go to those meetings. Those are the extraordinary situations.

The hon. Member again, unfortunately, spoke about clause 12. He talked about—well, he spoke about clause 12. He spoke about areas that would be cordoned off, and he gave examples about—well, he really did not speak about clause 12; he was referring to something else. He spoke actually about clause 13 essentially, because he said, “cordoned off areas”, when in reality what he was supposed to be speaking about was clause 12, with respect to entry and exit permits and the fines so attached to entry and exit permits. But the clause is quite clear,

and I will read it into the record for the Member, if for whatever reason he did not, you know, with the greatest of respect to him, properly understand what the clause meant.

Persons generally cannot enter or leave a closed area without a permit. Permits can be issued to classes of persons or individual persons. Conditions can be attached. Permits can be suspended or cancelled. Contravention can result in a fine of up to \$50,000 and imprisonment for one year on summary conviction, which means it could be lower than \$50,000, and you may not even be imprisoned, but you can be imprisoned for up to one year, not past one year; you could be imprisoned for a day. This allows authorities to control movement where unrestricted movement could compromise a special operation. The purpose is not to make ordinary life impossible; the purpose is to allow the authorities, for a defined period and in a defined area, to control movement where such control is necessary to conduct the operation safely.

Practical examples of where permit systems could be relevant, where persons could be issued these permits—these law-abiding citizens that you speak about, that you live next to, that I believe exist in Laventille East/Morvant – are:

- Residents needing to return home from work; they do not have to be worried.
- Employees travelling to work—

You spoke about yourself having to go to school and being worried when you have to come back home—you mentioned yourself, during the State of Emergency between 2010 and 2015, Member, and you mentioned that you were afraid, Member.

- Employees travelling to work would get the permits.
- Caregivers would be granted—

Mr. Sturge: With respect to the Member for Laventille East, 53(1)(e) and (f).

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members, let us remember to maintain relative silence when your colleagues and other Members are speaking, thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Caregivers are persons who would be allowed these permits; persons providing essential services; medical personnel; emergency responders; persons with urgent family circumstances. So, when it was, I believe—and excuse me if I am incorrect, the Member for Port of Spain South, Senior Counsel, indicated: What if it is an incident occurs in a household and domestic violence is taking place? What can happen? Are they supposed to stay there and die, or be subjected to whatever icks is taking place in the house?

No, because apart from the fact that they may very well have an entry and exit permit for them to leave, you do what everybody else does: Pick up the phone and dial 999, and the police will respond.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: You know why, they may respond even faster, because they are in the zone already.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: So, when I hear some of these arguments coming from the other side, I wonder to myself—especially in light of the fact, well, I could speak on behalf of Port of Spain South, as being a seasoned criminal practitioner; I cannot say much about Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, right? Port of Spain South should have done the correct thing and spoken to the rest of the Bench. It is clear that apparently “alyuh doh caucus on that side”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: “So every man Jack will just pick up de Bill, come to de House, talk all manner of nonsense, and expect it to pass as ah good contribution”. That cannot work here. We are here for serious business, because this is a serious piece of legislation. “Ah doh know how you end up here to be shaking yuh head, yuh cud go back down dey and shake yuh head”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and Laughter*]

Hon. S. Sobers: The goodly Member for Laventille East/Morvant also spoke, and I mean, he spoke with passion. He spoke about search and seizure and detention of certain items, and he wondered whether or not this would have been an abuse, and he wondered where would be safeguards that should be placed within the Bill concerning those things. I would want to inform the hon. Member, if it has not been done by senior counsel on the other side already, that search and seizure in this type of manner already exists.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: We do not need the Special Operations Bill, 2026, for that. Detention of that nature already exists. We do not need this Bill for that. A police officer can search and seize based upon reasonable suspicion. A police officer can detain as well too, based upon reasonable suspicion. And if it is you, as a member of the public, is aggrieved or affected, Port of Spain South will be able to tell you that there is a tort in civil law called detainee and conversion, where you could bring a claim against the police for the seizure of the thing, get it back, and you might even win some money too.

But apparently, I know you might very well tell yourself or tell the rest of the public: Well, these are fanciful terms being used by lawyers, because at the end of the day, you have to pay a lawyer to do it. “Well, no, de PNM full ah lawyers”. “De PNM have senior counsels too”. “Dey go do it for yuh pro bono”.

I know Port of Spain South will definitely do it for you pro bono. You go upper St Vincent Street; he will handle you, right?

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. S. Sobers: A particular part of St Vincent Street. “But if you go further up, it go be pressure, right”. You are bound to lose. You are bound to lose. You still stand a chance here, right? The hon. Member also spoke about lived experiences, and, I mean, when he mentioned that, it touched me. Because, as I said to the hon. Member, I gave my address that I grew up in, which is Mon Repos in San Fernando; Skinner Street, Mon Repos, San Fernando. Right? I am a San Fernando boy, just like Dr. Moonilal, who grew up in Ste. Madeleine, right?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: Hon. Jerlean John—look at that. So many examples of us who grew up in these areas. We know about these lived examples that you are talking about.

8.00 p.m.

I know what it is, I will tell you something, hon. Member from Laventille East/Morvant. I know what it is. You know what it is? To come home from church, seven o’clock in the evening. The Roman Catholic Church right out the road from by me, St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church, and get stopped by a police officer, right, who had his own reasonable suspicion, three young boys now coming from church, well dressed, and we get pulled to the side and get asked a set of questions, and got pat down as well too. I know about that. But you know, at the end of the day, as a grown adult, I realized he is doing his job. He had a patrol he was doing.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: He had a patrol he was doing. But I understand what you are

talking about, and there was a particular past commissioner who used to say, “Is better yuh comply and den complain.” Comply and then complain. So, if you have these issues that you are talking about, these lived examples that you are speaking about, no problem. There are positions where you could go and complain. It has the Police Service Commission. It has the Professional Standards Bureau. The other lawyers on the Bench could tell you about that. The Police Complaints Authority. It has the courthouse as well too. Go to them and complain, but comply when the time comes. As I had to comply, and my brothers had to comply when we went through that as well. That is a part of life.

And the safeguards—

Mr. Birchwood: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. S. Sobers: Well, that is what I am telling you. Those are the safeguards. And yes, the safeguards that the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande spoke about with respect to the training, that are there to assist as well too. But there are other safeguards that I am saying that exist independently of the Bill before the House today, and you need to get au courant with that.

But you know what struck me, unfortunately, when the Member spoke, and it is not tethered to the Member, but it is tethered to the PNM as a whole. What is the response? They talk about safeguards. What was the response for something like that, if you have to go through something like that? What would have been the PNM’s response in being in office in administration for so many decades for situations like this? In areas like Laventille East, Morvant, or San Fernando East, where I grew up, and in other places that persons would have grown up in?

You know what would have been the response? The PNM’s response is “all that yuh good for is for yuh to go and cut grass. All that yuh good for is to join a CEPEP programme.” That is the PNM’s response. The UNC’s response is

something like that, is saying, “No, yuh better dan cutting grass.” The UNC’s first response was “Teach a man to fish and he go be able to fish on he own.” That is what Mr. Panday had said.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: Mrs. Persad-Bissessar’s response to that thereafter was to open up the gate for everybody.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: That is what the UNC’s response was, to liberate people in circumstances like that. That is what our response was. So, that is to answer some of the questions that my good friend from Laventille East/Morvant brought up in his contribution, his lived experiences.

I spoke to some of the issues that Port of Spain South mentioned when he spoke about “Whether or not we have statistics with respect to anti-gang, and how many people get charged under anti-gang?” I mentioned, and I indicated that the anti-gang legislation needs the teeth for it to work better. these were things that we put on the Floor of the Parliament back then. So, respectfully, when it comes to situations like that, we will take no advice from the PNM on issues like that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: The hon. Member as well, for Port of Spain South, he spoke about the fact that “This is now becoming a feature of the UNC, where we remove section 4 and section 5. It is a common feature of the UNC.” Well, that is something that was totally common by the PNM.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: Sometimes no matter what the Bill was, however it touched and concerned the Constitution, they would strip it down, take out section 4 and section 5. So do not come and tell us about doing that now when we know it is

proportionate and just in these circumstances.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: But as I said before, the PNM's position is always fear, doom and gloom. The sky is falling. The UNC will not support anything. We will never be a good government. We will bring legislation that is ad hoc. "It doh make no sense." But when we spoke to you about DNA, when we spoke to you about anti-gang, when we spoke to you about the Firearms Act, we spoke to you about several iterations of miscellaneous Acts that you hodgepodged together and you bring on us in the dead of the night, did we complain? All of us prepared, and all of us caucused, and all of us spoke from the same hymn book, which is definitely not what took place here this evening.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: We used to have that too, yes, before we came out here. I spoke and I mentioned already the fact that search warrants can happen in the way in which they can happen. Several practitioners in the House know about that. They know about this already. So, persons, the public that is listening should not apprehend any immediate fear. These are things that happen all the time. These are things that happen all the time. But I know that which was brought up by the Member for both St. Ann's East and for Port of Spain South, they talked about the removal of some of the social programmes. I know persons spoke about it, but think about it. Currently, right now, with the little that we have in this country because of the fumes that the PNM left us, we have a lot of social programmes that are running to help teach people—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers:—so that they could go out there and earn a dollar of their own. The Ministry of Culture and Community Development has several programmes.

Every time you watch the newspapers is something from the Ministry of Culture and Community Development. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries always has something going on to teach people what to do, how to do hatchlings, and create farms on their own, and all of these sorts of things. The Ministry of the People and Social Development always has something going on, it is just for you to get out there.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: And I do not know if it was the Member for St. Ann's East, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West or Port of Spain South, so, I apologize if it is either all of you or one of you—one of the hon. Members who mentioned “challenged communities in densely populated areas and how this is going to affect them and affect them in those.” “So wey yuh think happening all de time, eh? What yuh think happening all de time?” I would not call the Member's name. There is a very a very intelligent, sharp, erudite Member on our side, which might be all of us on this side eh, right. But a particularly sharp Member would always quip to me and say, he says, “You know, Sean, when we have meetings, we have to go all over the place because our constituencies are densely populated, and the people living all over de place. So, we have to go in search of these people to have a meeting. You have a meeting here, you have a spot meeting there, you have a spot meeting there.” But sometimes, but sometimes—

Mr. Scotland: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. S. Sobers: Sometimes, I know what densely populated means Port of Spain South, and I could tell you some other things about densely populated, but we will leave that for when we are in the corridor, right? “Because yuh know meh long time.” And he would quip and say, “but when other Members opposite would want to have a meeting, they would simply just go where they have to go and say,

everybody come downstairs let we have the meeting.” That is the difference between how we have to deal with our populations in our constituencies that sometimes outnumber, outnumber, sometimes twice the amount of persons that live in PNM areas or in PNM-controlled constituencies compared to UNC constituencies.

So, we do know about the challenges that occur in densely populated areas and in densely populated constituencies, but we do not come here to this Parliament and cry and complain about it. We go out there and we do what the Prime Minister says to do from the beginning, “Go out there and serve the people, pound de pavement and touch de flesh.”

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

8.10 p.m.

Then there was the entire issue which went back and forth and back and forth about body cameras, and this and that, and who purchased the body cams. Well, we know you all purchased the body cameras, and we know how inferior the body cameras were. But the standard operating procedure for body cameras, if I am not mistaken, so that it could work with respect to how it is being contemplated here in this Special Operations Bill, and I do not want to be incorrect in any way. So, clause 21, this is one of the strongest accountability provisions:

“...police...”—and—“...Defence...”—personnel must—“...as far as...possible having regard to available resources, use a body-worn camera during...special operation in a closed area.”

Protocols must regulate:

“...access...”—to footage—

“...use of data...”

—activation—“...deactivated”

—recording the—“...reason for deactivating...”

The public should be informed that recording is taking place. In a modern policing environment, accountability should not depend solely on competing recollections of what occurred—which is really the pocket diary that police officers still utilize. Where resources permit, the Bill provides for an objective contemporaneous record of operation.

So what is intended here, as far as I am aware, the use of body cameras, yes, the limitation is in terms of how long the device can last for. But in any modern policing jurisdiction, what would generally happen is, you go to the station, you pick up your body camera, you put it on. You do not switch the camera on to sit down in the car while you are having a conversation with your batch, while you are waiting by the traffic light, while you are watching “tanty” crossing the road, no. When an incident occurs, your training kicks in, you turn on the body camera. That is how it is done in mature jurisdictions. The body camera is not on as soon as you enter the police vehicle, or as soon as you put it on when you are in the police station. But when an incident occurs, which usually happens between 30 seconds to maybe a minute and a half, you turn the camera on, or when you have to intervene in a situation, you indicate to the person, “Listen, the camera is on, we are here to do x, y, and z, we are here to have a discussion”. “The camera is here to protect both of us.” You could ask seasoned criminal practitioners about incidents occurring out on the streets. It “doh” be for no 15 and 20 minutes.

The Member for Toco/Sangre Grande could tell you, when you are cross-examining a witness and you ask him how long a matter went on for, a fracas or something, they will tell you, “Five minutes”. If you stop and you ask the magistrate or the judge to allow you to let five minutes pass, you will see how long and inordinate and unpracticable five minutes is actually. It does not occur in five

minutes. That is why the operating procedure for the body camera is set out in the way it is. For whatever reason, if it is the body camera was not charged, you still have the ability to take contemporaneous notes. How? Through your pocket diary.

If you do not have your pocket diary, when you go back in the station, what is the SOP? Seasoned practitioners are supposed to be able to tell you all that “if allyuh had caucus”. They will tell you when you go back in the station, the group of officers will go and report to the most senior person who would have been on duty with them. That person will give an instruction to one of the junior persons, or a person who was part of the exercise, and you tell them, “Go and write up the station diary”. Before the station diary is completed, the senior officer will watch it, he will read it over, and then he signs off.

So just like Port of Spain South would say, when you ask for a disclosure in a matter, disclosure is a document that you would require to help you prepare your defence if necessary. You ask for the station diary—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, do you require your additional 15 minutes?

Hon. S. Sobers: Yes, please, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Okay. You finish at 8.28.

Hon. S. Sobers: Yes, please, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: That is how it works. But if you all had prepared, I would not have to go through all of this rigmarole to tell “allyuh” that is what this section means, and that it actually occurs already.

Many of us who practise in the criminal courts or who had practised there, we know about disclosure. We know what to look for in a station diary. We know when to request it, and that is the contemporaneous note of the activity that has

taken place. So do not let anybody fool you about that. That, “Body cameras here eh mean nothing”. “It cyah happen”, and this and that and the other, because you all know “yuh buy stupidity and you give it to us”. We know what the SOP should be to go along with these things, to complement the things that already exist, so that you have a robust system of reporting, and a robust system of documentary evidence that can go to the court if you want redress in a particular way, or if somebody has been charged to ensure, the charge that was laid, that it was not laid arbitrarily. We know what we are doing on this side, man.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: The next thing I must raise, and I could not believe it, because Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West would know, Port of Spain South would definitely know, if you are detained—and even Laventille West, when I tried to—

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Speaker, 44(2), I notice the Member keeps speaking to this side of the Bench while he should be addressing his contribution and statements towards you. His back is constantly—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Okay. Yes, Member for Tabaquite, you can look at me and address me.

Hon. S. Sobers: Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, I could spend “whole day” looking at you, I will not watch them. [*Laughter*] I will direct it to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will watch you. I prefer to so do. So that the Members on the other side, who are seasoned Members, please, Madam Deputy Speaker, they would know that when somebody is detained—and the thing is, I am peeking because I do not want them to jump up again. I am peeking. When Laventille West was here and he spoke about Chandrawtee Ramsingh, any law student who is now coming out, it has certain cases you must know, Chandrawtee Ramsingh is

one of them. *Yasin Abu Bakr v The State* is another one that you will use for bail. You are supposed to know it inside out.

So when I heard him call Ramsingh, I say, “Well, what paragraph in Ramsingh”? Everybody knows the paragraph in Ramsingh is paragraph 10, but it deals with PACE, something we do not have here. So when the Law Lords spoke about it, it was a juxtaposition. It was a guide. We do not have legislation that says how long somebody could be detained. Members opposite—I do not want to watch them directly, I will peek at them while I am saying it—Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, and Port of Spain South especially, they will know how to deal with that, you know. They will have people going in that station from the day “yuh geh lock up” to start to put down their application because they need to do their affidavit. For what? Something in the CPR called, habeas corpus.

In this Bill, Special Operations Bill, habeas corpus is the ability to approach the civil court for habeas corpus. You are not blocked from doing that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: So if you are detained, Madam Deputy Speaker, essentially, then you can do the very same thing. You will hire, maybe, one of them across on the other side, the hon. Members.

Hon. Member: No, no, no.

Hon. S. Sobers: “Yuh might loss. Yuh might loss.” But what will happen is, is that you start organizing. You start sending your person to the police station to find out what is going on, this, that and the other, and whatever, and then you go ahead and you file a habeas application.

But you know what happened here, the bright lawyers on this side decide, “Hear what going on, we doh want people to run to have to go and file a habeas corpus application, so we have a provision in here that does allow yuh to have the

police go by the magistrate to justify yuh detention” before the time limit that is prescribed, or that is suggested, rather, in Chandrawtee Ramsingh. So that the magistrate could look at it and say, “Well, okay, release the man”, or the magistrate could look at it and say, “Hold him for ah two days again and if yuh ain’t come up with anything, release the man”. Which is exactly the same thing the habeas corpus does. But instead of you spending thousands of dollars, sometimes, by attorneys, it is in the law, and that is what a forthright, a proper forward-thinking government does when they are passing legislation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: So, members of the public, do not let these people fool you. They are talking about migration of criminals, Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West spoke about that. That when we do this, and we rush down there, “dey go” migrate elsewhere, and migrate here, and migrate there. Well, here is what is going on, when they migrate, we are going after them wherever they go too, wherever they are.

The Prime Minister stood up in this House and she said, “If they want to come Siparia, we’ll take special operations down in Siparia”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: If they want to come Tabaquite, if they migrate in Tabaquite, we are taking them down in Tabaquite.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: It does not matter. This thing is no geographical discrimination like they would want to peddle it out to be.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: We want to lock up the criminals wherever they are in this country.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: We want to bring them dragging and kicking before the courts.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: After due process is followed, they will be prosecuted and they will be sentenced accordingly. That is the position.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: “Migration of criminals.” [*Member sucks teeth*]

You know, there is so much more that they left us with here to speak about. I will tell you two things before I take my chair, Madam Deputy Speaker. The other side spoke a lot at length sometimes, trying to bait us into thinking that this is some piece of legislation targeting the PNM, “and the PNM, and the PNM people, and the PNM base, PNM this, PNM that, and the PNM”. In June of this year, the 8th of June, the Member for—“ah peeking”—St. Ann’s East, on a platform, stood up and said, and I quote, in a speech she made then, she claimed that:

“...many students involved in school violence...”—what?—they came—
“...from PNM households.”

That is what the Member for St. Ann’s East said—

Hon. Member: This St. Ann’s East?

Hon. S. Sobers: Yeah. But they will want to go and complain about all the measures that we are doing here, and then they say, respectfully—the hon. Members say, respectfully, that they are doing it for their constituents. But their constituents have been reaching out to us—

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers:—reaching out to the Ministers of Homeland Security and Defence, and telling them, “Aye, we want special operations”. “Aye, we want

police in the school. Aye, we want the police post too.” That is what their constituents have been reaching out and telling us.

So as a responsible government, who are you going to believe, the constituents or the ones that I have to peek at now on the other side? No, we will believe their constituents, because they know what they are going through. It does not matter, respectfully—unfortunately, as the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West was saying—how many times he is walking through his constituency, and it is “Love Stuary” and “Love Stuary”. Well, I have to say, “Love Stuary”, because that is how it is posted, please, respectfully, Madam Deputy Speaker, “Love Stuary”. At the end of the day, the love from “Stuary” must come when he supports a Bill like this.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: That is the love that we want from “Stuary”. That is the love that we want. That is the love that we want, and that is forward-thinking. It is disabusing your mind of certain things.

You are entertaining or considering foolishness that is being posted about “who gehin switch here and who gehing switch here, doh study dat”. That is nonsense, just as if it is you think you will ever be Prime Minister again or if you “go ever lead” the PNM again.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: He is staying right there for now. He might be out the next time they have screening.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before I close, I want to say this, as I come to an end, this administration, we understand and appreciate, through our magnanimous leader, we have a lot of work still to do. I think it was Robert Frost who said:

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep.”

This administration, we have miles to go before we sleep. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Diego Martin Central.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Symon de Nobriga (*Diego Martin Central*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for acknowledging me and allowing me to enter into this debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, I do so, as always, mindful that I represent not only the constituency of Diego Martin Central, but the wider population is watching us in this House, and not only now, but they will be able to access what we say and the manner in which we say it, far into the future, whether it be this entire Sitting, or especially for our younger people, long-form and short-form.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Public Utilities and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Barry Padarath): Thank you, acting whip. Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to invoke the Standing Order regarding sitting beyond the 8.00 p.m. hour. Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 15(5), I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the completion of the business before it.

Question put and agreed to.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS BILL, 2026

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Diego Martin Central, please continue.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is that knowledge that forces me to be mindful about the words that I use and what I say in this House. Madam Deputy Speaker, before I start, there are three pieces of misinformation that were bandied about during the course of the debate today, and I am compelled to address those three pieces of misinformation. I will address the first one, which was the most recent, and it was uttered by the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite.

The Member of Parliament for Tabaquite came here and said that he, in his substantive ministerial position as the Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, I believe he—and I will paraphrase it—is constantly embarrassed by the position that was taken with regard to the declaration of crime and criminality as a public health crisis and emergency, and no other Caribbean country supported that. Madam Deputy Speaker, if the Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs went to the CARICOM website, the Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs would be able to see that on April 18, 2023, all 15 member states of the Caribbean Community collectively supported and declared escalating crime and violence a public health issue and emergency.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, further to that, this regional stance expanded further when CARICOM, alongside the United Nations and the UNDP, united behind a landmark framework to operationalize treating crime and violence as a public health emergency across the region.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a bit of misinformation. Maybe in the heat of the moment, my friend from Tabaquite let it come out.

Mr. Sobers: “Ah will carry yuh”—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: No, no, you “doh” have to do that, you carry your people.

Mr. Sobers: “Ah will carry yuh in ah boat, doh worry.”

Mr. S. de Nobriga: “No, no, I doh geh seasick, I cyah take what you will do on dat.”

Anyway, Madam Deputy Speaker, the other piece of misinformation was bandied about, early on, by the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, and then again supported by the Member for Couva North, and it is this narrative that those on the other side have when they talk about the PNM’s crime plan and the crime plan being, “who dead, dead”. Madam Deputy Speaker, let me be very clear, I know what the reality is and I know what the truth is, I went to Google, I typed in, “When did Dr. Keith Rowley say, who dead, dead”? That is a simple Google search. This is what came up in the Google search, Madam Deputy Speaker:

Former Prime Minister, Dr Keith Rowley, made the “who dead, dead” remark on January 15th or 18th of 2022 during a press conference—

For those opposite, after this I will explain to you all what a press conference is:

—during a press conference addressing COVID-19 policies and workplace

8.30 p.m.

Context of the quote. The issue:

Rowley was pushing back against trade unions and critics at the time who argued that taking the COVID-19 vaccine should be treated strictly as a personal choice rather than a matter of collective public health responsibility.

The statement. He stated:

It is saying, let us leave it to choice and “who live, live and who dead, dead”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga:—using the phrase to characterize what he viewed as a reckless, hands-off approach to the pandemic.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, again, on this Google search, there is another bullet point called: “The Fallout”. And this is particularly interesting—these are Google’s words and not mine. “The Fallout”:

While he used the phrase to criticize that mindset, the blunt snippet was frequently re-quoted and repurposed by political opponents and critics (such as Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar) to accuse him of callousness regarding public safety and rising crime.

Nothing to do with crime, Madam Deputy Speaker. He was addressing a real and pertinent issue at the time. And it is either that the Members opposite do not know, or they simply parrot a slogan that they are given to shout when they are in Parliament.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the other issue that I would like to address is a comment made by the Attorney General in his opening remarks, and again supported by the Member for Couva North, this constant narrative around, “Under the PNM, gangs were allowed to flourish.” It is astounding to me, astounding, that this is the party of LifeSport. This is the party of a programme that, funny enough, lasted for two years—just like this piece of legislation that they have brought to us, this is the party of a programme that empowered gangs and gang violence; a party that, while they were in power—and, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me put some context.

If somebody was 16 in 2012, that puts them in their late 20s and early 30s now. We as a country are reaping the fruits of that labour, alongside—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga:—the closure of youth camps and alongside the normalization of corruption at such extreme levels for five years that it almost broke this country—not only financially, eh, but it almost broke the spirit of this country. And for 10 years, Madam Deputy Speaker, that was an uphill battle that the PNM faced while constantly—

Mr. Hosein: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr. S. de Nobriga:—being—

Mr. Hosein: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am on a point of order, please, 48(1). What is the relevance to this particular Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, can you immediately tie this back into the Bill? If you can, please do that. If not, I will ask you to move on.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, with all due respect—I understand your position, but with all due respect, we have sat here and had Members opposite go all around—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I ask you to tie it back into the Bill. I ask you for relevance. If you are unable to give me relevance, as you just proved, I kindly ask you to move on.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, the relevance of what I am addressing here is answering what was said by the Members opposite. I am not speaking about anything that happened outside of this debate, you know. I am speaking—but the problem is that the reality is something that those opposite do not want to hear. And more so, they do not want the nation to hear.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your ruling, and I will move on.

Madam Deputy Speaker, every right-thinking citizen in this country wants to see the police succeed, and the PNM is no different. Every decent citizen in this country wants to see illegal firearms and the terror and havoc that they created, brought to an end, taken off our streets, and the Opposition is no different. Madam Deputy Speaker, every community wants to be free of crime, of intimidation, of extortion, and we on this side are no different.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, every parent wants to see gangs dismantled, and so do we. The Opposition wants law enforcement. The Opposition wants the police service to have the lawful authority, the resources, the training, the intelligence and the institutional support necessary to protect the citizens of this country. And no one on this side has taken a position that is contrary to that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, but the Opposition has a responsibility too. The Opposition, as part of this legislative body, has a responsibility and a role to play to ensure that the laws that are created here are fit for purpose, and ultimately, serve the best interests of the nation as a whole. The legislation before us, this Special Operations Bill, 2026, is a critical piece of legislation, not only for the stated intentions in here, Madam Deputy Speaker, but also for the outcomes of its implementation.

My colleagues on this side have laid out, in great degree, the flaws, the gaps, the shortcomings, the dangers of the Bill. And, of course, the Government has created a narrative—even before this legislation was brought before the House, the Government created a narrative that somehow any opposition to components of the Bill is proof that special interests are being protected by the opposer.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are grown men and women, and we have a

serious role to play here, and that cannot be the position that a serious Parliament, a serious government takes.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: It just simply cannot be. Madam Deputy Speaker, even in the rush to get this Bill to the Floor of the House for this debate, the Prime Minister told three unfortunate untruths.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Firstly, you do not have to tell me to be careful. I am very aware of what I am saying. Anyway, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be speaking to you.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the first one was to claim that the Bill had already been laid, knowing that it had not been. On the Floor, the Prime Minister was told more than once that it had not been laid—claiming that the Bill was laid. When the simple question was posed to her by the Opposition Leader as to when the Bill was laid, the Prime Minister went off on a tirade. But we understood here what that was. It was to distract the conversation away from the simple fact that that deception, purposeful or not—

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, may I turn your attention to Standing Order 48(6)? On the day of the Sitting, the hon. Prime Minister clarified what was the process of what was happening. There was no sinister move behind it. The Member—Madam Deputy Speaker, I am invoking Standing Order 48(6) for imputing improper motives against the Prime Minister.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have to agree with that Member. No improper motive against the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: I understand that you have to agree with it, Madam Deputy

Speaker. My point has been made—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think right now that you are imputing an improper motive against me.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: And you still continue, but I will allow you to continue with your contribution.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. The fact is that a Supplementary Order Paper was then rushed to Parliament, and that is the paper in which this legislation was then laid. That is the fact.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, the second untruth that was told was the issue of body cams; the issue of body cams and the wearing of body cams. And this has been bandied about. The Member for Tabaquite was at pains to go to the legislation. But I do not think he has realized that the issue here is not what is here, you know. The issue is that what is here was in direct conflict by what was stated in that statement. And it is not the first time that that has happened with this Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister came to Parliament and said that officers involved in special operations must wear body cams. That statement has been shown to be untrue by those of us on this side and by the very legislation itself.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, the third untruth is that the PNM blocked the ZOSO Bill. I understand the Member for Tabaquite does not want us to be talking about ZOSO. But the Prime Minister, in her statement, raised the ZOSO Bill. The simple fact is this. The Bill failed because it was bad law.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: And it failed because of the arrogance of the Government in trying to force bad law down the throats of this Parliament and the nation.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(6), please.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, if you would allow me to elucidate on 48(6). The hon. Prime Minister said the following:

That police officers and military personnel in special operations zones must wear body-worn cameras as far as is possible, having regard to available resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is on the public record.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, typically, I would leave—my apologies.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. I would let the *Hansard* reflect that. And once again, move on. Do not impute any improper motive.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want it to be very clear here. I am not imputing improper motives at all.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: I am stating a fact; a fact. That was what was said. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The legislation before us, as I said, this Special Operations Bill, is a critical piece of legislation, and we have laid out those gaps. The fact is that we are now here, Madam Deputy Speaker, at the same place that we were in January when the Government at that time failed in the ZOSO Bill. As we did then, we are doing now.

We understand that it is our responsibility to identify the dangers of the legislation. We understand that it is our responsibility, as a responsible Opposition, to stand—yes, to stand up as the voice of all the people in the country who are going to be forced to live in a police state, created by this UNC Government.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

8.45p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not about trying to serve the interests of any gang member, to serve the interests of any criminal or drug dealer or kingpin, who should be attracting the attention of both the police and the jail. This is not about this, not about that, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is about testing whether this legislation can make the country safe, not only in the short term, you know, but if it can address criminality in the long term.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, I crave your indulgence, 53(1)(e),(f) and (g). The Member for Barataria/San Juan is bothering me at this point. Can I please ask for your protection?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Member, please continue your contribution.

Hon. Members: Overruled?

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Beckles: No surprises.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: No. Right?

Ms. Beckles: Even the Member is shocked.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: [*Laughter*] But the test, as I said, the test is not whether it will solve crime in the short term, but whether or not the population, the citizens feel

safer as a result of criminality in the long term being addressed. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the other test is, what happens next? What happens when the life of this Bill comes to an end? It is a simple thing. What happens to the citizens who live in those closed areas, wherever they may be? What does success look like to them?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I genuinely want to know whether the Government has properly worked out what is going to be required for them to operate this system that they have created and what results they expect to achieve and how the Parliament and the public will be able to judge that it has succeeded? Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not think that those are unreasonable questions to ask.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we know that the Bill gives the State extraordinary powers over citizens and entire communities. We know that the Government should therefore do more than just tell us that the powers being conferred onto them are simply necessary. It needs to demonstrate to us that it has the personnel, the equipment, the systems and the institutional capacity to exercise that power effectively.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government should also tell the country what success is supposed to look like. As I said, does success mean more operations? Does it mean more arrests? Does it mean more firearms recovered or more people detained? Or does success mean fewer murders; fewer shootings; criminal organisations dismantled; successful prosecutions and communities remaining safe after an operation has ended? Those two things are very, very different.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have lived in an almost perpetual state of emergency

since April 28th, 2025, and this Government has repeatedly come to the Parliament to tell us that the work is not done and we have to continue this thing. Having exhausted that avenue, they have now come to get a two-year block to do the same thing or worse without having the additional harassment of having to come to the Parliament and not answer questions as to why these extraordinary powers and the removal of constitutional rights are necessary, and that is all that it is.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am particularly concerned that this Government has concentrated so heavily on acquiring power that it has paid insufficient attention to what that power is actually supposed to achieve. Let me be very clear, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am a citizen of this country and I am a parent. I have two children who are going nowhere.

Hon. Members: What!

Mr. S. de Nobriga: And they are adults in this country. Their future is tied to this country.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: So to be clear, Madam Deputy Speaker, I support strong, lawful and effective action against criminals, and I want to see the gangs broken and I want to see the persons financing them, directing criminal organisations, I want to see them prosecuted. I want, not just my community, but all communities to feel free from intimidation and extortion, but I am also not going to stand here and pretend that simply passing this Bill is the same thing as producing a plan to reduce crime.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the legislation itself establishes a legal framework, and I understand that legislation that is brought before this House cannot contain every administrative and operation detail. That would be an insane request from anyone

on that side. The Government must be allowed a certain level of freedom to do the things that the Government must do, particularly when it comes to issues of national security. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, when a government is asking a Parliament to approve a framework of this magnitude, it has a responsibility to have an open and honest conversation, as far as it is possible, about the implementation arrangements to ensure success.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have not seen that. What we have seen, is Members opposite stand up, make their bacchanal and their “janjhat”, and then sit back down. Madam Deputy Speaker, this position that it “doh matter what we bring, alyuh would oppose it”. The fact of the matter is that when we do bring amendments, regardless of what the legislation is, they are dismissed out of hand.

So, “doh start to play this game of, well it doh matter”, because the truth is that we know that it “doh matter” what we bring, you all are going to exercise the majority that you have in the House. And if it has to go somewhere else and you have a majority there as well, then you will exercise it there as well. That is just a fact.

Mr. Sobers: Madam Deputy Speaker, if I may, 48(1), please.

Hon. Member: Yeah, please.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, can you move along, please?

Mr. S. de Nobriga: I will.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: So, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: —additional 15 minutes?

Mr. S. de Nobriga: I have arrived at that time already, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: My God, time flies when you are having fun.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, you know the former Member for Naparima used to come—my colleague from Couva South has exclaimed—the former Member of Parliament for Naparima used to come to the Parliament, and in his contributions, he would often ask for certain types of information. And when he did that, Madam Deputy Speaker, there would be pounding of desks—of course, they were on this side at the time. There would be pounding of desks, agreement in what he is asking for, calling out the Government. And these were the things he would ask for. Things like, where is the operational assessment? Where is the costing? What is the staffing plan? Where are the performance indicators? What is the evaluation framework? Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a fact, right?

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Let us compare it with Singapore.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: And of course—let us compare this with Singapore.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, many, many of his colleagues then are in the House today, and, of course, they sit on the other side, and they have no concern for anything to do when it comes to that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear to me that the pigs are walking on two legs.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Yes.

Mr. Hosein: “Yuh forget it have Muslims in dis Government”.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga:—we are simply asking that the Government as part of a

fulsome debate around this most critical piece of legislation, speak to us here and to the nation that will see this debate in long or short form tonight or some point in the future, speak to us about the measures to ensure success, the measures that they will take to ensure that in two years, when they come back—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, with all due respect, I have heard this many times from you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I rise on tedious repetition and relevance. Can you, please, relate this to one of the 26 clauses of the Bill? Thank you.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, sure. Madam Deputy Speaker, right—clause 22. At clause 22, it says that the weapons, ammunition and ballistic signatures assigned to police officers and members of the defence force involved in special operations must be registered with the Forensic Science Centre before an operation in a closed area.

Madam Deputy Speaker, up to that point, it is absolutely sensible. But then the clause says, unless the Commissioner or the Chief of Defence Staff determines otherwise. The same Commissioner or Chief of Defence Staff who are subject to the veto of the Prime Minister, they then determine otherwise on what basis. What—does that decision then have to be recorded? Must the reasons for their position be documented? And will it appear in the monthly report that the Prime Minister will be writing to herself?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: And, Madam Deputy Speaker, these again, this Bill, right in this clause by itself, this Bill contains a pseudo-accountability measure and then creates an exception without establishing the criteria of governing that exception. Madam Deputy Speaker, clause 8 says that the matters to be addressed in the

reports will

“...be determined by the Prime Minister in writing, after consultation...”

However, the Bill itself does not guarantee the publication of the performance information Parliament will need. That decision is ultimately left up to the Prime Minister. There is no guarantee that the public will have any idea. How long do I have again, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker: You end at nine minutes after nine.

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Oh, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: There is no guarantee that the public will have any idea from any report about how many operations were conducted; where they were conducted; how long did they last; how many searches were carried out; how many homes were entered without warrants; how many persons were detained? Madam Deputy Speaker, they will have no idea about whether or not murders and shootings remained lower after the operations themselves ended. Did criminality move into surrounding communities? Did the same area require repeated interventions? And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the reason that this is important is because without it, this becomes a trust exercise. Not for us, because again they will do what they have to do, but for the nation. And that trust is in short supply when it comes to this Government.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, the fact is that at the end of two years, unless we establish benchmarks, unless the Government makes some level of commitment to be transparent in terms of what the benchmarks are going to be. In two years, they will simply come back and do what they have done when the requirement to extend a state of emergency has met them. They will simply come

and say, the work has not been done and the police still needs these powers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my point is simply that we want to see the success. But unless we can measure the success, then there is no way to establish what it looks like. There is no way to establish whether or not they have actually done what they said the Bill was going to do. There is no way to know whether the job is almost finished and we can see where the benefit of this legislation is.

9.00 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is the position that I would like to put forward to you. I understand I am almost at the end. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be able to enter the debate, and I expect my colleagues will complete the assignment. Thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Tobago West.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Joel Sampson (Tobago West): Good evening, Madam Deputy Presiding Officer. There is a saying that says, “When rain falls, it does not fall on one man’s housetop.” And I am assured that everyone in here, crime has affected them in some way or the other, directly or indirectly. Today presented an opportunity for the Government and the Opposition to come in here and work together, you know, and bring meaningful contributions. You know, if the Opposition does not agree with something, they are free to say, “We do not agree with this. You could probably try this, or you could take this out, or you could put in this,” because the country at large is looking on. But instead of doing that, they come in here and oppose. That is why they are on that side, and as the song says, they are only good as their last performance.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. J. Sampson: Madam Deputy Speaker, as we speak, authorities in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are processing young men from Tobago who were reportedly intercepted in the Grenadines with a substantial quantity of cocaine. Approximately two weeks ago, the authorities in Barbados arrested, charged and brought before the court a young son of Tobago in connection with a substantial quantity of narcotics. His alleged accomplices reportedly escaped and made their way back to Tobago.

Let that sink in. Young men from Tobago, cocaine in the Grenadines, narcotics in Barbados, alleged accomplices escaping across the Caribbean Sea and returning to Tobago. These are not distant stories coming out of Colombia, Venezuela or Mexico. These are not scenes from a crime drama. These are young men connected to our island, allegedly operating across international waters and being processed by the criminal justice systems of neighbouring Caribbean States.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while we sit here debating legislation, the criminal networks are not debating. They are moving. They are moving drugs. They are moving firearms. They are moving money. They are moving people and they are moving through the waters surrounding Tobago. In August of this year, police in Tobago seized more than 33 kilograms of marijuana, together with 100 rounds of 9-millimetre ammunition. Three people were arrested. In December of 2024, the police intercepted more than 230 kilograms of marijuana and approximately 13 kilograms of cocaine at the western end of Tobago. Two men were arrested while reportedly loading fuel into an unregistered vessel. In that same year, Tobago recorded 26 murders, the highest number in the recorded history of our island. Twenty-six murders, Madam Deputy Speaker, among a population of approximately 70,000 people. That is equivalent to approximately 37 murders for every 100,000 residents.

These are not merely statistics. These are funerals. These are children growing up without parents. These are mothers burying their sons. These are families being forced to live with questions that may never be answered. These are communities learning to distinguish the sound of gunfire from the sound of fireworks.

This is the uncomfortable truth we must confront: Tobago is no longer merely being affected by crime. Tobago is at risk of being incorporated into a wider regional network of organized criminal activity.

Our geography, which has always been one of our greatest blessings, is also becoming one of our greatest vulnerabilities. We sit within reach of major narcotics-producing territories. We are surrounded by open waters. We possess numerous bays, coves, beaches and informal landing points. We have small fishing vessels moving legitimately between communities and across territorial waters. And we have limited resources with which to monitor every mile of our coastline. The same sea that feeds us, employs us, connects us and attracts visitors to our shores can be exploited by criminal organizations to transport drugs, guns, money and people.

We must, therefore, stop comforting ourselves with the outdated belief that Tobago is isolated from organized crime. We are not isolated. We are exposed, and unless we act decisively, Tobago could become more than a destination for illegal drugs. It could become a storage point, a transshipment point, a refuelling point and a recruitment ground for regional criminal organizations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is why I rise today to offer a Tobago perspective in support of the Special Operations Bill, 2026.

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. J. Sampson: I do not support this legislation because I desire a militarized

Tobago. I support it because I refuse to accept a criminalized Tobago. I do not want soldiers and police officers permanently stationed on every street corner, but neither will I accept gunmen, traffickers and criminal organizations exercising authority over any village, bay, jetty, street or community on our island.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. J. Sampson: For too long, national discussions on violent crime have proceeded as though Tobago existed outside of the national security environment—as though the waters separating our islands somehow insulated Tobago from the guns, gangs, narcotics and organised criminal networks affecting the rest of the country.

The painful experience of recent years has shattered that illusion. Tobago has changed. The scale and character of the threat confronting our island have changed, and the response of the State must change with it. Families have been traumatised. Communities once considered peaceful have become increasingly anxious. Some business owners have been forced to adjust their operating hours. Residents have installed additional lighting, cameras and burglar-proofing. There are communities in which people no longer feel as free to move about at night as they once did. This is not the Tobago we inherited, and it is not the Tobago we are prepared to surrender to criminality.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. J. Sampson: The Tobago House of Assembly has, therefore, repeatedly called for a security response proportionate to the changing threat. We have supported increased police visibility, stronger intelligence gathering, improved marine surveillance, and closer cooperation among the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the defence force, the coast guard, and Tobago local institutions.

We have also supported the establishment of joint police and military posts

in strategic locations such as Plymouth and Goodwood, together with an enhanced security presence around our coastline and sensitive marine areas. The Special Operations Bill provides a legal and operational framework within which that kind of coordinated response can be strengthened.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the most important features of this revised Bill is found in clause 4 and the Schedule. The Bill expressly establishes the entire island of Tobago as District 7, a distinct policing district. This is not merely an administrative convenience. It is in recognition that Tobago possesses a unique geography, population distribution, transportation network, coastline, and security environment.

Tobago is not simply another municipality. We are an island jurisdiction with more than 40 communities spread across approximately 300 square kilometres. We have extensive stretches of coastlines, numerous bays and landing points, a substantial marine tourism industry, and several communities separated by difficult terrain. Our security risks include not only murders and conventional gang violence, but also the movement of illegal firearms, narcotics, and persons through our territorial waters. We must protect residents, visitors, tourism assets, fishermen, marine operators, and communities situated considerable distances from the main police facilities in Scarborough.

By designating Tobago as a single policing district, the Bill allows special operations to be planned around Tobago's actual circumstances. Clause 5 requires the Commissioner of Police to designate a police officer, not below the rank of Superintendent, as Head of Special Operations for the district. Clause 7 similarly provides for a member of the Defence Force, not below the rank of Major, to serve as Head of Military Assistance. This creates identifiable leadership and accountability for special operations conducted in Tobago. It means that

responsibility for Tobago cannot become lost within an administrative structure designed principally around the municipalities of Trinidad. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill also represents an attempt to move away from treating the entire country as though every community faces the same level of threat at the same time.

Under clause 11, an area may be declared a closed area only where there are reasonable grounds for concluding that public safety and peace are threatened by escalating violent crime, homicide, shootings, kidnappings, gang-related activity, illegal firearms, ammunition, weapons or explosives, or by the control or intimidation of a community by a gang.

The President must also be satisfied that ordinary law enforcement measures are insufficient to maintain or restore public safety and peace. This is important. The people of Tobago understand the need for decisive action against criminal networks. But decisive action must also be targeted, lawful and based upon evidence.

A closed area declaration must not be made simply because a community is poor, because young men gather in a particular place, or because an area has acquired an unfavourable reputation. Poverty is not criminality. Unemployment is not criminality. Being a young male and from a particular village is not criminality. The legal threshold established in clause 11 requires a demonstrable threat and the insufficiency of ordinary policing measures.

Within seven days of making the declaration, the President must provide the Speaker of the House of Representatives with a statement setting out the specific grounds for the decision. The House may annul the order, and the President may revoke it. These requirements introduce a measure of transparency and parliamentary oversight that must be welcomed.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

9.15 p.m.

The powers contained in the legislation are significant. They include establishment of cordons, restrictions on entry and departure, curfews, warrantless searches based on reasonable suspicion, seizure of property, arrest and detention.

Such powers must never be exercised casually, politically or vindictively.

The strength of the revised Bill is that these powers are accompanied by safeguards. Police officers and members of the defence force assigned to special operations must be trained in human rights, the use of force, community engagement and conflict de-escalation. That training is particularly important in Tobago. Our communities are close-knit. The manner in which our operation is conducted can determine whether citizens become partners in law enforcement or withdraw their cooperation because they feel humiliated, disrespected or unfairly targeted.

Security officers operating in Tobago must therefore understand that firmness and professionalism are not opposites. An officer can act decisively while respecting the dignity of the citizen. Indeed, the officer who behaves professionally is more likely to earn the trust and cooperation necessary to obtain information and secure lasting results.

Clause 15 requires reasonable suspicion before a warrantless search may be conducted. It also gives an owner, occupier or other responsible person an opportunity where reasonably practicable to observe the search. Female citizens must be searched by female police officers. A list must be made of seized items and a receipt must be provided. Tools used in lawful trade or business cannot be seized under this provision, nor can documents protected by legal professional privilege. That protection is especially relevant in Tobago, where a vehicle, fishing vessel, engine, power tool or piece of equipment may be the principal

means by which an entire household earns its living.

Clause 16 allows for a person to apply to a magistrate for the return of seized property. Clause 17 requires a person who has been arrested or detained to be told the reason in a language that he or she understands and to be brought before a magistrate. Continued detention is subject to judicial supervision. Clause 20 provides for complaints to be recorded, visits from family members, attorneys and medical practitioners, and access to food, clothing and medical care. These provisions matter because national security and human rights must never be presented as mutually exclusive choices. The purpose of law enforcement is to protect the lives, rights and freedom of law-abiding citizens.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill also introduces important mechanisms for operational accountability. Monthly reports must be submitted by both the Head of Special Operations and the Head of Military Assistance. An annual report must be laid before Parliament. The Commissioner of Police and the Chief of Defence Staff must establish joint operational protocols and separate standard operating procedures. Failure by officers to comply with those protocols may result in disciplinary action.

Clause 21 addresses the use of body-worn cameras during operations in closed areas, while allowing access to recordings by oversight and investigative bodies, including the Police Complaints Authority, the Police Services Commission, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Office of the Ombudsman. Body-worn cameras protect the citizen. They also protect the honest police officer and soldier against false allegations. I would nevertheless urge that the words, “as far as is possible”, having regard to available resources, must not become a permanent loophole.

Before special operations are conducted, adequate cameras, data storage systems,

batteries and evidence management facilities should be available. The inability to equip police officers properly should be treated as an operational deficiency to be corrected, not as routine exercise for conducting intrusive operations without an objective record. Clause 22 also requires the registration of weapons, ammunition and ballistic signatures assigned to officers involved in special operations. This is another important protection. The State must be able to account for every weapon deployed and every round discharged during an operation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while supporting the Bill, I wish to identify one matter that should be strengthened. The Bill defines the Chief Secretary as the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly. However, having defined the office, the operative provisions do not appear to assign the Chief Secretary a consultative or reporting role. If the legislation recognizes Tobago as a distinct policing district and expressly defines the Chief Secretary, then that recognition should have practical meaning.

National security remains a responsibility of the central government and the constitutionally established national security agencies. The Tobago House of Assembly does not seek to direct police operations or interfere with intelligence-led investigations, but the Assembly is the principal elected institution governing Tobago. It operates health facilities, emergency management systems, schools, social services, infrastructure, transportation and community development programmes. All of these services may be affected when an area is closed, cordoned off, or placed under curfew.

A special operation could affect access to health centres, schools, workplaces, ports, tourism facilities, public transportation, food supplies and emergency services. The Assembly will inevitably be called upon to support affected residents. I therefore recommend that where an area in Tobago is to be declared a

closed area or subjected to a curfew, the Prime Minister or the relevant national authority should consult the Chief Secretary where circumstances permit before the declaration is made. Where advanced consultation is impossible because of urgency or operational sensitivity, the Chief Secretary should be confidentially notified as soon as practicable after the order is made.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. J. Sampson: The Chief Secretary should also receive the non-sensitive administrative information necessary to coordinate health, transport, emergency, humanitarian and community support services. That would not compromise operational security. It would improve implementation. The Tobago House of Assembly should similarly be consulted in the preparation of protocols concerning civilian movement, access to essential services and the processing of permits within Tobago. So just as the Prime Minister and the Cabinet communicate with the THA, having led to significant and important changes advancing Tobago's development agenda, it is our hope that it will continue as it relates to this piece of legislation.

Clause 24 appropriately requires applications for permits to be accepted both manually and electronically. In Tobago, however, the system must take account of elderly residents, people without reliable internet access and persons living in rural communities. There must be clearly identified physical locations, reasonable operating hours and an emergency process for medical and humanitarian circumstances.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is an enforcement measure. It cannot by itself address all the conditions that allow criminal organizations to recruit, intimidate and control communities. A special operation may remove guns and disrupt gangs, but if the State withdraws immediately afterwards and leaves behind

unemployment, abandoned spaces, family instability, school disengagement and fear, criminality will eventually attempt to return.

For Tobago, every special operation should therefore be accompanied by a community restoration plan.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. J. Sampson: That plan should involve the Tobago House of Assembly, churches, schools, sporting organizations, social workers, mental health professions and youth development agencies. After enforcement must come stabilization. After stabilization must come restoration. After restoration must come opportunity.

The State must not enter a community only with rifles, roadblocks and arrest warrants. It must also arrive with educational support, counselling, employment pathways, recreational programmes, environmental improvements and protection for witnesses and vulnerable families. The ultimate objective cannot merely be to control a community temporarily. It must be to return that community safely and permanently to its residence.

Clause 26 provides that the legislation will remain in force for two years from its commencement. The sunset provision is prudent. Extraordinary policing powers should not become an automatic and permanent feature of our democracy. There must be an opportunity to examine the experience of the legislation, assess its effectiveness, study its impact on communities and determine whether it should be continued, amended or allowed to expire. That assessment must be evidence-based.

The annual report should therefore include, for each district, the number and duration of special operations, the number of closed area and curfew orders, arrests and charges arising from the operations, firearms and ammunition recovered,

property seized and subsequently returned, complaints received, injuries to civilians and security personnel, instances in which body-worn cameras were not used, the demographic impact of the operations and measurable changes in violent crime following an intervention. Tobago's data must be separately identifiable. We must be able to determine whether these new powers are producing safer communities rather than merely generating large numbers of searches, detentions and arrests.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of Tobago do not want their island militarized, but neither do they want their communities terrorized.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. J. Sampson: They do not want innocent citizens treated as suspects merely because of where they live, but neither do they want criminals to exploit the rights and freedoms of our democracy to import guns, traffic drugs, intimidate families and take lives. The responsibility of the State is to hold these principles together. Security and liberty, enforcement and accountability, urgency and due process. This revised Bill gives law enforcement agencies a targeted framework to intervene where ordinary policing measures have become insufficient. It establishes Tobago as its own policing district. It creates identifiable command structures. It requires specialized training. It provides for judicial supervision. It mandates reporting. It introduces body camera oversight. And it places a two-year limit on the legislation. These are meaningful improvements.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

9.30 p.m.

Our support, however, must carry an equally clear expectation, that every power granted will be exercised lawfully, proportionately, professionally, and without political interference and discrimination. Tobago will cooperate with the

national security agencies. The Tobago House of Assembly will support lawful initiatives that protect our people. Our communities will continue to work with responsible police officers and members of the defence force, but Tobago must also be consulted, respected, and included in the decisions that affect the movement, livelihoods and constitutional rights of its people. We support this Bill because Tobago's people have a right to live without fear.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. J. Sampson: We support it because no gang, gunman, trafficker or criminal network must be permitted to claim ownership of any village, street, coastline or community in Tobago. We support it because our young people must never be allowed to believe that their only pathway to prosperity lies in the cockpit of a fast boat, carrying drugs across the Caribbean Sea. And we support it with the conviction that strong law enforcement, proper accountability and respect for human dignity can and must exist together.

In closing, Madam Deputy Speaker, I must say, Tobago belongs to its law-abiding citizens. Every community must be reclaimed. Every family must be protected. Every young person must be offered a lawful alternative. And every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago must be given a fair opportunity to live in safety, dignity and peace. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Diego Martin West, whilst I recognize you, we will now take a break. We will resume at 10.00 p.m. This House is suspended.

9.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

10.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hans Des Vignes (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to enter into this debate on a piece of legislation that affects each and every one of us in Trinidad and Tobago, and can really change the way we go about doing our lives.

Whilst this legislation may seem like it is just about national security, there are effects on the economy and finance, effects on culture, effects on sports and youth, and so many other areas. And whilst we on this side—based on reviewing the Bill over and over, caucusing on it, discussing it, we vehemently reject this piece of legislation.

What I will say tonight, based on the contribution from Tobago West, this Government, tonight, has a chance to show whether or not they really care about Tobago. Because Tobago West's contribution included having the Chief Secretary involved in the legislation, in terms of administering these special zones. He also mentioned the social elements of the previous ZOSO Bill being enacted in Tobago to improve communities. So tonight will be the test as to whether or not this Government has any care, concern or respect for the people of Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: And they speak testicular fortitude. Tonight is when it will be tested.

I will first like to start by addressing some of the statements made by the Member for Tunapuna. The Member for Tunapuna stood up and said, "You all are not coming here and defending your constituencies." And I am going to address that very shortly, because that is exactly what we are doing. Our constituents have come to us and they do not want any part of this.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: In fact, no matter what you all say inside this Parliament, we

know it is akin to the original ZOSO, and the public saying is, “Go so with ZOSO.”

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: So, as for the Member for Tunapuna, he came in this Parliament—imagine this, Madam Speaker. He came in this Parliament to talk about trees and, “Oh, de PNM, why dey let people have trees in dey house, dat is what dey contribute.” But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I went up online, and I started to search trees and politicians, and I found an April 19, 2013 story where they are saying that a small amount of plant-like material resembling marijuana was found in a washroom at a private residence of the then Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar. That was the story. So when he is coming here to talk about trees—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Lee: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(1).

Mr. Hosein: Standing Orders 48(1), 48(6), the Member must withdraw and apologize for that. That, Madam Deputy Speaker, is imputing improper motives on the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*].

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am reading a report that was in the papers.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. I asked you to withdraw that and move on with relevance. We have been here for almost 12 hours. Please keep it relevant.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam. Deputy Speaker, no worries, I shall keep it relevant and I shall definitely withdraw said statements.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when you do any sort of fight training, they always

tell you not to telegraph your punches. And the unfortunate thing is, with this Government, they telegraph every punch. They come to the Parliament and they talk, and you know exactly what their next move is. They think they are so cunning in their approach.

Hon. Member: Well, they are.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Well, they are not. They think they are so cunning in their approach. So, for example, right, when we are talking about the special zones and places that are going to be closed areas, closed-off areas, and cordoned-off areas, they have already telegraphed to us where they are going to close off and in what ways, in simple statements, such as from the Member for Oropouche East, where he said, “It could be a neighborhood. It could be a street. It could be a Member’s House?” How did we reach there?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: How? How did we reach there? We should never reach there because it is saying that you are already ready to target and victimize people based on political affiliations. That is what you are already telling us. Oropouche East, that is what you stood up in this House and said. I have the most respect for you, and I was astonished.

Ms. Benjamin: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on 51(b). I have been in this house for 12 hours. I will continue to sit in this House if—

Mr. Marcelle: It has no 51(b).

Ms. Benjamin: Please, excuse me. Tedious repetition.

Mr. Marcelle: But that is not 51(b).

Ms. Benjamin: 55(b), 55(1)—

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, I suggest the Member learn her Standing Orders. The Standing Order she has quoted, 51, is about anticipation—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, please sit down. Please sit down.

Hon. Member: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is very late. We have been here for some time. Do not repeat yourself. Do not repeat what the other eight or seven Members on your side have already said, relevance. And please keep it extremely relevant or else I will have to ask you to resume your seat.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, I was just responding to the statements made by Members opposite.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: And I will also say that the Member quoted Standing Order 51, which is anticipation, and not repetition, right? So, I just suggest that the Member take some time and review her Standing Orders.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I have already given my ruling. What is the need to continue with this repeatedly? No one here needs or wants that. Continue with relevance to the Bill—to the 26 clauses of the Bill.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: No problem, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, I want the country to understand what I am saying in terms of telegraphing, right, and the closed areas, which is clause 11. There is a Senator who represents the Government that highlighted areas within my constituency: Bagatelle, Rich Plain, Carenage, Point Cumana. He called all of those areas “holes”. He mentioned that they are ridden with so many different and difficult things and circumstances. And then we have the Prime Minister who says, she is going after people in Westmoorings. These are my constituents and today, I will stand up and defend the people of Diego Martin West.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: So—

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(6). The hon. Prime Minister at no point said that she is going after the people of Westmoorings.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Whilst I am not allowed to get involved in the debates, the hon. Prime Minister gave an example of an area.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall move on, despite newspaper reports, all right?

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, may I ask that that be withdrawn, please?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please withdraw that.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, with all respect for you, I choose to withdraw in this situation—out of respect for you and the House, and in continuing with my contribution, right?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: So, the reality is, most people will not read the clauses of the Bill—clauses 4,10 and 11—and that is why we on this side stood up today, and we outlined the effects that this can have on different communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at the core of this, at the heart of this, let us understand something. What we are saying is, the Government is going to close down communities, and to traverse in and out of the community, the neighborhood that I live in, the street I live in. I need to get a permit? Madam Deputy Speaker, anywhere in the world that you have that discussion—

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b). Several Members across the Floor have raised this issue about the permits; 55(1)(b)

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, Member, please move on to something new.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a new point. The Bill has clauses—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Respectfully, Member, it is absolutely not a new point. Move on.

10.10 p.m.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Okay, Madam Deputy Speaker, no problem. So let us talk specifically about sport. Most of the communities that will be affected, categorized, classified, are the communities that a lot of our young athletes come from. What are you saying to these young people that represent Trinidad and Tobago, and represent the sport that they play?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: You are saying that to move in and out of their communities as young athletes, and let us be honest, for anyone that has ever played a sport, you know, as a student athlete, 4 o'clock in the morning is when you are leaving home. Sometimes at 10 o'clock you are reaching home, sometimes at 11 o'clock, sometimes at midnight from training, from tournaments, from different things. But guess what? You are going to say, "Alright, these areas are closed areas", and you are going to tell an athlete that that is what they need to do?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b). The Member is playing smart with foolishness. Whether you are an athlete, a policeman, whatever you are, you will still be required to have a permit; 55(1)(b).

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member said 55(1)(b).

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Let me hear you.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:—are you supposed to explain—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:—or are you just simply supposed to quote the Standing Order and allow the Speaker to make—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Gatsby-Dolly: I cannot even speak—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for St. Ann's East, I would ask you to say that very, very carefully because some of the Members on the Opposition Bench do the same and the Presiding Officer allows it. And you know why we allow it? We allow it because we need explanations. We need an understanding.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Laventille West, just to be absolutely clear, we have exhausted the topic of the curfew and the closed areas. So, please, continue on something else.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, this point is about one of these clauses. It is a point that has not been made before. It is a new point.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Nobody has come to this House and spoken about the way this Bill affects athletes, affects culture, affects tourism, and affects finances. Nobody.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: And I reject that.

Hon. Members: No democracy. Let people speak.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Let us understand what this means in terms of culture.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Let us understand what this means in terms of culture. For anyone who has an understanding of the Carnival industry, anyone who has an

understanding of—

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Member: Oh gosh!

Mr. Padarath: —55(1)(b), we cannot—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, for a permit or curfew, you cannot individualize for every profession and every sector.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: Standing Order 55(1)(b), please.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I will allow you to continue with your point.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Thank you very kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: So, I understand why. Just new points get them a little antsy on that side.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Right. So let us understand this. The pannist, the people that still have not been paid since Carnival who are putting the extra—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member—

Ms. Mohit: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I am allowing you to continue to speak.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: This is absolutely irrelevant, and this is your absolute last warning. If you are irrelevant in any way—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: —you will have to resume your seat.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am just standing up for my constituents who are cultural performers.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Those who will have to traverse in and out of communities that they have already outlined.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Deputy Speaker, on Standing Order 55(1)(b), could the Member—please, move on to climate change if you have to.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Dr. Moonilal: But please, we heard that story about every plumber and electrician and carpenter and athlete and singer already.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: We have exhausted the permit once more. We understand that. Please, move on.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Alright. Madam Deputy Speaker, let us talk about the way this Bill, in all its clauses, affects the tourism index of Trinidad and Tobago, and our perception.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Let us talk about something else.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(1). This is about crime-fear-fighting initiatives. In no way do any of the clauses of the Bill have anything to do, at 10.15 p.m. in the night, with the respect to tourism.

Mr. Young SC: It is not about—it is not about clauses in the Bill. It is about the effects of the legislation. The Government cannot shut down [*Inaudible*] of the citizens.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is this really what we are going to turn this Chamber into?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I will allow you to make your point, and I require you to make it relevant to the Bill.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have to understand that when we implement legislation, it affects different elements of our society.

Mr. Marcelle: “Talk de tings, man. Talk de tings”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: If we cannot speak on behalf of the citizens who are affected, on behalf of our constituents, it is an injustice to the people we represent.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Let us understand what this does. We saw the effects of an SOE in terms of the hoteliers in Tobago, what they had to say and how it affected the perception. We are in a situation where we have seen reports of decreased arrivals in Trinidad and Tobago during an SOE. The perception that these elements leave people of Trinidad and Tobago is negative a one. It is one where they are not sure, while traversing through the country, while on their tour and their expeditions of Trinidad and Tobago, whether or not an area is a closed area, a cordoned-off area, and they are not sure how to move around.

Mr. Marcelle: Excellent point.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: This affects tourism. This affects all of us. When you talk about the workers, when you talk about the workers of the hotels, the bars, the clubs, the places people go when they come to Trinidad and Tobago, the workers come from these communities. The same communities that they have mentioned

many times and point at as struggling, and they have the worst to say about.

Mr. Marcelle: The PNM constituencies.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: The workers come from these communities. This Bill has a serious effect on money flowing within the economy.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Marcelle: The Minister of Finance did not even raise that point.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: So, I could understand the Minister of Finance standing up here and trying to defend it, but deep down in his heart, if he is looking at the numbers, he will see that everything that is happening from the SOE to ZOSO, “is best it go so” because it is affecting the economy.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: I want to talk a little bit about search and seizure, clause 15. Clause 15 provides significant search powers:

“...a police officer conducting special...”—area—“...in a closed area...”—may search a—“...place, vehicle or person without a warrant...”—where there is—“...reasonable suspicion that an offence is being committed...has been committed or is about to be committed.”

There are safeguards that they claim, yes, I understand that, and I respect that you all are saying what you all are saying, and we already ventilated all the ways that this falls short. But I want to go a little further. Let us talk about the people from these communities that work PH with the car that they have. Suppose they come home late one day and the car gets seized? Some people work Food Drop. That is what some educated professionals are doing now to make a little extra.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: TTRS.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Yeah, the TTRS and all these things, these are things that

people from these communities do to make a little extra dollar because again, the economy has gotten tighter based on the contraction of so many programmes.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: You know what is the funny thing about this, Madam Deputy Speaker? They have exempted themselves from going through the process of what the average citizen has to go through. They have already separated themselves. That is why they will come in this Parliament and laugh and giggle.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Because they are not going through it. And there is a song by King David, “If you live here...”—you will see what is happening. And you are not living here. “Alyuh not living it”. So that is why, when my colleague to my left from Laventille East/Morvant was saying certain things, they went down all sorts of different roads, “You could hire this one, you could do this and that person”, it is because you all are not experiencing it.

Ms. Benjamin: Standing Order 55(1)(b), and also, I would like to add 48(4). Madam Deputy Speaker, it is 10.20 p.m. Everything that the Member is saying has been laboured by a respective Member.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. Benjamin: And then when they cannot get their point across, they want to say “they” and be very insulting at 10.20 in the afternoon.

Hon. Member: In the night.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Move along, Member.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: [*Laughter*] Madam Deputy Speaker, it is so funny to hear from those on the other side in this moment. They have repeated so many of the

same points. I have drawn all new points.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: All new points. Things that have not been mentioned. Since 10.30 this morning, we are debating this Bill. Yes, it has 26 clauses. Yes, I am touching on the clauses. These points have not been raised. But because they are now seeing that “Aye, I talking to the man on the ground”, and in a language that they could understand, “it scaring yuh”.

Mr. Marcelle: “Yeah. Dey fraid dat”.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: We also always have to consider how the framework and the legislation affect each and every citizen. Because connectivity does not end for the tourists when they land at the airport in Piarco or even in Tobago—

Mr. Marcelle: Cruise ship.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: —or by a cruise ship. When this legislation provides for closed areas, cordons, curfews and permits restricting movement, Government must also explain how economic activity continues when those powers are exercised—

Mr. Sobers: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1), he spoke about this already.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, you have made the point on tourism. Let us move on.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Laughter*] I will just touch on the two-year sunset clause that the Act will continue enforced for two years from commencement. A sunset clause is useful in some ways because it requires Parliament to reconsider whether extraordinary legislation remains necessary.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, this is becoming ridiculous now. Standing Order 55(1)(b). Several speakers have spoken about the sunset clause,

what it will do, et cetera. The Member is just rehashing, and rehashing, and rehashing. It makes no sense. Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), please.

Dr. Moonilal: Save him from himself.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I will be very gracious to you.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Ms. Mohit: She is on her legs.

Madam Deputy Speaker: As I said, I will be very gracious to you on one last attempt. You may not have been in the Chamber for the entire time. I have been here. I have heard what every single Member has said, and I remember it.

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you very much. If it is one person who was in this Chamber, it was definitely me. I listened to all of their contributions. I sat quietly and respected them.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: The lack of respect in return is not a reflection of me. It is a reflection of them.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, I notice those on the other side continue to get antsy, so I will wrap up—

Hon. Members: Ahh! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes:—by simply saying, for us in Diego Martin West, this is not theoretical because it was already signalled by your Senators, your Members, and even the Prime Minister, that you all are coming for us in this constituency of Diego Martin West.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. H. Des Vignes: The signals were clear. There were statements made and—

Mr. Hosein: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(6), imputing improper motives against

the Member for Siparia and the hon. Prime Minister.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We have been through this already. Member, I now ask that you remain seated.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: This is the end of your contribution.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for La Brea.

10.25 p.m.

The Minister in the Ministry of Public Utilities (Hon. Clyde Elder): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for recognizing me so that I can make my contribution in this debate. Before I start, Madam Deputy Speaker, you had indicated just a moment ago that we have been here for just about 12 hours now. I want to express how proud I am of you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your tenacity, your temperament and your phlegmatic disposition that you have demonstrated here.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker, as I listened to the Opposition, and each one of them categorically stating that they do not support this Bill, I could not help but ask myself: Why would you not support such a Bill? It is a Bill that is designed to assist with crime-fighting measures.

Mr. Young SC: Standing Order 55(1)(b), Madam Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC:—every speaker talked about this Bill as it pertains to crime, 55(1)(b).

Madam Deputy Speaker: I will allow the Member to continue with his opening statement.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you. Madam Deputy Speaker, I see hate. Madam Deputy Speaker, I see bitterness. Madam Deputy Speaker, I see acrimony. Madam Deputy Speaker, I see animosity. Madam Deputy Speaker, I see hatred.

Mr. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Mr. Padarath: Madam Deputy Speaker, may I turn your attention to Standing Order 55(4)(c). Madam, there seems to be a situation developing where several Members are jumping up at the same time, continuously disregarding the rulings of the Chair. I ask you to take a look at 55(4)(c).

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for La Brea, you did not get to complete your sentence. I will allow you to complete your sentence. I will allow you to make your point.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members on the Opposition Bench, after the Member has completed—

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please allow the Member for La Brea. I will allow him to finish his sentence. He has not finished his sentence. You have no idea what he was going to say. I have no idea what he was going to say. If after completion of his statement, you still want to raise a Standing Order, of course you are allowed to do so. Member for La Brea, continue.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I see an Opposition completely out of control, completely out of control.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(6).

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled, overruled.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: To make it clear, overruled. Member, continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, when you live in constituencies like mine, that are very close to the mainland of Venezuela and that of the Member for Point Fortin, it is very easy, if the borders are not properly protected, for criminal elements from another country to enter our country.

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), we already heard the point about coastal areas.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member for La Brea is speaking specifically about La Brea, just as every Member has spoken specifically about their respective constituencies.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I will not allow this House to become this disruptive. I ask you to have some level of decorum in here.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am on my legs, Member. I am on my legs and I am asking you to resume your seat. I do not recognize you. I am not going to entertain anyone that is not recognized. Member for La Brea, please continue with your contribution.

Mr. Scotland SC: What does coastal area have to do with the Bill?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Simply overruled. Continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker, I read clause 17 of the Bill. And I want to take us to 17(1) and (2)

.Mr. Young SC: Standing Order 55(1)(b), speakers before have referred to that clause.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: If we want to be petty, at 10.30 p.m. Member, you may make your point without reading the clause. Simple solution. Continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes. 17(2)(a). Nobody read that. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been here since 10.30. No one read 17(2)(a). It says:

“Where a person...”

Mr. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on 55(1)(b). I read—

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, sit down. I am asking you to sit down. I am not going to continue to raise my voice. Continue, Member for La Brea.

Mr. Kesar: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on 54(2). Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been sitting here for the last 12 and a half hours and I think we need to respect the Speaker when she stands. Standing Order 54(2). Please, let us get back some order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: On that note, I would advise everyone to read Standing Order 54(1) and (2). Continue, Member.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. So I was about to read the part:

“Where a person is arrested or detained in a closed area, that person shall—

at the time of his arrest or detention, or as soon as is reasonably practicable, be

told, in a language in which he understands—”

Mr. Young SC: I rise on 55(1)(b). That was raised by a speaker on the Government side.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Once again, overruled. Continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, what this clause does is that it in fact contemplates and considers all different aspects of society, because language for us could be words and language for somebody else could be sign language. Therefore, what this clause is doing is to say to us as a society that we are so all-encompassing, that we are so caring, that we are so considerate—

Mr. Des Vignes: Standing Order 55(1)(b), Madam Deputy Speaker. Every speaker said the same thing about the Bill.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have not heard anyone spoken about sign language. This is getting absolutely ridiculous!

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Port-of-Spain North/St. Ann’s West, you have been continuously disrupting the Member. Member for Diego Martin Central, I just asked you to read Standing Order 54. You clearly have not.

Mr. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, they shouting across the Floor and I am the one that gets called out.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The point I was trying to make before I was interrupted again, Member for Port-of-Spain North/St. Ann’s West, you have been continuously interrupting the Member for La Brea. He has not really gotten to say anything. I will not have that continue. I am going to ask you to withdraw from

the Chamber for 10 minutes.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Mr. Young SC: For raising Standing Orders?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am not going to allow you to continuously disrupt this House. I am not going to allow you.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

[*Mr. Young SC departs Chamber*]

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for La Brea, please continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to seek your protection. I really want to seek your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker, because when the Member for Port-of-Spain North/St. Ann's West was leaving the Chamber, he clearly said to all of his colleagues: "as soon as he starts speaking keep raising 55(1)(b)."

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Ms. Mohit: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant continues to create actual disorder in this House, 54(4)(a). His mannerisms are totally unacceptable. Look at him throughout the day; all four, Laventille West, Diego Martin West, Laventille East—

Mr. Des Vignes: Standing Order 48(6), how can you impute that improper motive on us on this side?

Ms. Mohit: Their behaviour is totally unacceptable.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am on my legs, Members.

Ms. Mohit: Totally—

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am on my legs.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Anyone who continuously disrupts the Member from speaking, I will ask you to withdraw from the Chamber.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Ms. Mohit: He needs ZoSO.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members who continuously disrupt, I will ask you to withdraw from the Chamber. This is my final warning. Member for La Brea, please resume.

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to respond directly to the Member for Diego Martin West. Diego Martin West spoke about the tourism impact that this Bill will have. But Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not sure if the Member for Diego Martin West remembers that the US and the UK Governments issued travel advisory against this country.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: As a matter of fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me just read what the US said to their citizens visiting Trinidad.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on 48(1). I do not know what part of the Bill that is related to. No clause.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Just as the Member for Diego Martin West wanted to make his point about tourism, the same way the Member for La Brea is responding.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes. Thank you again, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that is why I craved your protection earlier, Madam Deputy Speaker, because from the time I start a sentence, before it is finished, they jump up. I am surprised they have not

jumped up as yet. Yes? So I will read what the US Government said to their citizens coming to Trinidad. The US Government personnel are banned from visiting high-risk areas in Port-of-Spain, like Laventille, Beetham, Sea Lots, and Cocorite. Travel to downtown Port-of-Spain, local beaches, and the Queen's Park Savannah is prohibited after dark. Violent crime and gun activity are much higher in Trinidad than Tobago.

10,40 p.m.

This is what the US Government said to their citizens because they did nothing to properly address the crime situation in Trinidad.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker 55(1)(b), we heard that a million times about who did nothing. "We heard that whole night, Madam Deputy Speaker, whole night, whole night."

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member simply quoted a very relevant point. Continue Member, overruled.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes, and Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West went on to speak about food drops and how food drops entering these closed areas would not be able to go in, and we would not know if the area is closed or not, but Madam Deputy Speaker, right now they do not even go because it is crime-riddled.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), tedious repetition. We have heard that point over and over about people not being able to go in, to these closed areas.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I have given my ruling on those who have continuously disrupted the Member from speaking. So now I ask you as well to please withdraw from the Chamber for 10 minutes.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: With pleasure, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes, and—

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker, what this Bill does is the exact opposite of what Diego Martin West is saying or accusing it of. What this Bill does is to restore to the tourists the confidence to come to Trinidad—

Mr. Des Vignes: 55(1)(b), we heard that about 15 times tonight.

Mr. Marcelle: Exactly.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled, continue, Member.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and if it is that was heard 55 times tonight, Madam Deputy Speaker, then he said it the 55th time, and he should have been called on tedious petition. Because I am simply responding to him and the new point, according to him that he made. No one else made that point.

Hon. Member: Yeah, yeah correct.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: But you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, what is going on here—I want to read a passage, and just permit me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to bring it back to the Bill.

Crime knows no political party.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Permission granted. I am just putting that on the record.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder:

Crime knows no political party. It does not discriminate by race, religion, community, or political affiliation. It affects every citizen, that is why crime must not be politicized. It must be confronted responsibly, with seriousness, competence, and a commitment to protecting every person in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that was the Member for Arima on August 05, 2026, on her Facebook page. Tonight, they have come here and done the very opposite of what she has said on August 5th on her Facebook page.

Mr. Des Vignes: 48(6), imputing improper motive against the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Arima.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Absolutely wrong Standing Order, sit down.

Hon. C. Elder: Tonight, they have come here to politicize crime, instead of coming here to sit down with us and responsibly discuss this Bill, they have come to politicize crime. So, every time I try to speak, they jump up. Politics, politics. So right now, everybody who is worth their salt as an MP will know where all of the “hotspots” and “drug dens” and drug dealers are in their constituency. If you do not know that, you do not deserve to be an MP.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: But, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you know that, how then do you, as a MP, address these “drug dens”, these “drug dealers”, these “drug lords” in

your constituency? Truth is, you cannot. That is the truth. But if, as a government, we have a policy that says we could now cordon off an area—

Mr. Des Vignes: 55(1)(b), we have heard this many times tonight.

Hon. Member: Yes, yes we did.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled, continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Never heard it.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Elder: “Allyuh was bereft” of any ideas on that side, and you never heard it. **Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker, if it is, we as a government could come with a Bill that says, “Yuh see those drug dealers dat we know operating in dis back alley here, and that road dey, and dis village here, we going to attack and target dem, and leave de rest ah de people to go about dey business”. “Dat is what dey protesting against.”

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: “Dat is what dey opposing.” Then they come here and they say that we support the police and policing. As soon as they see it—and I want to respond directly now, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. As soon as they say it, they then come and they begin to criticize the actions of the police.

Mr. Des Vignes: 55(1)(b), the Member for Tabaguite said the same thing about the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Sit down, continue Member, for La Brea.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you. Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say this. While I do not condone in any way at all any form of police overuse of their powers, I, as an MP, the police in my constituency are very familiar with me.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: They are familiar with me, Madam Deputy Speaker, because up to yesterday, I was at the La Brea Police Station, where I assisted the police through corporate La Brea to repair a water pump that was not working, and there was no adequate water.

Mr. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise 48(1). What is the relevance of you helping the police fix the water pump?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled, continue.

Hon. C. Elder: When we repaired the water pump, I was able to procure six chairs for the police station. I was able to get someone to come and check the air condition unit that has been malfunctioning for years—

Mr. Des Vignes: 48(1), what does air condition—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled, Member please make your point, tie it into the Bill.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes. The point I am making, I could go on and on. The point I am making, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that while they mouth that they support the police, we on this side do demonstratable action to show that we support the police.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC: 55(1)(b), Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With all due respect Member, you have returned to this Chamber for 30 seconds. You do not know what the Member is saying. Overruled, sit down.

Mr. Young SC: 55(1)(b), he is referring to helping the police, all of them have.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have already ruled. Why are you speaking over me? That should never be. Continue, Member.

Hon. C. Elder: The point I was making, Madam Deputy Speaker, I did say that I was responding directly to Laventille East/Morvant. When the police begin to do their job, because some of us believe that we are in a position of status—

Mr. Des Vignes: 55(1)(b), Tabaquite said that exact same thing, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled, continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes, and Madam Deputy Speaker, that is how they are going to behave for the rest of the night. I am almost sure, and I am prepared to sit down and get up, sit down and get up, and make my point.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Elder:—as I was saying earlier, we on this side support policing. I want to read for you, Madam Deputy Speaker, however, I want to read a document that came to me, and it has to do with the police service, and it also tells us quite clearly what their use of the police service was for. Sometime ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the 16th of March, 2021, the Ministry of Finance advised NIPDEC that on the 9th of March, 2021, NCB Global Finance Limited was awarded the mandate—

Mr. Young SC: 48(1), what is the relevance of this to the Bill? 48(1).

Madam Deputy Speaker: If you let the Member continue, you will get your answer in a very short space of time. Continue, Member.

Hon. C. Elder: I actually did not expect anybody else except Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West to get up.

Hon. Member: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Yes, NCB Global Finance Limited was awarded the mandate to arrange and fully underwrite a seven-year, 4.5 per cent fixed-rate loan facility for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS). The loan facility was submitted on the 26th of March, 2021 to NIPDEC Board of Directors—

Mr. Des Vignes: 48(1), Madam Deputy Speaker. Because even if it has to do with any particular item for the police, this Bill has nothing to do with a loan.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled, continue, Member.

Hon. C. Elder: This Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a policing Bill. That is what this Bill is. Yes?

Hon. Members: Correct, correct.

Hon. C. Elder: What I am demonstrating here, Madam Deputy Speaker, I spoke about how I, as the MP, went to La Brea yesterday and assisted with resources while—

Mr. Young SC: 55(1)(b), Tabaquite spoke about that already.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Once more overruled, continue, Member.

Ms. Ameen: “Madam Deputy Speaker, yuh know what happen to dem, dey have nuttin to say.”

Hon. C. Elder: At this time, the TTPS had outstanding liabilities to suppliers, more than \$500 million for goods and services and other minor equipment purchased. The Ministry of Finance advised that the outstanding payables will be financed through borrowings with payments to suppliers—

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(1), this is not the budget, why are we talking about expenses?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Sit down, come on, come on. The Member has been interrupted at least three times. I am losing track of what he is saying because of all these interruptions—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker:—and I think that you need to be quiet. Member for La Brea, please resume your contribution.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Ministry of Finance advised that your standard payables will be financed through borrowings, with payments to suppliers administered by NIPDEC through an account established for this purpose. The approved financing facility was \$200 million, NCB. Added to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the amount is \$200 million, as I said before. The commencement date is 23 April, 2021. The period is seven years. The maturity date is 23 April, 2028.

Mr. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(1). What does this have to do with any clause in the Bill?

10.55 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I can hear all the murmurs, but I will ignore it. Member, I am allowing you your extra 15 minutes. I am not going to ask you if you want it.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes, the interest rate is fixed at 4.5 per cent per annum, and the annual interest cost is approximately \$9 million; semi-annual interest payment, approximately \$4.5 million; admin fees, \$6,000 per annum—

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker, oh gosh, even if the point has to be developed, it is really a very, very long run-up. Please, could the Member come to the point? We have been here, as they said, for quite some time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, we have been here for quite some time. Member, please make your point and make it relevant to the Bill.

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important that the country understands and knows how the money that they have paid to this Government through tax is being used, or misused, or abused. I “doh” know which one it is.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, what does that point have anything to do with regard to the legislation before us? 48(1).

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, quote your clause if you have a clause. If not, let us try to make it completely clear that it is about this Bill.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes. As I said before, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a policing Bill. The police service will need all of the assistance that it can get if it is to be effective, even within the scope of the Special Operations Bill—

Mr. Young SC: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), every speaker has spoken about the police; every single one.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes. Madam Deputy Speaker, the point I was making is simply this, as a government, we must ensure that for this Special Operations Bill to succeed and become an Act, that we must be committed and demonstrate to the citizens that we are committed to ensuring that the police is supported.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b). I think that has been said over and over, and over and over—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Member, continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes. I will sit down and get up for the next 15 minutes and that is “allyuh” business.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Elder: Go home. “Why yuh” come here for?”

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to raise 48(4). The Member is casting aspersions on Members opposite and using insulting language.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Okay. Member for La Brea, withdraw the statement and continue with your contribution.

Hon. C. Elder: Withdrawn, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not sure which statement it was, but—[*Inaudible*]

The point I am making, Madam Deputy Speaker, was, I could recall a Prime Minister said, “We know who Mr. Big is”—

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on 48(1), I really do not see the relevance of that to any clause in this Bill. We have been here too long.

Ms. Benjamin: Madam Deputy Speaker, if you would allow me, 53(1)(e), (f) and (g). The Members opposite are not allowing the Member for La Brea to develop any point. By now they are being ridiculous.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I will get up as much times as it takes to maintain order.

Mr. de Nobriga: [*Inaudible*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Diego Martin Central, come on.

Mr. de Nobriga: My apologies.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I really do not think you are sorry for any of it, and this is not a conversation. Member for La Brea, you have 10 more minutes.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: So let me round off this point by stating, categorically, to the police service that this Government will continue to support them and their efforts, and we thank them for what they have been doing thus far.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I recall that the Member for St Ann's East had indicated, quite theatrically, that there were no social provisions in the Bill. Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to respond to that as well. The Bill itself does not have a social provision, but when you read the Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, and you look at the qualifying criteria for the members of the defence force or for the police service, it says—

Mr. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Continue, Member.

Mr. Marcelle: I rise on 51(b)—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Please, continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes.

Mr. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for La Brea, please continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Yes. It says the:

“...Head of Special Operations and persons assigned under section 6 shall be police officers who are trained in —

...human rights;

...use of force;—

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 51(1)(b), and I also want to direct—
[*Inaudible*]—47(1)(a)—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Continue, Member.

Hon. C. Elder: And:

“...community engagement;”

I want to focus, just for a while, Madam Deputy Speaker, on “community engagement”, because “community engagement”—we had heard some of it from the Member for Tunapuna. But “community engagement” will also involve the youth clubs, the police youth clubs.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: They will have you believe that the police youth clubs—

Mr. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker, they—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Continue, Member.

Mr. de Nobriga: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC: So you are not even listening to our objections?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Continue, Member.

Mr. Young SC: At least pretend to listen. You cannot take instructions—
[*Inaudible*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Do you want context, Member? The Member for St. Ann’s East spoke about youths—so what we have for the youths, this and that. Again, I am not supposed to get involved in these debates.

Mr. Young SC: Nor are you supposed to take—[*Inaudible*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am speaking.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, please continue with your contribution. To be absolutely clear, I believe and I know that the police youth club is very relevant to this.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: On top of that, it contains the word “police”. Come on.

Hon. C. Elder: So, Madam Deputy Speaker, while they were speaking about, “What is going to happen to the youths? How they are going to get in and get out?”, and “The young people”—they were speaking about that, but these youth clubs are very instrumental and integral.

Even before, all now, the Siparia Police Youth Club, the La Brea Police Youth Club—I could name two that works extremely well to take our at-risk youths, and the youth in the community, bring them into the paramilitary fold and guide them on a discipline line where they could stay away from a life of crime and criminal activities.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill, while they will have you believe, and they want the population to believe, through fearmongering, that their rights are being curtailed—

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), we heard that “fearmongering” point from everyone.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 53(1)(l). I put it to you that this is improper behaviour, it is unfit, and the Members are on a campaign to disrupt the Member for La Brea from even beginning, far less completing a contribution tonight. You may just have to ask them to please stop interrupting at any cost.

Mr. Young SC: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(6), imputing improper motives—
[*Inaudible*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Come on, Member, come on.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Young SC: They are using the same Standing Order that was used when the Member for Diego Martin West was making his contribution.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am choosing to ignore the absolute disregard for the laws and the conduct of this Chamber. Member, you have six more minutes, and I am just telling you, you are allowed to speak without any interruptions. I am giving you that permission to continue speaking.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Scotland SC: If there is an infraction of the Standing Orders in that six-minute period, are you saying that I am not allowed to raise an objection pursuant to the Standing Order?

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What Standing Order?

Hon. Member: 54(1).

Hon. C. Elder: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to respond now to Laventille West. Laventille West would have called out a number of regional corporations, boroughs, and he would have identified most of them as PNM-controlled or run corporations.

And he referred to the SOE from 2011, I think it was, when he said that, “PNM corporations were identified by the Government.”

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would have thought that he would have jumped for joy, because if it is this Government recognizes that his constituency

has a crime problem, and they are willing to identify those areas and work with those areas to resolve that crime problem, why are you not happy?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: I want to speak now, Madam Deputy Speaker, to their constituents, because if I am their constituent and I see the Government is attempting to address crime in my constituency, then why will my MP falsely, maybe—

Mr. Young SC: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), that was said before. I am raising it under 47(1)(a), a right that cannot be taken away.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Member, continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Why would you, as a constituent, want your MP to come in Parliament—

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b). Tunapuna said this exact same thing. We rise on 47(1)(a).

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Continue.

Hon. C. Elder:—to come to Parliament and not represent my interests properly? Why?

Mr. Des Vignes: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(6), improper motive—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Member for La Brea, continue.

Hon. C. Elder: I think that the constituents that you represent, that you owe them an apology for the way you are representing them tonight.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(6), imputing improper motives.

Hon. C. Elder: The way you have represented your constituents tonight—

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I raised a Standing Order, Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(6), imputing improper motives, saying that we on this side are not representing our constituents properly.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, Madam Speaker, we reject that and we ask for your ruling. **Madam Deputy Speaker:** Overruled. Continue.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, if I had told an untruth against them, I would have withdrawn, but it is the very truth I am speaking here tonight.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Des Vignes: 48(6), Madam Deputy Speaker, he is standing—[*Inaudible*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order 55(5), Member for Diego Martin West, you are required to withdraw from the Chamber for the remaining of the Sitting.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I have asked you to withdraw from the Chamber.

Hon. Member: “He packing up”.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I would ask the Marshal to escort you.

[*Member exits Chamber*]

Member for La Brea, you may wrap up.

11.10 p.m.

Hon. C. Elder: Thank you. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with your instruction that I may wrap up, I want to say that as Member of Parliament for La Brea and in the interest of the people of not only La Brea, but of Trinidad and Tobago, I support this Bill wholeheartedly.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder: And just before I take my seat, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say this, it takes a Prime Minister with the calibre, stature—

Hon. Member: Tenacity.

Hon. C. Elder:—tenacity, temperament, courage, bravery, as Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Member for Siparia—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. Elder:—to take the scourge that is crime by the horns and to bring a Bill like this so that people of our country could get relief from crime and finally be able to flourish and prosper in this Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you and I support this Bill wholeheartedly.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Malabar/Mausica.

Mr. Dominic Romain (*Malabar/Mausica*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to join this debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, permit me to begin on a positive note because we in this House, while we may be political opponents, we are not political enemies, and I understand that today the hon. Prime Minister is celebrating her 55th wedding anniversary—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain:—a milestone indeed. And so, in her absence, I would want to extend anniversary greetings to her and Dr. Bissessar.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Mr. D. Romain: Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Laughter*]. Several Members opposite, during their contributions, including the Member for La Brea, would have accused the last administration of having done absolutely nothing to treat with the crime scourge and, as a result of that, they now find it necessary to bring

this legislation to treat with the criminality that they claim they inherited, Madam Deputy Speaker. But the history would show, Madam Deputy Speaker, that nothing could be further from the truth and that, in fact, the efforts of the administration to deal with the issue of crime from a legislative standpoint were frustrated by Members opposite.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: More often than not, Madam Deputy Speaker, they sought to oppose legislation that was brought to treat with the issue of crime, and it was only when public pressure was made to bear that they would relent and eventually support. Madam Deputy Speaker—

Ms. Mohit: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), most of them traversed this road on the other side; 55(1)(b), Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Instead of the same thing happening—

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Instead of the same thing happening, where Members stand on tedious repetition, I am imploring you, please, keep it relevant so that I do not need to take any action that I do not want to.

Mr. D. Romain: I am keeping it relevant, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I would just reference, for the benefit of members of the listening public, because I have been looking at the Parliament's—the YouTube channel and reading some of the comments from the general public who have been viewing for most of the day. In fact, the average viewership has been over 1,000 persons. So it shows that the public is very interested in the proceedings taking place here today and I would just reference an article, Madam Deputy Speaker, dated November 22nd, 2020, entitled:

“UNC will pay heavy political price”

Written by one Israel Khan, who we know is no friend of the PNM. In fact, he was the nominee for Members opposite, in 2023 for President and he says—

Ms. Mohit: 48(1), Madam Deputy Speaker, this is absolutely irrelevant to what—

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Let us hear what he is saying.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Remember what happened when we were attempting to listen to the Member for La Brea? However, I always give fair rulings, so Member, continue.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Speaker, I do not intend to belabour the point, so I would just, with your permission, read some of the letter and then I would move on to my next point. And it says:

“I CRY SHAME on the United National Congress (UNC) for causing the defeat of the Anti-Gang Bill in the House of Representatives. The UNC leadership will pay a heavy political price with the non-aligned voters for withholding their support for the...”—Bill.

“By abstaining from voting for the Bill, the UNC MPs gave the impression to the enlightened public that they are not really against the Bill, but are desirous of defeating the Government in passing this vital piece of legislation which will certainly assist in ‘fighting’ crime.

The UNC’s lack of support for the passing of the Bill gave credence to the comments of the Leader of Government Business, Camille Robinson-Regis that it is a ‘blatant attempt by the...Opposition...to make the country ungovernable’.”

He went on to say:

“Shame on the UNC for seeking...”—their—“...narrow political interests and not the safety and welfare of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Israel B Rajah Khan, and again I stress, the UNC's nominee for President in 2023.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I would have mentioned on Wednesday, as elected Members of this House, we have both a mandate and the privilege of speaking for those whom we represent. This is a very consequential piece of legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker, and as I mentioned before, it has generated a lot of public interest, and is still doing so. And one would have thought that with a piece of legislation like this that the Government would have given consideration to, Madam Deputy Speaker, consultation and perhaps even consensus. Because I heard several Members opposite mention that their constituents support the legislation, but I am not aware that they had any consultation in the likes of which they did for the stand your ground legislation, because they recognized that there were certain provisions in that legislation which could get citizens in trouble, which is similar to this legislation, which we have concerns about, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, the Member for Toco Sangre Grande spoke to the issue of safeguards, we on this side have no confidence in those safeguards, Madam Deputy Speaker. Because the same assurances were given for the SOE that we have been under for several months. One of those safeguards which citizens were given was this SOE Tribunal, that if it is you were detained under a PDO and you felt that you were detained wrongfully, that you could apply to this Tribunal for them to hear your case, and that there was a possibility at that point that that detention could be overturned. But we would have heard several instances of persons who were recently released, of their efforts to utilize this safeguard, they came before the Tribunal, the Tribunal would have assessed their case and would have indicated, listen, there is not sufficient evidence to detain these people, release them, and that would have been vetoed, overridden, by the Minister, who has the prerogative so to

do. And for those persons who did not have the financial wherewithal to take it further, unfortunately, Madam Deputy Speaker, that safeguard failed for them, it did not pass muster, and they had to remain detained until the State of Emergency came to an end.

We were also given assurances that the only people who have to be concerned about the SOE and the provisions would be the criminal element. The law-abiding citizens have absolutely nothing to be concerned about.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Deputy Speaker, 55(1)(b), please. I think this point has been traversed by many speakers, thank you very much.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Please move along with a different point, Member.

Mr. D. Romain: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande mentioned one of the safeguards, clause 5(4), which speaks to the:

“...Head of Special Operations and persons assigned under section 6 shall be police officers who are trained in –

- (a) human rights;
- (b) use of force;
- (c) community engagement; and
- (d) conflict de-escalation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande should be ashamed to note that as a safeguard, because I would want to think—

Ms. Mohit: Madam Deputy Speaker, Laventille East, Port of Spain South, Laventille West traversed safeguards; 55(1)(b), please.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Move along. Please, make a new point that no Member has made before.

Mr. D. Romain: Madam Deputy Speaker, one would want to think that all of these matters raised here, for which police officers would be trained, that this

would be part of the standard training protocol for all police officers. Because police officers on a daily basis interact with the general public, and we would expect that they will be trained in human rights, they will be trained in use of force, community engagement, and conflict de-escalation, but if they are not, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is an indictment on the TTPS because it means this is why the level of confidence that the public has in the TTPS is at an all-time low, and my colleague would have given us his experience, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, 5(3) says:

“A police officer shall not be designated under subsection (1) if the Prime Minister, after consultation with the Minister, the Minister with responsibility for defence and the Chief of Defence Staff, signifies to the Commissioner his”—well, I guess or her—“objection to the designation of that police officer.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am curious as to what information the Prime Minister could possibly have about an officer who the Commissioner of Police designates to head this district, which the Commissioner himself would not have. What information could the consultation with the Minister and the Minister with responsibility for defence and the Chief of Defence Staff, what information could they have about an officer who is under the charge of the Commissioner that he does not have?

Ms. Mohit: Madam Deputy Speaker, heads of divisions, or districts, or zones were traversed by all speakers on that side; 55(1)(b), please.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This is a new point. This is a new point.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Again, Member, please, new point.

Ms. Mohit: Sorry, Dominic.

Mr. D. Romain: No, you are not sorry. You are not sorry, and members of the public are looking on.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I asked you—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I ask you to address me only.

Mr. D. Romain: Madam Deputy Speaker, as I looked at the Parliament channel during the course of the day, and I read some of the comments, some of the characterisations of this Bill by some members of the public who were on the chat, read:

- Threat to democracy;
- legislation to abuse citizens;
- an assault on citizens' constitutional rights;
- draconian legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so this definitely speaks to the need that there was, in fact, a need for the Government to have engaged in some level of consultation with the public—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain:—so that they can have a better understanding of the clauses in this Bill and how it is going to impact them. Because I am certain not every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago would have looked at today's proceedings, and therefore they would not have heard the explanations coming from Members opposite with respect to the various clauses and how it would affect citizens.

I turn, Madam Deputy Speaker, to Clause 18(a), another clause that gives us some cause for concern. It says:

“18 (1) A person commits an offence if he –

- (a) threatens or assaults a police officer or a member of the Defence Force, or any other person, who is performing a function or exercising powers under this Act; or
- (b) without lawful justification or excuse, obstructs or hinders a police officer or a member of the Defence Force, or any other person, who is performing a function or exercising powers under this Act.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, we need to be mindful of the fact that when we come here to make legislation, we are not making legislation for ourselves; it is for the country as a whole, and the majority of citizens are not going to read this. They are not going to go to the *Gazette* to look for a copy, they are not going to go online to look for—

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. D. Romain: Yes, and it is not going to be printed in the newspaper, right? But the concern I have with 18(a):

“threatens or assaults a police officer”

“A person commits an offence”

What constitutes a threat, Madam Deputy Speaker? What constitutes assault? Madam Deputy Speaker, I learned for the first time in this House, a few months ago, when we had the incident with the taking of a photo of a member of staff, that assault under the common law does not—

Mr. Hosein: Madam Deputy Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, 48(1), that is totally irrelevant to this particular debate.

11.25 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Again, you were going well just now, you know. Continue quoting the clauses and making your explanation.

Mr. D. Romain: So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am quoting the clause, and I am saying, it says here:

“18. (1) A person commits an offence if he—
(a) threatens or assaults...”

But the average citizen does not know that under the common law, assault does not require physical interaction with somebody.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: And we know citizens in this country, when it is they have interactions with police and it escalates, they pull out their phone. “Ah taping yuh, yuh know. Yuh going and lose yuh job.” Yes, and we hear things like that. That could constitute assault. If you come up in the face of the police officer so, and he feels threatened, most citizens do not know that that could be considered assault. The fine for that \$50,000 and imprisonment for one year.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: The same with “threatens.” So, that is why we needed to have consultations so citizens could understand this. So that when they interact with the police, especially in a closed zone, they know how to be, how to conduct yourself—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain:—otherwise, you could find yourself having to pay \$50,000 and serving one year imprisonment. Also, to where it refers to:

“...any other person, who is performing a function or exercising powers under this Act.”

Who is this “any other person?” It does not specify. I am glad the Member for Tunapuna told us about obstruction. Again, the general public would not know about these things because not everybody has a legal background, Member.

So, I do not know if perhaps after the Bill passes, because as the Prime Minister says, they will pass this without our support. They do not need it. The Member for Fyzabad spoke about consensus when he started. He talked about, you know, we took a position that we are not going to support, but the practice is that when you come to the House, you would try to debate, to convince the other side to support your position. But when you start your contribution by referring to Members on this side as “a band of chastened degenerates”, I mean, it makes it kind of difficult to build consensus after that. It just goes all downhill from there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, right, 23 says:

“(1) A police officer may require a person within a closed area to disclose his full and correct name, including any alias, and his full and correct address, where the police officer has reasonable cause to suspect that the person is in the course of committing, has committed or is about to commit an offence...”

How do you do that? Just look at somebody and say, “you look like you going to commit an offence.” I mean, come on. Again, these are the kinds of things. So, imagine you are in a closed area, you are heading to work, minding your business. You are running late, and you decide to take up a run, and the police say, “Aye, he looking like he running. Let me stop you. Let me stop you.”

Mr. Marcelle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on 53(1)(e) and (f). The Member for Barataria/San Juan has—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Overruled, Member please sit down. Overruled. Continue Member.

Mr. D. Romain: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am happy that the Member for Barataria/San Juan has advised me to take a course in law, because you need to

extend that advice to the rest of Trinidad and Tobago who do not have a law degree—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain:—Member for Barataria/San Juan, and who have the same concerns. That is why you all should have had consultation. So, when people ask questions like this, you could answer.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, when they had the consultation for stand your ground, questions were raised by—

Ms. Mohit: Madam Speaker, the Member's entire contribution was on consultation. He has repeated himself. This is the fifth time he is raising consultation in his speech, 55(1)(b), Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I was about to say the same thing myself. Member, move along.

Mr. D. Romain: Madam Deputy Speaker, is there a time limit on how long I could speak on a point?

Hon Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Can you repeat that, please, Member?

Mr. D. Romain: I am asking if there's a time limit on how long I could speak on a particular point.

Ms. Ameen: [*Inaudible*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is a—

Mr. D. Romain: In a different context, I raised it this time in a different, a different clause.

Ms. Ameen: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, please desist with your disrespect for me.
Continue.

Mr. D. Romain: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am still on 23. The last part:

“(1) A police officer may require a person within a closed area to disclose his full and correct name, including any alias...”—as it says—
“...where the police officer has reasonable cause to...”—believe—
“...that the person...can assist in the investigation of an offence.”

I raised that when the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande was talking, and I noticed he did not treat with it. He skirted around it. Madam Deputy Speaker:

“...assist in the investigation of an offence.”

When you were talking about the committing, has committed or is about to—I raised that. And you said, “yes”, and you did not treat with it. I noticed no other Member on that side, they did the same thing, they did not touch on it.

The Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, when he was speaking, Madam Deputy Speaker, gave the example with respect to the body cameras. And he was saying that, “if a person is speaking to the police and the body camera is on, they would not want to speak to the police because they do not want to get put up.” But if this is saying here that a police officer may require a person “...who can assist in the investigation of an offence”, you could put up the person. Because the police officer has reason to believe that this person can assist in investigating an offence. And you pull up outside the person’s home to interrogate, to speak with them and the village lookout, the neighbourhood lookout sees that, and they go and talk. The next thing you know, this person finds themselves getting calls or being visited by certain persons who may have committed a crime, and who feel that the person is a snitch. And, you know what they say about snitches, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, we are concerned about that.

Again, these are things that the citizenry needs to be aware of. So that if it is the police officer approaches you from that perspective, and you would be inclined to say, “Well, I doh have to talk to you. I doh have to tell you nutten.” The law says the officer can, in fact approach you from that perspective. So that when the Government comes and they try to create a narrative that we are about protecting the criminal element and, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are not. Nothing could be further from the truth. These are some of the concerns that we have with respect to this legislation. These are some of the issues that would have been raised with us over the short period of time, because we were not afforded the opportunity to be able to have access to this, to sit down in any period of time with our supporters to have some discussion, so that we could come here and give air to their concerns.

I had my office day yesterday. I had my office day yesterday.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Mr. D. Romain: And you know what I did when I finished, Madam Deputy Speaker? On my way home, I decided to stop off at Church’s Chicken on O’Meara Road, O’Meara Plaza. I am giving you the specifics because people would have seen me there, so I am not telling tales out of school. As I walked in, there was a gentleman in the line. Now, I, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very happy for the fact that a lot of people still do not know who I am, all right. When I walked in, the gentleman was looking at me, but you know, I did not think anything of it. And the first thing he says to me, he said, “Ah hope allyuh ready for tomorrow innuh. Ah hope allyuh going and jam dem.”

Madam Deputy Speaker: Well, can you tie this back into the Bill? Please get to the point now.

Mr. D. Romain: Again—

Mr. Marcelle: Is this Bill you are talking about?

Mr. D. Romain: Yes, is this Bill he was talking about, Madam Deputy Speaker, right.

Mr. Sturge: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Members: No, no, no. While we were waiting in the line we had a conversation. He did most of the talking and he expressed to me what his concerns were, right, and I took note of it and I thought it fit to come here, and he seemed to be very au courant with the contents of this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, right. I know that he would be having conversations, and I am sure he is probably looking on right now because he indicated to me he was going to look into the entire—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, can you please get to your point.

Mr. D. Romain: “Aah boy!”

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to respond to a point that was made by the Member for Tunapuna. When he spoke about, you know, the children, and giving them the opportunity to be able to live the life that they want to live and that is very good advice, Madam Deputy Speaker. But when it is that one of the options that the Government chooses to exercise, that when some of these young persons may run afoul of the law, particularly those who may be in school, and again, I am referring to what the Member spoke about, that they get into school fights and the first thing we choose to do is to suspend them, expel them rather, or perhaps even give them a charge. You must understand the impact that that could have on them in terms of them being able to access a clean Certificate of Character, Madam Deputy Speaker, and impact their ability to be able to live the lives as the Member spoke about, that they would want to enjoy. The Member mentioned that. I am just responding to what he said.

Ms. Mohit: From Church’s Chicken to this?

Mr. D. Romain: “Yeah, well, y’all doh want meh to make meh point.” And

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not be too much longer, because we have been here for very long. And I want to say, having listened to the contributions of several Members opposite, one would get the distinct impression that it is only when the PNM is in power that you have runaway crime.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: I am glad you all answered that. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been the Member of Parliament for Malabar/Mausica for about 16 and a half months, but I have lived in the constituency, previously D'Abadie/O'Meara, for the entirety of my life. And the only time, Madam Deputy Speaker, that my constituency, formerly D'Abadie/O'Meara, now Malabar/Mausica was ever labelled a hotspot was when we were under them. When we had a UNC MP from 2010 to 2014.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: Murders were a daily occurrence, particularly, in the district of Carapo. And the Member for St Augustine can bear me out on that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Ameen: “No, no, doh bring me in yuh ting.” [*Inaudible*]

Mr. D. Romain: Earlier the Member for St Augustine was telling the Member here to ask me about where she lives, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, I am responding to her. I am responding to the Member.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: And the Member knows that.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. Ameen:— [*Inaudible*]

Mr. D. Romain: That is alright. That is alright, but I am simply making the point. Right? Madam Deputy Speaker, after they would have demitted office in 2015,

and the stewardship of the constituency—

Ms. Mohit: Madam Speaker, 48(1), this is not 2015.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, can you please get to your point?

Mr. D. Romain: I am making my point, Madam Deputy Speaker, that—

Madam Deputy Speaker: You have started about three or four different scenarios and did not complete it. I am asking you, if you have a point to make, make the point.

Mr. D. Romain: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was making the point.

Ms. Ameen: What time Church's does close?

Mr. D. Romain: "I doh know, very late." I was making the point, Madam Deputy Speaker, that since that time to now, the constituency of Malabar/Mausica has returned to normalcy. In fact, last week, for the first time, we had a murder in the constituency after a very, very long time. And I can tell you that the constituents of Malabar/Mausica were very traumatized by that. Right. But even though we learned that the person was not from the constituency, but we still extend sympathy—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, this is your last warning on relevance. If you are not relevant, I am going to ask you to resume your seat.

Mr. D. Romain: Madam Deputy Speaker, I was just making the point which Members agreed that—a lot of them said that, "It is only when the PNM is in power that you have runaway crime." I am saying that in my own constituency, that does not hold true. And that it was only when they were there that we had runaway crime—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain:—and now in my constituency, for the last 10 years or so, it has been very peaceful. The issue of the district of Carapo is now peaceful once more,

Madam Deputy Speaker, now that it is under the control of the PNM.

Ms. Mohit: Now peaceful, UNC in power.

Mr. D. Romain: “Yeah, de last murder took place under y’all and dat is SOE.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear that Members intend to frustrate, so I want to thank you for the opportunity to have made a contribution on behalf of my constituents, and also on behalf of the wider citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago who do not have the privilege to actually come here and to speak directly to those who hold power to be able to make the legislation. So, I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

11.40 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC): Madam Deputy Speaker, I will treat as ventilated all of the provisions of the Bill, which have been the subject of considerable back and forth for the past 13-plus hours by my reckoning. Now, I do not intend to repeat any of those provisions, even though I consider that many of the questions posed by those opposite are answered or were answered, either in the course of me piloting the legislation or in contributions made by my colleagues after me.

So, I will confine my remarks to the law. But before I begin, I would just like to speak to a matter that was raised by our partner from Tobago, who spoke to the relationship between the provisions of the legislation and consultation with the Honourable Chief Secretary. Now, we have had discussions with the two Tobago representatives, and there is a non-legislative fix. That is to say that the matter that was raised can and will be settled by discussion.

As human beings, friends and partners do, we settle things that way all the time. We are partners in this Government, and that is how we operate.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Now, as to the law today and tonight that is to be found in the contributions of the Member for Port of Spain South, a seasoned lawyer. Oddly enough, the Member for Diego Martin Central, not a lawyer. And finally, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, a person trained in the law, albeit one who has, as the Member for Tabagite reminds us, very little practical experience in the law. The Member for Diego Martin Central asked a question, and I thought it was rhetorical. But out of an abundance of caution, I provided the answer. The question was, what does success look like? Now, the petulant answer to that is that it looks nothing like the desolation that you left.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC: 55(1)(b), tedious repetition. We have heard this extensively.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Attorney General is responding to something, overruled. Continue.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thank you for that. So, the petulant answer is that it looks nothing like the desolation and the chaos that you left us.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Seriously though, success looks like the state which I described in my opening. It is a return to peace and the recognition that there is no perfection on earth. A continuing reduction in the levels of violent criminal activity in our country is what we seek.

Now, to Mr. Scotland SC. He has made three points. The first is the constitutional argument. And yes, I mean, of course I have to repeat because I am responding to the—as the Minister of Energy is reminding me, I am duty-bound to respond. That is the purpose of response. Even non-lawyers understand that.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Now, a failure to—the Member for Port of Spain South made three main points. The first was that the legislation was unconstitutional. He said that it represented a failure to clothe itself with clause 13 and to place the section 4 and 5 recitals. And he pointed to curfews, cordons, and warrantless searches.

The answer, of course, we see, is to be found in Lady Hale's dicta and in Akili Charles. The legislation is a proportionate response to threats to public order. There is a legitimate object being pursued, we see, by proportionate measures. Parliamentary scrutiny, judicial oversight and a sunset clause. Those are proportionate measures.

The second point which he makes is this. He says that, as an Opposition, those on this side did not support anti-crime measures, and he specifically flagged the anti-gang legislation. That is a point which was made again by the last speaker.

Now, the problem, first of all, I was not around when these events took place. But what I can say is this. There has not been one successful prosecution under that anti-gang law.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: That is the only point which I make on that. I make no judgment as to whether or not persons supported or did not support. But hindsight, as they say, is 20-20 vision.

Hon. Member: Hinds not here.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Hindsight. Not anyone else. Hindsight is 20-20 vision. And the fact is that the legislation was a waste of time. That is a fact. Not one successful prosecution.

The third point, I think, that was made by my colleague was related to property values. And I believe that that has been answered before. But if not, the answer is this. Of course, the point was that values within the zone would be compromised by a blight. If you establish that X is a zone, values go down. The answer is that if there is rampant crime in an area, then values are going to go down. And it is more likely than not, that if you do something about criminal activity in that zone, the values will go up.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: And that is the experience that has increased.

Now, Port of Spain North/ St. Ann's West brings up the rear.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: The points that the Member made are as follows. He said, to the best of my recollection, that we are—and he said this in strident terms—we are going into a police state. I think I could have heard him from my office across the street. Now, the legislation does establish police districts. But police districts do not equate to a police state. That is a point that anyone would know. Besides that, there are some other points. He said that the powers within the legislation were draconian.

Now, he listed a number of them. Some of them have been dealt with by my colleague from Tabaguite, who said that, in very prescient terms, he said, listen, these are not extraordinary powers, practitioners in the field, and he pointed to the Member for Port of Spain South—practitioners in the field would know that these are not extraordinary powers. They may seem to be extraordinary powers to

persons who do not practice law, to persons who are jacks of all trades, but masters of few.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: But the point is that we reject that. We say that the measures in the legislation are proportionate, and that the legislation is exactly what is required to treat with the scourge of crime that we all face in this country today.

Now, the other point which the Member made was that relating to the President. And, again, much ado about nothing, the argument, I think, was that, again, made in strident terms. The Constitution uses the President as part of the Executive. There are powers given to the President alone. No one pretends that these are those extraordinary powers. This is an executive function. Policing is an executive function. The police force is an arm of the Executive. Now, the discretion which is described in the legislation is circumscribed. It is an executive discretion. And that is really the end of that.

Now, I would be remiss if I were to stop there, because, given our history, I think I should make one or two other points. Now, regrettably, I sat here today, and I was not in this place a year and some ago, when certain unfortunate remarks were made of my Prime Minister. I heard today something about a Prime Minister who had self-appointed herself silk—and I thought that that comment was over the line.

I want colleagues to think about it for a second, because this is not something that is trivial. There is a pattern of behaviour that comes from a certain individual in this House, aimed and directed at a woman who is 75 years old which is—

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker, this is 48(1)—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: 48(1).

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No. If he is wrapping—

Mr. Young SC: And 48(6)

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order 46(1), the mover of the Motion is responding to everything.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: There is a pattern—

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker, I said 48(1). Relevance is the Standing Order I raised, not 46(1).

Madam Deputy Speaker: Overruled. And the explanation for that as well is that the Member who is the mover is responding to everything that has been said for the last 13-plus hours.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

11.55p.m.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC:—a woman who is 75 years old. You can speak of her in the worst and most derogatory of terms, as was done before I came to this place. And then you speak of her today in terms of her qualifications. And who are you to speak of anyone's qualifications?

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Now that is all I have to say about that. With respect to comments of me being “ah dunce”, my colleagues on this side who know me, and those on that side—do you know that the Member opposite, one of his last cases, before he went—

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Young SC: Fifteen years ago; 15 years ago.

Madam Deputy Speaker: What Standing Order, Member? Continue, hon. Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: One of the cases that he did 15 years ago, I took a red ink pen—

Dr. Moonilal: And mark up everything.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC:—and had to mark up everything.

Mr. Young SC: And lost the case. And lost the case.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: Do you know what else? Do you know what else? Not only did I do that, he has done no law in the last 15 years, but appointed himself Senior Counsel.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: With those words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 26 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Madam Deputy Speaker: Leader of the House.

The Minister of Public Utilities and Minister in the Office of the Prime

Minister (Hon. Barry Padarath): Thank you most kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, September 23rd, at 10.30 a.m.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 12.04 a.m.