



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

4th Session - 10th Parliament (Rep.) - Volume 22 - Number 14

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Friday 10th January, 2014

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(TYPESET BY THE HANSARD STAFF, PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER, CARONI,
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO— 2022)

CONTENTS

	Page
WELCOME	
(Member for San Fernando East)	
[<i>Mr. Speaker</i>]	249
PAPERS LAID	249
ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS	
TTPOST	
(Details of Financial Commitments)	
[<i>Deferred</i>]	250
Power Supply at Union Estate	
(Details of)	
[<i>Deferred</i>]	250
Committee on Youth and Crime	
(Details of)	
[<i>Deferred</i>]	251
William Bratton	
(Details of Services Rendered)	
[<i>Deferred</i>]	251
Financial Assistance for Tertiary Education	
(Details of)	252
Fire Tender Accident, Blanchisseuse	
(Details of)	256
Award of Contract to K F Marketing Limited	
(Details of)	259
Laventille Family Day	
(Details of)	260
EXPIRATION OF QUESTION TIME	
Security-Lighting Projects of WASA	
(Details of)	
[<i>Expired</i>]	270
Cable Theft at WASA	
(Details of)	
[<i>Expired</i>]	271
Discontinuation of Supply to Schools	
(Details of)	
[<i>Expired</i>]	271
New Chaguanas Market	
(Details of)	
[<i>Expired</i>]	271
Malick Secondary School Closure	
(Details of)	
[<i>Expired</i>]	272
DEFINITE URGENT MATTER	
(Leave)	
Failure of Government to Address Oil Spill	272

DOG CONTROL (AMDT.) BILL, 2014	
First Reading	273
NURSES AND MIDWIVES REGISTRATION (AMDT.) BILL, 2014	
First Reading	274
BAIL (AMDT.) BILL, 2013	
[Third Day]	274
	363
	406
Committee Stage	499
Third Reading	503
ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS	
[<i>Mr. Speaker</i>]	341
DEFINITE URGENT MATTER	
Failure of Government to Address Oil Spill	
[<i>Mr. Jeffery</i>]	272
PROCEDURAL MOTION	
[<i>Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal</i>]	406
ADJOURNMENT	
[<i>Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal</i>]	
High Homicide Rate	
(Corrective Measures for)	503

Security Lighting Projects of WASA	
(Details of)	513
Cable Theft at WASA	
(Details of)	514
Discontinuation of Supplies to Schools	
(Details of)	515
New Chaguanas Market	
(Details of)	519
Malick Secondary School Closure	
(Details of)	520
Beetham Gardens Community Centre	
(Details of)	526
Pelican Extension Community Centre	
(Details of)	527
Demolition of Old School Buildings	
(Details of)	528
Construction of Bailey Bridges	
(Details of)	530
EXPIRATION OF SPEAKING TIME	
Refurbishment of Bon Air Government Primary School	
(Details of)	

Welcome (San Fernando East MP)

Friday, January 10, 2014

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 10, 2014

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

WELCOME

(MEMBER FOR SAN FERNANDO EAST)

Mr. Speaker: Members, may I on your behalf warmly welcome back to this honourable House, the hon. Member for San Fernando East. [*Continuous desk thumping*] [*Mr. Manning stands and bows head*]

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, may I quickly, also take this opportunity to welcome back to the Parliament and to our deliberations, the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East and my own Member of Parliament. I think we will all agree it is show time. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Roberts: It is show time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual Audited Financial Statements of East Port of Spain Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2009. [*The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
 2. Annual Audited Financial Statements of East Port of Spain Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2010. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 3. Annual Audited Financial Statements of East Port of Spain Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2011. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 4. Annual Audited Financial Statements of Trinidad and Tobago Film Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
- Papers 1 to 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*
5. Annual Report of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) for the financial year 2013. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

Papers Laid

Friday, January 10, 2014

6. Value Added Tax (Amendment to Schedule 2) (No. 4) Order, 2013. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
7. Annual Report of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for the period October 01, 2011 to September 30, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
8. Strategic Plan of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2013—2018. [*Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Nela Khan)*]
9. National Spatial Development Strategy (NSDS). [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
10. National Spatial Development Strategy (NSDS) Consultation Report. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that today of the 13 questions on the Order Paper, the Government will be in a position to answer nine. We will ask that questions Nos. 28, 29, 45, and 47 be deferred for two weeks. Mr. Speaker, we have also asked the Opposition, the Opposition has agreed to take question No. 48, to be answered first.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

TTPOST (Details of Financial Commitments)

28. Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities indicate whether:
 - a) The Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST) is able to meet its financial commitments on a monthly basis?
 - b) Any employees of TTPOST are facing retrenchment? [*Miss A. Hospedales*]

Power Supply at Union Estate (Details of)

29. Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities state:
 - a) The rationale for moving the power supply from Union Estate to the National Grid?
 - b) What is the total cost of the transmission infrastructure needed to relocate the power supply from the Union Estate to the National Grid?
 - c) How long will the move take?

- d) What is the value of the unsold electricity surplus at present? [*Miss A. Hospedales*]

**Committee on Youth and Crime
(Details of)**

45. With respect to the Committee established to report on Youth and Crime and chaired by Professor Selwyn Ryan:
- a) Could the hon. Prime Minister state the amounts paid by the State to each member of this committee for their services as committee members; and
 - b) With regard to the recommendations of this committee contained in the report entitled “No Time to Quit: Engaging Youth at Risk” could the hon. Prime Minister state:
 - i. Which recommendations were implemented; and
 - ii. Which recommendations have not been implemented? [*Mr. J. Warner*]

**William Bratton
(Details of Services Rendered)**

47. With respect to the recent visit of Mr. William Bratton, Crime Consultant, to this country, could the hon. Minister of National Security state:
- a) The terms of engagement for services rendered by Mr. Bratton and/or his consultancy firm prior to, upon or subsequent to his visit?
 - b) The total cost incurred by the State and a breakdown of these expenses with respect to the visit by Mr. Bratton and his team?
 - c) The cost of hosting of the “Bill Bratton Seminar – A Country to Defend” on November 12, 2013 at the Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain;
 - d) Whether any contracts or agreements have been signed with Mr. Bratton and/or his consultancy firm prior to, upon or subsequent to his visit to Trinidad and Tobago; and
 - e) If the answer to part d) above is in the affirmative, the particulars of any such contracts/agreements inclusive of the dates of the signing of the contracts/agreements and the deliverables? [*Mr. J. Warner*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**Financial Assistance for Tertiary Education
(Details of)**

48. Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*) asked the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training:

Could the Minister state:

- a) How many persons received financial assistance for tertiary education expenses during the period May 2010 to present?
- b) The constituency breakdown of the answer at (a)?
- c) How many persons were unsuccessful in their applications for financial assistance for tertiary education expenses during May 2010 to present?
- d) The constituency breakdown of the answer at (c)?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

The Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me thank my colleague, the Leader of Government Business in the Lower House and his counterpart on the Opposition for accommodating my question this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, the question is in four parts and is as follows: How many persons received financial assistance for tertiary education expenses during the period May 2010 to present? And as I go along I will be answering the other parts of the question.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to answer this question in context, and I start by saying that Cabinet Minute No. 421 dated March 14, 2002, established the National Financial Assistance Programme initially branded the Community Development Scholarship Programme from 2002—2007, to assist citizens in financing their tertiary education through the provision of bursaries for programmes of training and study in traditional and non-traditional areas. The programme was established under the then Ministry of Community Development and Gender, Affairs, with the objective to, and I quote:

Establish a programme of scholarships that focuses primarily on building human capacity within the communities that are not tied to or restricted by the traditional criteria and selection process for such awards. This scheme will create opportunities for special development of our youths who would not normally have the opportunity to benefit from such exposure.

Mr. Speaker, in 2007 the programme was renamed “The Community Development Financial Assistance Studies Programme” and its objective was expanded to include emphasis on persons from the grass root, who constitute the socially and/or financially deprived. In addition, a selection committee was established to evaluate applications with emphasis on needy nationals.

Mr. Speaker, subsequently, the programme was transferred to the office of the Prime Minister, effective July 2011. During the 2011 budget debate, excerpts, from the preliminary report from the Equal Opportunity Commission were highlighted detailing the operations of the programme. Consequently, the hon. Attorney General requested a forensic audit into the awards of scholarships by the former Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, during the period 2003—2007. The audit was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers and completed in the final quarter of 2012. Based on the findings of the audit, the matter was referred to the Integrity Commission and the Director of Public Prosecutions for breaches to the Integrity in the Public Life Act.

Mr. Speaker, I have a summary of some of the findings of that report and in fact, before I get into the substance in terms of the details, it might be important for me to remind the House and the national community of some of the breaches that were found in that report.

Miss Mc Donald: Sir, could I—Mr. Speaker, could I—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: You are not answering the question. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Mr. Speaker, I was just building up to the answer. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Continue please.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(1).

Mr. Speaker: Not sustained. Continue please.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not applicable to question answers.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Mr. Speaker, I was just answering the question in context.

Hon. Member: “Yeah, yeah.” [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: But, Mr. Speaker, I understand how these things hurt, [*Crosstalk*] and I do not know whether my colleagues on the other side would like to pass me a note to say, keep this quiet.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Roberts: “Ay!”

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: This is not about keeping anything quiet. Mr. Speaker, in January 2013, Cabinet approved the Financial Assistance Studies Programme Policy and since its approval the programme was advertised in March and August of 2013 for the general public.

In September 2013, the programme was transferred to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. The question: How many persons received financial assistance for tertiary education expenses during the period May 2010 to present? And I want to tell you that we do have this response which is as follows, but in so responding I want to tell you that this report that I have in my hand for 2003—2007, in some cases could not have made reference to this answer, because for very many areas and many cases we could not find to which institutions these moneys were disbursed—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Oh, oh.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim:—and for what area of study. But, Mr. Speaker, from May 2010 to the present, 163 citizens received financial assistance for tertiary education expenses under the National Financial Assistance Programme. And I say citizens, Mr. Speaker, because what we found as well in preparing this answer, is that when we looked at the report there were some persons who were not citizens who were granted financial assistance.

Mr. Roberts: What!

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Mr. Speaker, further, an additional 33 applications were approved and are currently in transit for disbursement of the respective bursaries.

The second part of the question, the constituency breakdown of the answer at (a). Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that while it was very easy for me to find this from 2010 it was very challenging to try to make a comparison of constituencies before May 2010. In fact, in some cases people were applying for financial assistance and they had no fixed place of abode, you could not identify where they were living.

Mr. Roberts: What!

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the constituency breakdown of the national tertiary education financial assistance provided to citizens is detailed hereunder, number one, and I go constituency to constituency. Arima, 5; Arouca/Maloney, 4; Barataria/San Juan, 7; Caroni Central, 5; Caroni East, 2; Chaguanas East, 5; Chaguanas West, 2; Couva North, 10; Couva South, 2; D'Abadie/O'Meara, 2—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim:—Diego Martin Central, 7; Diego Martin North/East, 5; Diego Martin West, 1. Fyzabad, 1; Laventille East/Morvant, 3; Lopinot/Bon Air, 4; Mayaro, 1; Moruga/Tableland, 2; Naparima, 15; Oropouche East, 8; Point Fortin, 3; Pointe-a-Pierre, 5; Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, 3; Port of Spain South, 4; Princes Town, 13; San Fernando East, 7; San Fernando West, 7; Siparia, 2; St. Ann's East, 2; St. Augustine, 2; St. Joseph, 5; Tabaquite, 5; Tobago East, 2; Tobago West, 1; Toco/Sangre Grande, 4; Tunapuna, 6; bringing the grand total to 163 persons.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to how many persons were unsuccessful in their applications for financial assistance for tertiary expenses during the period May 2010 to the present—the total number of unsuccessful applicants for financial assistance for tertiary education expenses during the period May 2010 to present is 194 persons. [*Interruption*] The constituency breakdown of the answer at (c) is as follows: Arima, 8; Arouca/Maloney, 12; Barataria/San Juan, 15; Caroni Central, 6; Caroni East, 1; Chaguanas East, 2; Chaguanas West, 5; Couva North, 3; Couva South, 6; D'Adabie/O'Meara, 10; Diego Martin Central, 10; Diego Martin North/East, 4; Diego Martin West, 9; Fyzabad, 5; La Brea, 1; Laventille East/Morvant, 2; Lopinot/Bon Air West, 2; Laventille West, 1; Mayaro, 1; Moruga/Tableland, 1; Naparima, 1; Oropouche East, 8; Point Fortin, 3; Pointe-a-Pierre, 2; Port of Spain South, 7, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, 17—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Seventeen.

Sen. The Hon. F. Karim:—San Fernando East, 1; San Fernando West, 5; Siparia, 2; St. Ann's East, 3; St. Joseph, 5; St. Augustine, 1; Tabaquite, 6; Talparo, 1; Tobago East, 5; Tobago West, 1; Toco/Manzanilla, 1. Non-resident—maybe who would have been successful before—2.

Mr. Speaker, that is the information that I have been asked to provide. But I want to just say, that while we provided this information, in going back to what was there before, it was extremely challenging and difficult, because the information in some cases contradicted the intent and the purpose of the Cabinet Note that gave rise to this facility, and in some cases where challenges were made by the former Minister in the early stages of this assistance programme, the permanent secretary at that time who raised these measures and these issues was subsequently removed and the information and the responsibility given to the deputy permanent secretary.

Mr. Speaker, I am raising this because these are not new to this place. Because the hon. Attorney General, in fact, laid this report, the Pricewaterhouse report in 2013.

I thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Fire Tender Accident, Blanchisseuse
(Details of)**

9. Miss Donna Cox (*Laventille East/Morvant*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

With respect to the fire tender which was involved in an accident in Blanchisseuse in November 2012, could the Minister state:

- a) What was the exact date and approximate time of the accident?
- b) When was the tender bought and at what price?
- c) What was the book value of the tender at the time of the accident?
- d) What is the total cost associated with the recovery of the wreck?
- e) What payment has been made to the contractor to date and how much is outstanding?
- f) What was the approval process involved in authorizing the payment?
- g) Who authorized and effected the payment?
- h) Under which Head and Sub-Head were payments made?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As it relates to the question in regard to the fire tender which was involved in an accident in Blanchisseuse in November 2012, I wish to reply, hon. Members, that the accident involving the said fire tender No. 504 occurred on Saturday, November 17, 2012 at approximately 17.20—at approximately 5.26 p.m. in the vicinity of Paria and Brasso Seco junction, Blanchisseuse Road, Arima.

The fire tender was purchased in February 2006 at a cost of \$2,236,275.38. The question was also asked pertaining to the book value of the tender. The asset register, however, provides only a list of assets owned by the Government and does not contain a book value at any particular date, so this information is not available.

The total cost associated with the retrieval of the wreckage was \$6,850,030 VAT inclusive. The full payment of this \$6,850,030 VAT inclusive was made to the contractor Sammy's MultiLift Services on January 08, 2013. Mr. Speaker, some of the items that were used in this recovery process by Sammy's MultiLift Services included one 259 ton crawler crane, a 345 excavator, a 320 excavator, and an 18 ton forklift to name a few.

In regard to the approval process, Mr. Speaker, authorizing the payment entailed a recommendation from the chief fire officer explaining the circumstances of the wreck and the presentation of a bill which involved a cost beyond his financial limit and that of the permanent secretary. Based, however, on the recommendation and guidance of the then Minister of National Security and Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West—[*Interruption*—approval was subsequently sought and obtained from Cabinet in a Cabinet decision dated December 13, 2012. That Cabinet minute involved the authority for payment and a copy of that Cabinet minute as recommended by the then Minister of National Security and MP for Chaguanas West. It was then submitted to the accounting unit of the Ministry of National Security to make the payment in accordance with that Cabinet decision. The payment was made under Heading 22 in the Ministry of National Security, Sub Head 02, Item 001, Sub Item 36 under Extraordinary Expenditure. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

[*Dr. K. Rowley stands*]

Mr. Speaker: Can I ask if it is a supplemental, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Has the Minister been able to determine the cost of a new one of those items?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of National Security.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, no. No, I have not been able to.

Dr. Rowley: Was the cost of a new item any part of the consideration before the approvals were granted?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Sorry, what was that?

Dr. Rowley: Was the cost of a new item as replacement ever part of the consideration before approval was granted to obtain the recovery of that damaged item?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, at that time I was not the Minister of National Security, so I think that question can be answered by the then Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, since the Minister has passed the answer to the Member for Chaguanas West, could the Member for Chaguanas West tell us, please, is that a new arrangement? As far as I know, Mr. Speaker, he is not in the Government.

Mr. Speaker: “Yeah”.

Dr. Rowley: The question is filed to the Government. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Well, the Minister has answered. He said that he— [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: No, he directed me. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, procedurally, a question is filed to the Government about the expenditure of public moneys for which the Government— [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. Rowley:—is responsible. I have seen a Minister of Government asking the Opposition to ask somebody outside of the Government— [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—I am just asking whether that is a new approach that we are going to take in the House now. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: As you know the Chair does not have the power to direct a Minister how to answer a question. Until we amend our Standing Orders to effect that measure, I will have to take the answer that has been given from the hon. Member.

Dr. Rowley: Would the Minister give this House an undertaking that he would obtain the information which would be somewhere within the Government and provide this House with it and tell us when we can have that, please?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I would look into it and I will have that answer in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Further supplemental, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Could the hon. Minister state what was the depth from which this fire tender was towed or wrecked?

Mr. Sharma: That is the best you could do? Give him in inches.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet note requesting approval for such payments stated that the depth was 150 metres below.

Miss Cox: Supplemental. Would you be able to provide us, at a later date, with the book value, because you have not been able to provide it now? The book value at the time of the accident.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: At the time—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: Yes, thanks.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Security.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will get that information.

Mr. Speaker: Let us go on to the next question. We go on to the hon. Member for St. Ann's East.

Award of Contract to K F Marketing Limited (Details of)

19. Mrs. Joanne Thomas (*St. Ann's East*) asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

With respect to the award of a contract to “K F Marketing Limited” in the sum of \$5M for the marketing of the Tourism project, “Our Tourism, It's All About Us”, could the Minister state:

- a) whether this contract was put out for tender; and

- b) if the answer to part (a) is in the affirmative, the names of the other contractors who tendered for this project?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Chandresh Sharma): Thank you very much.

Mr. Roberts: Answer the question.

Hon. C. Sharma: Part (a) does not apply; no contract was awarded. Part (b) as such, does not apply. Thank you.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, well said. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Laventille West.

**Laventille Family Day
(Details of)**

20. Mr. NiLeung Hypolite (*Laventille West*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Could the Minister state:

- a) What was the actual amount spent on the Laventille Family Day held in November 2012 at the Queen's Park Savannah?
- b) The names and addresses of the service providers contracted for the event and for what services?
- c) When were tenders invited for services and what was the process used?
- d) What were the contract prices for the services provided?
- e) How many jobs were created as a result of the Laventille Family Day?
- f) Are these people still employed and at which agencies/organizations?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as it pertains to the actual amount spent on the Laventille family day held in November 2012 at the Queen's Park Savannah, the question is very indepth. It also requests names and addresses of the service providers; when were the tenders invited and what were the contract prices for the services provided as well as how many jobs were created as a result of this Laventille family day, and if people are still employed.

Mr. Sharma: You have until quarter past two, go ahead. [*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: “Yuh ha’ time, go ahead.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, on Sunday—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, how many pages of answers you have there?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, the list of the number of suppliers, the list pertaining to the addresses and so forth, it is elaborate, it is about 15 pages.

Hon. Member: Read the whole thing. Read it. Read it.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, with your leave, there are several questions on this Order Paper today, if the hon. Members of this House would like the hon. Minister to read the entire 15 pages—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Speaker:—we will allow it. If Members believe that we can give the hon. Minister at least a five minutes to read his statement and then circulate—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker:—the other parts, that would be okay. But I do not think it is fair to other Members who have questions pending for oral answer not to be allowed to be given answers today because of this inordinately long answer.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, the point of bringing some order to this, we will accept that there are certain parts of the question which require no elaborate time. For example Part (a) is very straightforward: what was the amount spent on the family day? And, of course, Mr. Speaker, he can give us the list, if there is a list, as you suggested, but certainly, where the answer is as succinct, we can have it, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: “Aaam”, hon.—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “He cannot tell yuh how to answer ah question!”

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, please! Mr. Speaker, Members of the Opposition have exercised their right under the Standing Order to ask a question. Members of the Government cannot indicate to Members how to ask their questions and what to state. When the answer is available, the Government is in a position to answer the questions asked—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Now they do not want the answer.

Dr. Moonilal:—and the Members of the Opposition have asked the questions in that way and the Government is prepared to answer. The Minister of National Security has done an enormous amount of work in preparing his answer, and we would like to listen to the answer of the Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Yes, man.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Security.

Mr. Roberts: Answer the question!

Hon. Member: “Take yuh time and answer.”

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I think. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, November 18, 2012, the Ministry of National Security in conjunction with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and other stakeholders hosted a community funfair, which sought to promote the uniting of the various communities of east Port of Spain and Laventille. It should be noted that the Laventille Family Day to which the question refers, was actually coined the Laventille Community Renewal Family Initiative or Community Renewal Initiative for short by the Ministry of National Security.

The event was also intended to give the police and other stakeholders the opportunity to meet and have meaningful exchange of dialogue and commitment in turning around these communities in a more positive way. This, Mr. Speaker, is where we speak about the concept of secondary crime prevention, where we can utilize the energies of young persons away from a life of crime.

The residents would have been afforded the opportunity to interact with officials from various organizations to gain an understanding of the employment opportunities available and to avail themselves of such opportunities. This event was also intended to give those communities the opportunity to build bridges and remove informal borders which tend to segregate those communities and in so doing, improve the relationship among citizens.

Several communities in east Port of Spain and Laventille were identified as critical participants in this event, and that included a variety from Africa, Beetham Gardens, Gonzales, John John, Mon Repos, Picton, St. Paul Street, St. Barbs, Sea Lots, Rock City, Red Hill, and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

The day's events included a planned cultural exposition with performances by a wide array of local talent, inclusive of several artistes from the wider Morvant/Laventille community. It was anticipated that the event should and would yield, among other things, the following results: signal to the communities the Government's commitment to change the negative nature of the relationship between the state agencies and the communities. It will also provide the forum for private-public sector agencies to display products/services, offer job opportunities for residents and training in preparation for sustainable employment.

2.00 p.m.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, it was also earmarked to showcase the vastness of the rich cultural talents of the people of the Laventille community to the wider society; also to provide the opportunity for civil interaction and camaraderie among warring factions in the various communities; the opportunity for respective state agencies also to share with the communities, services they offer and how access to those services can be facilitated. Mr. Speaker, ultimately, the overarching goal was to improve the quality of life in the targeted communities.

The Laventille Community Renewal Family Initiative was the biggest cultural extravaganza hosted by the Ministry of National Security in the fight against crime at that time. The collaborative effort went a long way into securing the success of the event. It must be noted that even though the event was focused primarily on residents from Laventille and the environs, persons from other areas of Trinidad and Tobago were also accommodated.

In light of the foregoing, my response to the questions posed by the Member for Laventille West would include the actual amount spent on that said day, and the actual amount spent on the Laventille Family Day held in November 2012 at the Queen's Park Savannah was \$3,197,416.79. This figure comprised the total cost of goods and services, inclusive of the cost of cultural performances held throughout the day, which I will speak more on later on.

The services provided and the names and addresses of the service providers, as requested, they contracted for the event, are as follows:

It involved suppliers: CB Kitchen—and I would not bother to go ahead with the addresses, Mr. Speaker. The service provided—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: We want the addresses.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: You want the address?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Okay. It will involve: CB Kitchen, Jurawan Terrace, Petit Valley, Diego Martin. The service provided involved catering—breakfast for members of staff and officials. We then move on to Nick Nacks Catering Centre Limited. The address: 75, Montique Street, Marabella. The service provided involved catering and that included lunches for all members of staff and officials.

We then move on to Classic Awards Limited, which is situated at the corner of Luis Street and Ariapita Avenue, Woodbrook. The service and products provided: ceramic mugs, spiral jotters, copy books and key rings.

Screen Stars Limited, Mr. Speaker, was also a provider. They are stationed at 81 Belmont Circular Road, Port of Spain, and they supplied and printed 5,000 drawstring bags. A. Moses and Sons Limited, as we move on, stationed at 181 Tragarete Road, Port of Spain; they provided traffic vests, dust masks-disposals and mag-lights.

Another supplier was HH Supplies Limited; the address: 58 Brunton Avenue, Diego Martin, the service provided being flashlights and batteries.

Number seven involved a company called Maser Limited; address: 115 Tragarete Road, Port of Spain, and they provided signage. We then also had a supplier known as Big Truck Contractors; the address, just as we have it, as South Trinidad. They provided living room suites. JP Plant Rentals at St. James, Port of Spain, plant rental. Ricky Raghunanan Scaffolding Company Limited; address, San Juan in Trinidad; service provided: scaffolding works.

Mr. Speaker, we then move on to Porta-Air Rental located on Churchill Roosevelt Highway and Boundary Road, El Socorro—provision of air condition. Maurice Chavalier, trading as Maurice Chavalier Decors, located on 10 Apple Blossom Avenue, Petit Valley, and they provided fabric for the venue. Mr. Speaker, Green Leaf Plant Rentals located at 1A Perico Road—they provided the rental of plants and fountain. Premier Party Rentals, located at 5 Picton Court, 112—114 Picton Street, Port of Spain, they were the providers of tents, sidewalks; scaffolding, guttering and chairs.

Mr. Speaker, the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago, address, 85A and B Cipriani Boulevard, they provided electrical and plumbing supplies. Marlon John of Port of Spain provided electrical wiring. Calvin Bartholomew, trading as Concepts and Design by Cali, address, 7 Backroad, Upper Bournes Road, St. James, provided event decor.

Tropical Tent Rentals Limited, located at 45 1st Street, Five Rivers, Arouca—they provided tents, sidewalks, guttering and chairs. Mr. Speaker, number 19: Western Plastics, their address, IBP Freezone Building, No. 3, D’Abadie. They provided 5,000 wristbands with print. Mr. Speaker, Bonanza Farms, located in Tumpuna Road, Guanapo, they provided seven ponies over a seven-hour period, and transportation.

Hon. Member: Police—

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Ponies, ponies.

Hon. Member: Ponies.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Chuckles, Tinkerbell & Friends, located at 124 Belmont Circular Road, Belmont, provided entertainment, that being characters and props. We then move on to Create Magical Moments, address, Barataria Courts, 6th Avenue Extension, Barataria, where they provided a bouncy castle, food for kids and 3,000 wrapped toys for children, all being Christmas gifts.

Community Personnel, address, 55 George Street, Port of Spain—they dealt with the mobilization and distribution, public address system, poster distribution and sticking within the community. Silva Image Digital Photography, located at Western Main Road, Carenage—they provided photography services. Rent-A-Amp Sound Company, address, 13 Upper Bournes Road, St. James, provider for the stage, the PA system, lighting, screens and generators.

Mr. Speaker, number 26: Crisp Clean is at No. 3 Warren Street, Woodbrook—they provided cleaning items. Brandon’s Events Rental Company Limited, located at 3 Fletchers Road, Chaguanas, providers of chairs and tables. Trinidad and Tobago Event Management Company Limited, the address, Lamp-post 61, Ramlal Trace, Chaguanas—they were providers of tents. Audio Video Xperts Company Limited, address, Belmont, Trinidad—they provided screens and cabling for the main stage.

Rib House Limited, Mr. Speaker, address 1 Fitt Street, Woodbrook—and they provided catering and bar services for VIPs. Number 31, Monix Grill & Lounge, address 66 Tragarete Road, Woodbrook, provider of catering for dinner for participants of the job fair. Oasis One Brands Limited (Water One), at Number 10—11 Frederick Settlement Industrial Estate, Caroni—they provided bottled water. Double X Workshop Limited, address, Industry Lane, Champ Fleurs, Trinidad, providers for the signage.

Oral Answers to Questions
[SEN. THE HON. G. GRIFFITH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Ross Advertising at 11 Gray Street, Woodbrook: marketing and media. Unlimited Functions, address, 105 Tragarete Road, Woodbrook, Port of Spain, providers for staging, tents, tables, sound and lighting, furnishings, potted plants. Unlimited Functions, the address also 105 Tragarete Road, Woodbrook, Port of Spain, signage. Unlimited Functions, again at 105 Tragarete Road, Woodbrook, providers for set logistics and design, and Chealeif Lee Wing, address, 58 Caiman Circle, St. Joseph, events management.

Mr. Speaker, as it pertains to cultural performances: Sandra Des Vignes from East Port of Spain, cultural performance; Leroy Calliste, Port of Spain, cultural performance; Hans Des Vignes, Port of Spain, hosting services; Success Laventille Secondary School from East Port of Spain, cultural performances; UniStars Pan Orchestra, East Port of Spain, cultural performance; Jason Williams, San Juan, hosting services; WITCO Desperados Steel Orchestra from Laventille—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Big band.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—cultural performance; North West Laventille Cultural Movement, Laventille—cultural performance; JJ and Friends Limited, Carapichaima—cultural performance; Laventille Rhythm Section, Laventille; Los Alumnos de San Juan Parang Group, San Juan; SEPOS Cultural Workshop, South East Port of Spain; Codrington Pan Family, Laventille, all cultural performances.

Mr. Sharma: No tassa?

Hon. Member: No.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Karene Asche, East Port of Spain, cultural performance; Heeralal Rampartap, South, cultural performance; Laventille Steelband Festival Foundation, Laventille—cultural performance.

Others, where addresses were not provided, all under “cultural performance”: Sharon Alexis, Curt Alexander, Edghill Thomas, Nicole Greaves, Free Lancers Pan Groove Steel Orchestra, Reflex Performing Arts, Dianne Haynes-Gulston, Yvonne Rodriguez, Harrydeo Mccoon, Muhammed—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of National Security, I think I have to apologize to the House for not identifying the length of time that answer would have taken, otherwise I would have placed it under written response. I get the impression that you are going for another 20 minutes, given the trend that you have started. I would like, with the leave of the House, to have the approval that the rest of the answer be circulated to Members. Are Members in support of that?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Are you finished?

Mr. Speaker: No, he has another—how long again do you have?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Three/four minutes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: About another five minutes or so, Mr. Speaker—just about five minutes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Four minutes. Promise it in four minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Well, you have to do it in four minutes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: I could do it in—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Gopeesingh: Four minutes.

Mr. Roberts: “Mash gas!”

Dr. Gopeesingh: Four minutes.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Inclusive of Ian Pantin, which is Bungi Garlin and the Asylum Band, Dike Perreira, David Michael Rudder, Andre Robley, Keston Rodriguez, all under “Cultural Performance”, except for Keston Rodriguez—the magic show.

In securing the goods and services for the execution of the Laventille Community Renewal Family Initiative, quotations were requested and providers selected in accordance with Government’s procurement procedures.

Three arms of the Ministry of National Security were involved in the organization of the event. These involved OLEP, the Office of Law Enforcement Policy; the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the CSP, the Citizen Security Programme. *[Interruption]* No. The contract prices for the services provided, inclusive of that of the cultural performers, are as follows: CB Kitchen, \$51,800; Nick Nacks, \$180,000; Classic Awards, \$175,000; Screen Stars Ltd, \$159,000; A Moses & Sons Ltd., \$13,000; H H Supplies, \$17,933; Maser Limited, \$2,691; Big Truck Contractors, \$13,300; JP Plant Rentals, \$17,500; Ricky Raghunanan Scaffolding, \$87,883; Porta-Air-Rentals, \$13,660; Maurice Chavalier, trading as Maurice Chavalier Decors, \$75,000; Green Leaf Plant Rentals, \$23,517; Premier Party Rental, \$32,370; the NCC, \$29,200. Marldon John, \$1,500; Calvin Bartholomew, \$19,550; Tropical Tent Rentals, \$51,684; Western Plastics, \$5,400; Bonanza Farms, \$16,300; Chuckles Tinkerbelle & Friends, \$23,520; Create Magical Moments, \$202,000; Community Personnel, \$75,000; Silva Image Digital Photography; \$15,000; Rent-A-Amp, \$287,500; Crisp Clean, \$32,000;

Oral Answers to Questions
[SEN. THE HON. G. GRIFFITH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Brandon's Events Rental Company, \$50,000; Trinidad and Tobago Event Management, \$22,340; Audio Video Xperts, \$133,975; Rib House Limited, \$168,251; Monix Grill & Lounge, \$139,600; Water One, \$46,295; Double X Workshop, \$31,296; Ross Advertising, \$299,761; Unlimited Functions, that is the tables and chairs, \$155,250; Unlimited Functions (signage), \$19,250; Unlimited Functions (logistics), \$194,000 and Chealeif Lee Wing, \$52,000.

The cultural performances, Mr. Speaker: Sandra Des Vignes, \$7,000; Leroy Calliste, \$12,000; Hans Des Vignes, \$5,000; Sharon Alexis, \$1,500; Curt Alexander, \$2,000; Edghill Thomas, \$8,500; Nichole Greaves, \$3,000; Success Laventille Secondary School, \$6,000; UniStars Pan Orchestra, \$3,000; Jason Williams, \$5,000; WITCO Desperadoes, \$12,000; North West Laventille Cultural Movement, \$5,000; JJ and Friends, \$5,750; Free Lancers Pan Groove Steel Orchestra, \$3,000; Reflex Performing Arts, \$3,000; Dianne Haynes-Gulston and Yvonne Rodriguez, \$3,000 each; Harrydeo Mccoon, \$2,000; Laventille Rhythm Section, \$3,000; Los Alumnos de San Juan Parang, \$7,000; SEPOS Cultural Workshop, \$2,000.

2.15 p.m.

Almost there, Mr. Speaker. Codrington Pan Family, \$5,000; Mohammed Muwakil, \$4,000; Ramona Morales-Pompie, \$4,500; Karen Ashe, \$5,000; Dorcas Bryan, \$3,000; Heeralal Rampartap, \$2,500; Ian Pantin (Bunju Garlin and Asylum Band), \$89,336; Dike Perreira, \$9,000; David Michael Rudder, \$29,552; Andrea Robley, \$1,500; Keston Rodriguez, \$3,000; and the Laventille Steel Band Festival Foundation, \$4,000. The total coming up to \$3,197,416.79, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to clarify the goal of this initiative as indicated earlier, was to provide the forum for private/public sector agencies to display products, offer job opportunities for residents and training in preparation for sustainable employment. Everything was accomplished and readily available—the material—and a wide array of organizations and agencies including Ansa McAl, Capital Plaza, East Port of Spain Development Company, Families in Action, FPA, First Citizens Bank, Hyatt Regency, Innovative Security, Magic Mist Services, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Public Utilities, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and the list goes on.

Prior to this event, many may not have been aware of the various opportunities that could be accessed through the aforementioned agencies and other stakeholders. Feedback from the agencies indicated that 2,226 persons

sought employment and other information from these booths. I wish to state, Mr. Speaker, that after the Ministry of National Security provided the space for stakeholders and communities to meet and exchange information, the responsibility of securing employment rested upon the job seekers themselves. The initiative was not meant to be a recruitment drive. After obtaining the information, it was expected that individuals would make further strides in order to secure their own employment.

As I conclude, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Security was satisfied with its effort to strengthen the relationship between the law enforcement and security arms of the State and the communities in order to reduce crime in embattled areas. We acknowledge that we have a long way to go, but we remain focused on our goal to enhance the lives of the residents of Laventille and environs and, indeed, to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, by confronting criminality in all its aspects, primary, secondary and tertiary crime prevention, and this on all fronts through the use of every available technique in our arsenal.

As I have stated in the past, the Ministry of National Security is willing to work with all stakeholders in the fight to reduce crime and criminality. In light of this, and based on all that we hope to achieve through the Laventille Community Renewal Family Initiative, we reaffirm our commitment to meaningful dialogue, to breaking down borders tangible or otherwise, and most of all, in building bridges.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is 2.18, we end our question time at 2.15. Unless the Leader of the House is willing to agree to deal with the other questions, I would like to suggest to the hon. Members that questions Nos. 21, 22, 30, 46, as well as 51, will appear on the next Order Paper.

Miss Cox: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you would like to ask a supplemental?

Miss Cox: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Go ahead quickly.

Miss Cox: Thank you very much. To the Minister of National Security: was any service provider from Laventille a recipient of any contract for this Laventille family day?

Hon. Member: Yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: Desperadoes not from Laventille.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Security. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Cox: My question: not entertainment, any service provider? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, I gave out the—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, Members, allow the Minister of National Security to speak.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, the list involved 38 suppliers and the address as I read out to all—the question was any from Laventille?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It would be on the *Hansard*.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: There are no specific suppliers or providers whose address from their business place is in Laventille, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Cox: Thank you very much. Further supplemental please, Mr. Speaker. I would like to know if the expenditure of \$3.2 million achieved the objective of reducing crime and criminality in Laventille?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Security.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Yes. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the Ministry of National Security is very satisfied with the efforts. We achieved the objectives. It shows the importance of the relationship between citizens in a community and the law enforcement agencies through what is known as secondary crime prevention; the importance of putting mechanisms in place for persons to utilize their energies away from a life of crime. This year was just one of the many avenues, and we are very satisfied with the achievements and what resulted from it.

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

EXPIRATION OF QUESTION TIME

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Security-Lighting Projects of WASA (Details of)

- 21.** Could the hon. Minister of the Environment and Water Resources state what company was responsible for the security lighting projects of WASA over the period May 2010 to December 2012? [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

**Cable Theft at WASA
(Details of)**

- 22.** Could the hon. Minister of the Environment and Water Resources state:
- a) Whether there were any reports of cable theft at WASA during the period May 2010 to December 2012?
 - b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative could the Minister state the estimated value of the cable stolen?
 - c) Could the Minister also state what steps have been taken to apprehend the perpetrators and recover the stolen items? [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

**Discontinuation of Supply to Schools
(Details of)**

- 30.** Could the hon. Minister of Education state:
- a) Whether a decision was taken to discontinue providing supplies such as toiletries, stationery, and other requested items to schools and if so, when?
 - b) When will this service be resumed? [*Miss A. Hospedales*]

**New Chaguanas Market
(Details of)**

- 46.** With respect to the construction of a new Chaguanas market, could the hon. Minister of Local Government state:
- a) Whether any contract has been signed for this project?
 - b) If the answer to part a) is in the affirmative:
 - i. The name of the company that was awarded the contract;
 - ii. The cost of this project;
 - iii. Whether the contract was awarded by competitive tender;
 - iv. The names of all companies that tendered for this project and the amounts of the respective bids;
 - v. The particulars of the contract including the date on which the contract was signed, the scope of works, the date on which work was supposed to commence, the anticipated completion date for the works; and
 - vi. The current status of work on this project?

Expiration of Question Time

Friday, January 10, 2014

- c) When will actual construction work commence on this project? [*Mr. J. Warner*]

**Malick Secondary School Closure
(Details of)**

51. Could the hon. Minister of Education state:

- a) Why has the Malick Secondary School remained closed to date?
- b) Have the students attending Malick Secondary been placed at other schools/institutions?
- c) If the answer to part (b) is in the affirmative, how many students have been placed and where?
- d) If the answer to part (b) is in the negative, what has happened to these displaced students?
- e) When will the Malick Secondary School be reopened?
- f) Whether it is the government's intention to close down Malick Secondary School? [*Mrs. P. Mc Intosh*]

Question time having expired, questions 21, 22, 30, 46 and 51 were not dealt with.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

Failure of Government to Address Oil Spill

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for La Brea. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House at this sitting for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the failure of this Government to adequately address the very serious effects of the huge oil spill that currently pervades in the coastal region of the south-western peninsula of Trinidad.

The matter is definite insofar as a massive oil spill has in fact occurred and many residents of the coastal zone are falling ill as a consequence of the inhalation and continued chronic exposure to strong hydrocarbon gases and noxious fumes. The matter is also definite, as since December 17, 2013 when it first occurred, the energy disaster has not been fully contained.

The matter is urgent because of the immediate and consequential health hazards, both physiological and psychological, inflicted upon the people of La Brea and other areas of the south-western peninsula. Additionally, there are many persons whose livelihoods depend on the fishing and local tourism industries and are now experiencing tremendous hardship as a consequence of the oil spills.

The matter is of public importance because this is one of the largest oil spill disasters to occur in Trinidad and Tobago. It has affected a large portion of the residents who live along the south-western peninsula. The matter is also of public importance, given that the cause of the oil spills has yet to be ascertained and citizens living along the south-western peninsula have not been properly informed whether the oil spills have dissipated. Further, it reintroduces concerns on the security surrounding the petroleum industry which is a major income earner for our country.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, an application under Standing Order 12 must satisfy three substantive criteria.

1. The matter must relate to a particular matter or fact of recent occurrence and the application must be made at the first opportunity;
2. The matter must require the immediate attention of the House and the Government; and
3. The matter must involve the administrative or ministerial responsibility of the Government and be of national concern.

I have considered the application of the Member for La Brea, and I am satisfied that this matter qualifies to be raised as a definite matter of urgent public importance. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members, this matter also requires the leave of the House. Is the House prepared to grant leave?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, having regard to the position of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 12(3), the matter will be debated between 6.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m. later today. [*Desk thumping*]

DOG CONTROL (AMDT.) BILL, 2014

Bill to amend the Dog Control Act, 2013 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

NURSES AND MIDWIVES REGISTRATION (AMDT.) BILL, 2014

Bill to amend the Nurses and Midwives Registration Act, Chap. 29:53 [*The Minister of Health*]; read the first time.

BAIL (AMDT.) BILL, 2013

[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [December 06, 2013]:

That the Bill be now a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Members who have spoken so far are: the hon. Attorney General, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Minister of Legal Affairs, Member for Laventille East/Morvant, Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, Member for Chaguanas West, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, and the Member for St. Joseph. All Members willing to speak can now continue. The hon. Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Sport (Hon. Anil Roberts): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and let me first of all wish all colleagues, including yourself, a happy New Year and a prosperous 2014. Member for Diego Martin West, I “eh” ready for you yet. Somebody come to deal with you for me. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

So after wishing everyone a happy New Year, I would like to welcome back the former Prime Minister and the Member for San Fernando East, the hon. Patrick Manning. [*Desk thumping*] Member for San Fernando East, welcome back to this House and you came in, in a way that is befitting your position and the position of the PNM. You came in with show time [*Desk thumping*] and I am glad that you look very strong, healthy walking in. I really am because you look like Pollard. You look like if I put you on a cricket game you could hit a ball for six, but I also hope that you are strong enough to take a little licks as we welcome you back here today. We have been missing you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in coming into this debate at this point in time because 2014 is a red-letter day for this country, Trinidad and Tobago. This year is a positive one and positive signs are all around. However, there is one negative that is hanging over our beloved country and that negative is the murder rate past and present, and—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. A. Roberts:—“North/East do not worry, ah coming to you just now.” Take your time. Do not rush. You will get yours. This debate is critical in this Government’s thrust towards aiding, abetting, assisting, enabling law enforcement agencies, the population and everybody at large at presenting a safer Trinidad and Tobago, where each and every citizen can enjoy their property, their livelihood, their families, and enjoy the sweet life that is Trinidad and Tobago.

My mother always taught me and all of us that when you are doing your duty, whatever it may be, whether representing the country at swimming, or football, or coaching, you must always put God first, then country, family, school and club. However, sometimes I wonder whether all of us who are put into positions of leadership understand this: God, country, family, school, club. Because as I welcome back a former Prime Minister, I must say that he made me question my mother’s opinion and the protocol and procedures and precedence—the list of precedents being God, country, family, school and club.

2.30 p.m.

Because, as the former Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East came back into this House and we congratulated him, and it was really show time, it led me to believe and question: what were the priorities of his Government—the People’s National Movement—and under his leadership? Because it is clear that they operate under God—good—family, shopping in Port of Spain, Local Government elections, PNM elections, country and then Parliament. This is a very serious thing and those can “steups” on that side as much as they want because this Parliament is a very serious place of business, and one must come in here, first and foremost, to serve the people, the people put us here.

With all due respect to anyone, each and every one including myself, this Parliament must take precedence above everything. Once you are fit enough to shop, you should have been in the Parliament; once you are fit enough to wave on ah truck and take part in elections, you should have been in the Parliament; once you are fit enough to walk and talk and smile, you should be in the Parliament, because this is where—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 36(1), please.

Mr. Sharma: [*Inaudible*] Ah! Nonsense!

Hon. Member: Highly irrelevant.

Miss Cox: “Wais de relevance?”

Mr. Speaker: Continue, continue, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you. The relevance—you would not understand the relevance because the PNM does not understand what we are here for. You have not understood since 1962 and you will never understand that the people come first. It is not about show time, it is not about gallery time, it is not about media and take a picture and get in the front page; it is about serving people. You will never understand what I am talking about for you have not served, you only became politicians through the behest of the Balisier House. You did not represent this country in anything before so you would not understand so I speak to the people who understand what I am saying.

The work of this Parliament is critical work. We come here today to debate a Bill that can provide part of a solution towards providing our citizens out there—the ones who are at the gunpoint, knife point, at the murderous criminal intent out there, we come here to try and protect them. Not to gallery, not to get “ah one-up man” on somebody else, save that for some other place. So, with all due respect, we come here and we must understand that crime is a critical point and a critical issue in this country.

Let me say at the offset, we must begin also with the definition of crime because, unfortunately, across Trinidad and Tobago, our fault, my fault, all of our faults, we have not been specific or pellucid with the definition of crime because, if we were, we would understand that crime consists of many elements. Whether the most heinous being the murders—malicious murders and rapes down to the smaller, what people call, lesser crimes—breaking ah traffic light, jaywalking—smaller crimes, but all of these elements are encapsulated in the umbrella called crime.

When we deal with facts, one element of crime—murder—is out of hand. It is not at a world record-breaking, unprecedented level which was done under the PNM in 2007 with 558 murders, but it is too high at 407, it is too high at 22 in nine days for January 2014. It is too high—the murder rate is too high and we must all work together to get it down.

Hon. Member: Ridiculous!

Hon. A. Roberts: Yes, it is ridiculously high. Yes, and it was ridiculously high under the PNM at 558—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Unprecedented.

Hon. A. Roberts: So let us—unprecedented means it must go above 559; that has not happened. You see, you must deal with statistics and facts. This is why, Member for Port of Spain North/St Ann’s West, I have difficulty in debating with you because you just like to talk, we are talking statistics. But the fact is here that this Government takes no celebration [*Laughter and crosstalk*] in the fact that the PNM holds the world record for murders in Trinidad and Tobago. We take no celebration but the point is, “murders too high”.

However, having said that, all the other elements of crime, over the last three years, under this People’s Partnership Government, have come down. Does that mean we celebrate and show time and gallery and wave a flag and show off? No, because we have to keep on getting each element of crime down, including the murder rate but when you look at statistics, not just talk, 2013, some of the serious crimes—crimes that impact on people—for example, burglaries and break-ins. There is nothing more personable than somebody invading your private space, your home, your family, your belongings. “Breaking-in”—burglary and break-ins.

In 2012, there were 4,070 burglaries and break-ins; in 2013, there were 2,017—a decrease of 33 per cent. That is good; we have to do better. No show time, but it is the fact that it has come down. Robberies, people taking what you have worked hard for. Something that makes you feel upset, your self-esteem is down, you cannot believe that you have been disrespected by some hooligan robbing you. In 2012, there were 4,137; in 2013, there were 2,713—a decrease of 34.4 per cent. Good. Coming down, one-third down, needs to go down more; no need to celebrate and jump up but it is going in the right direction.

So crime is not just murders—murder, is worse, yes. The worse thing, the worse crime—taking a human life—and this needs to be addressed and needs to come down. But you must also give “Jack dey jacket and Jim dey gym boots”. The police have been bringing down and providing a level of security that was not there before as certain crimes involving persons, robbery, serious shootings and stabbings, have and continue to come down. So these are the facts, so when you get out there, we must talk facts. Yes, murders are terrible and need to come down, we agree, but the facts state: larceny of motor vehicles—“yuh work hard for yuh car and yuh go and park in the mall and man tiefing yuh car”. Back in 2007, they were up to 2000; 2000 cars annually were being stolen; in 2013, 975, so an improvement of some 53 per cent. Not down to zero yet but a great vast improvement.

Larceny: dwelling house, sleeping, “man break-in downstairs or yuh downstairs, man break-in upstairs window” and so on, in 2012, there were 507 of

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

those incidents; personable incidents that make people feel unsafe. But, in 2013, there were 334—a decrease of 34 per cent. So when you say that crime is on the rampage; that is not true. Crime has been coming down under control by some 34 per cent. Murders are out of control and will be dealt with by national security, their plans and so on, but do not make political statements that you hope to get into power by creating an untrue position.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: So how you all got there? [*Laughter*]

Hon. A. Roberts: How we got there? “Ah gonna tell yuh shortly.” You would not know, as Sando East will know, and I will let you know how we got here. That is a great question; wish I had extra time to answer “yuh”.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Cannot!

Hon. A. Roberts: Now, an analogy for the population to understand as we deal with this crime situation, and this Bail (Amendment) Bill here is one of the cogs to deal with it. If, for example, in 2009, your son was in a certain school—whatever school—and “yuh taking Form 4 and he fail all 10 subjects”, and then, in 2010, “yuh move him to a new school with new teachers”, and after two years in that school, he passed nine out of 10 subjects but he failed mathematics—because many people feel mathematics is the be-all and end-all and the number one subject, rightly or wrongly, but people feel so—but he passed nine out of 10 after failing 10 out of 10, would you call your son a failure? No, you would say that he improved on nine out of 10 and “son, we have to now deal with mathematics”, and give him some lessons, make sure “he do he homework” and try to pass mathematics. Well, that is where we are in the crime situation.

All other levels of crimes are coming down, from larceny of motor vehicles, robbery, burglary, house-breaking—all of those, down, an average of 34 per cent. Murders are down but not enough, but this month, they went back up, skyrocketed and we understand that, and nobody here is going to say or pretend or throw anything on it, and try to make any statement that that is acceptable. It is totally unacceptable and this Government thinks that one murder is too many, so we will continue to work together.

Here we are today to pass a bail amendment—an amendment to the Bail Act that would allow the police, those in charge, the DPP, some time to formulate their cases because everyone knows the backlog in the Magistrates’ Court. You can hear the Chief Justice talk about it, he is doing his job to move forward, and we, in this Parliament, must give them the tools to make Trinidad and Tobago safer. We cannot sit down here, hide our heads in the sand, play politics, flip-flop from

one year to the next. When we are in Government, we say one thing, and then when we are in Opposition, say another. That is not how you fight crime but— [*Crosstalk*] moving on.

The PNM, under the leader at the moment, Member for Diego Martin West, has said that this Government has no plan. We have no crime plan. Well, you know, sometimes it boggles the mind, Member for Diego Martin West, he had an opportunity to lead a storied party, and unfortunately, at every juncture, he failed to carry the PNM anywhere but backwards, [*Laughter*] and every time he comes here, he says “no plan”. “Yuh show him a plan, yuh tell him, yuh explain to him, he come back and repeat ‘no plan’”. As if it is a robot just regurgitating “no plan, corrupt, no plan, no good, put me, I want to be the man, no plan”. [*Interruption*]

We have had many plans and the Minister of National Security will go into the national security plans—tertiary, secondary, primary—all of that. I am not an expert in that; they have that. Minister John Sandy had plans. Minister—Member for Chaguanas West, Jack Warner had plans, implemented; Minister Gary Griffith now has plans, implemented, moving forward with those other members of the security council.

But what the PNM does not understand is that the real plan to fight crime is the People’s Partnership’s Manifesto “Prosperity for All”. Crime fight cannot, will not, and must not, be zeroed in on any one element. The police have their job to do. The early childhood centre teachers have their job to do. Parents have their job. Primary school, secondary school teachers have their job. Cabinet has their job. Legislature has their job. Judiciary has their job. DPP has their job. The sporting clubs, the associations, the NGOs, the radio talk show hosts, the media—everybody has their job to do, and we must understand that a crime-fighting plan does not only deal with army, police, roadblock, gun, lock-up, communication, DNA, fingerprint, searching—that is not a crime plan. A crime plan involves every aspect and this Government has been fighting crime from all angles [*Desk thumping*] because the root cause of crime, first and foremost, is the inequitable distribution of resources. Inequitable distribution of resources and this does not occur overnight.

Since 1962, of which most years—unfortunately for this country—the PNM was in charge, there has been an inequitable distribution of resources since then. Many of them sitting across there would not even know. I know Member for San Fernando East knows well, he has been a Member of Parliament since 1971. Some of them just come and talking plenty, “loud set ah talk; doh even know if dey going up for the next seat next time, who would be dey leader, but talking”.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

2.45 p.m.

But since then the inequitable distribution of resources, especially under the most storied party with the greatest legacy, has been nepotism and corruption. And once that exist and existed, that the people would not get the resources necessary, the resources would not trickle down; the sustainable jobs would not be created. Only friend and family become millionaires and billionaires. They pretend that they write a book. They work nowhere but they reach Forbes 500 list of richest women in the world. That is PNM. And when that happens and one person accumulates so much there is so much less for everybody else. And from that inequity creates a culture and a system and a society that is ripe for crime to exist.

This Government has realized that and has begun the equal distribution of resources across Trinidad and Tobago—[*Desk thumping*—no distinction between Port of Spain and city. The entire country across Trinidad and Tobago; places like Tabaquite, when you drove past—and not many people drove past. I must admit that even though I played football all across this country, I never drove through some parts of Tabaquite until 2007, when I thought I actually reached Haiti. I could not believe that a part of a country that was rich with oil and gas, that had boasted about billions of dollars, that had Tesoro and Texaco, the country of O’Halloran and Prevatt, that in Tabaquite, you would swear that you were in Haiti—dirt road and wooden bridges, wood—but I must say the bridge built with some good wood. “Dah wood look like it was dey when Columbus reached. I never see ting so. Driving my jaguar through dey—and is ah good ting jaguar is a good car with free suspension, four-wheel drive. And ah buy jaguar before coming into Government. Doh need to be in Government to buy no X6 and so on. But when ah driving meh car down there, I could not believe ah was in Trinidad and Tobago.” And this is the legacy of the PNM.

Build, yes, boast about this nice building—fantastic. What about the \$3 billion overrun? What could that have done for Matelot? What could that have done for Icos? [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. A. Roberts: What could that—“buh eh eh”.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise—[*Interruption*]

Hon. A. Roberts: “Is ah new year, you know”.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

Miss Mc Donald:—Standing Order 36(1). Relevance, please; relevance to the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013, before us.

Hon. Member: Show time.

Mr. Speaker: Member, connect.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Sir, I will connect for the hon. Member because unfortunately she falls into one of those “category” just come PNM.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: I am talking about inequitable distribution of resources leading to the climate, creating the climate, creating the conditions from which a vast majority of our people are poor and suffering even though our per capita income right now is US \$19,000—US \$19,000. At least 250,000 of our population cannot imagine what “yuh” talking about. Why is this? Because when the PNM rules, family “come” first. You see you could not understand when my mother said: God, country, family. You could never understand that because in the PNM, family first, country after.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, again I rise on 36(5)—imputing improper motives.

Mr. Speaker: Overruled. Continue, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. “Ah telling yuh. Ah know it hurting. Is ah new year buh it will hurt because the truth hurts.” And when “yuh sit down here and play games with election, election “we win, rah, rah, rah”. That is not what “it” about. “Yuh” want to win, go ahead. I am talking real issues about real people, about facts, historically, and the Balisier House has shown that they have been inequitable in their distribution of resources which puts a large part of the population with no other opportunity [*Desk thumping*] to succeed and therefore they must go to crime.

Crime is not just about—nobody is born a criminal. Children “doh” come out and the doctor or the maternity nurse “doh” slap a criminal. Children are all born with potential, intelligence, brilliance. But yet life opportunities would lead them into a path where that will happen. And that is the PNM—[*Interruption*]—“you doh know bout PNM”. “So leave meh. You relax”. Now—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: “Ah waiting for yuh”.

Hon. A. Roberts: “You waiting for me?”

Hon. Member: “She have a long wait, boy.”

Hon. A. Roberts: Historically, over the PNM—[*Interruption*];

Hon. Member: “What yuh provoking him for?”

Hon. A. Roberts: “And doh provoke meh because ah giving yuh a lil education. Yuh could go back in Balisier House and pretend yuh learn something bout the PNM.”

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. A. Roberts: Historically, when Dr. Williams said to the population: “I could put a crapaud in a PNM balisier tie and they will win”, a lot of the population thought—[*Interuption*—Yes, you understand.

Hon. Member: “Ferdie Ferreira seat”.

Hon. A. Roberts: But when he said “Ah could put a crapaud in a balisier tie and win dah seat”, the PNM celebrated. They said it means that our brand is so important, we are so good, the people love us so much that they would vote for the brand PNM. “Man take off he tie becau’ he know what I talking about”. But the truth “ah” the matter was, Dr. Williams was not talking about the brand PNM being so good and so loved and beloved and people would vote. What he was actually saying is that you the Members of Parliament who go to the fore, do not run the country under the PNM. They always have a crew, a five or six back-room men.

So back in his day you would see men like O’Halloran, Prevatt and Julien running the show. All the money “controlled” by “dem”, directed by “dem”. Then “ah” next boss come and “yuh” see men like Calder Hart—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. A. Roberts:—Julien—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald:—I rise on 36(1), please. I am on my feet, yes, thank you. 36(1) please, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, would you connect your contribution to the various provisions in the Bill please. Thanks.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, thank you. We are dealing here today with the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013 in order to provide the citizenry with a modicum of safety and protection, because many of our people, our population, our citizens have gone astray. They have yielded to the temptation of going the wrong way and I

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

am giving a background into why, because we are naturally a beautiful, loving, intelligent, creative population. So why are so many of our young people choosing to go that way? And this is why. It did not just happen today or yesterday. It happened for decades. The conditions were created by poor leadership. And when we come here now, we are going to ask for the support that will not be forthcoming from the Opposition. But we will still beg of them that somehow they tend to put people before themselves and that they vote for this amendment. I know I might be naïve but I am still trying to convince them, even though the Member for Diego Martin North East said—before they even start to debate—there will be no way they are supporting this. But I am trying to appeal to show them that it is not about the Government, or the Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia. This is about the people outside this Chamber, our citizens. The people we “lime” with, we walk with.

Now they may not understand that because when “dey in power, dey SUV does get darker tint, dey doh talk, dey doh say hi”; they do not say anything. But we, this Government stay on the ground, stay in jeans and jersey, sit down and talk and “lime” and we love the people out there. So right here I am trying to explain that this problem of crime—not only murders, because yes we have improvements across the board but we want it to come down further. And this here, this Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013, will go a long way into achieving that, and we need the Member for Port of Spain South’s support. So I would hope that she would listen and stop doing squats—exercise, the gym is upstairs, “she could go and take exercise” but I would want her to listen.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please, please. The Member rises on points of Order which she is entitled to do. There is nothing like squat. [*Laughter*] So please! Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Apologize to the lady “nah”.

Hon. A. Roberts: No, no, “she exercising, looking fit. Da is nuh apology”. That is a compliment. I am complimenting the Member for Port of Spain South.

Hon. Member: He is admiring you.

Hon. A. Roberts: I am admiring her and I wish her all the best. So under the People’s National Movement, every time they take government and they have this—they have the ability to help many, they have the ability to help the masses. The masses are not helped. Why? Because the nice MPs who like people sit down

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

there “but dey eh running nothing. The real men behind, they behind the balisier, they behind, downstairs, they in the lobby behind—you see when all yuh does be upstairs and camera up dey, dem in the dark just behind dey, about five ah dem. It used to be dem, back then—the Member for San Fernando East would tell yuh—Calder Hart, Julien, Garcia, Rao, Saith, dem running the show”. Not poor MPs like Gary Hunt, oh poor “fella”, La Brea, nice “fellas” but “dey doh know what going on, dey not making no policy. Dey ent sending no direction. All de money going down that way.” So you have to understand why the crime situation is what it is. “Doh” sit down there smug because you have to accept your responsibility, just as we accept ours now, to deal with the situation. And that is why we are here to deal with it. And waiting in the wings—if the population close “dey eye and wake up on the wrong side ah de bed whenever election call and one ah dem, whether Member for Diego Martin West, Member for San Fernando East, Member for Diego Martin Central, Robert Riley, Point—whoever is the leader next time—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: Robert what?

Hon. A. Roberts: “Next time dey could wake up and see one ah dem as Prime Minister. And yuh know who waiting in the wings? Rahael, Gabriel, Al Rawi—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Hon. A. Roberts:—Riley. Dey waiting there to—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald:—Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). No, no, no, imputing improper motives. 36(5).

Hon. Member: To who?

Hon. Member: Going too far.

Miss Mc Donald: And they are not here to protect themselves.

Mr. Speaker: What I would advise Members to do, particularly in this period, be very careful when we call people’s names, and those persons who are not here to defend themselves.

Miss Mc Donald: Exactly!

Mr. Speaker: So I—now, I cannot stop a Member from referring to a stranger from outside this House but I just want to advise Members that persons who are not here to defend themselves, I will like Members to be very cautious in their remarks. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for calling those PNMmites who fled—like Rao, like Calder Hart, “cah find none ah dem”. So I apologize for calling them. Maybe they will come back if somebody wake up and balisier in charge, they might return”.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the PNM wrote the Constitution and we must give them some praise for that because our Constitution is a great document. Yes, we are going to—the consultations have been completed and there may be some constitutional reform coming, that is up to the people to decide but, you know, the PNM was instructive in producing the Constitution. The problem with the PNM is they never read it and therefore they did not understand that when you are in power, not to take care of yourself, take care of everybody in every nook and cranny. Not only “yuh” people and “yuh” friend and family and “ting”, forget “dat, see bout people; love everybody”. Come across the board. “Yuh understand?” [*Interruption*] “For real?” Well you see you would not understand.

Under the PNM, “the Member for Diego Martin North East, who you sit next to and I hope you do not learn from, when he was Minister of Works and Transport, Mr. Speaker, there was some 76 per cent of contracts went to 20 contractors—big money.

Hon. Member: Same thing.

Hon. A. Roberts: No, not same thing. “Yuh see yuh doh know”. And thanks for asking “meh” so I will take “meh” time and make the point. So under the PNM 20 contractors getting all the “wuk”. “So Works and Transport spending \$1.2 billion on roads a year, 20 ah dem divvyng up”. Under this Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure over 200 local contractors are working doing roads right now. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: That is governance.

Hon. A. Roberts: Now, think about it. If you move an extra 180 contractors, that is contractors—if each contractor “hah” ten workers, “dah” is about 1800 extra workers “who have food in dey—money in dey pocket, dey have ah family ah four, yuh talking about 72—7400 people eating ah food and living and surviving” and therefore when you create equity in the system, there will be less motivation to do wrong “ting, buh when yuh keep everything for yuhself and yuh hug up” and prime minister is called up to a house in Goodwood Park and instructed to call an early election, this cannot be right. Nobody should have that—no group of people should ever have that power over the leader of the

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. But this Prime Minister, nobody “cyar call this Prime Minister to go no way, except she grand children to call her to go home to play badminton.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: That is right.

Hon. A. Roberts: Nobody. No group of individuals could call a prime minister and instruct her to call “ah” election especially when he did it before and failed. That could never be right and it will never be done. That is the legacy of the PNM, creating these powerful megalomaniacs who keep everything and do not distribute and now we have a crime situation, for a small country like this that has to be dealt with, and we will deal with it, with the Partnership, from all angles.

3.00 p.m.

“Yuh want tuh talk PNM, the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago, under the PNM, \$400 million in five years; \$400 million in five years. Yuh know how much pavilion dey finish? Seven. Ah doh even want tuh divide and tell yuh what was de worth of each pavilion. But under dis Government and dis Minister of Sport, 32 pavilions completed at \$106 million, another 24 tendering out and starting and moving forward for de people of dis country across Trinidad and Tobago.”

Dr. Khan: “Dat is tuh keep down crime.”

Hon. A. Roberts: “Aaah!”

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Auditor General.

Hon. A. Roberts: “Auditor General? I would deal wit dat. You doh worry ‘bout dat. You really feel you in something. Yes. Also URP, URP normally deals with some of our poorest people. Single mothers hah tuh feed three/four children. Dey need dey lil money. De PNM, with URP, as dey loss, as de UNC back then loss, de PNM come in. Every single human being who was dey, buss throat. Out. Get out and ah fresh set come in.”

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is what you did.

Hon. A. Roberts: What we did. Yes. We did the opposite and we took “licks” from our people because our people expected the same thing. “When yuh come in, move out dat poor people and bring in ah fresh set ah poor people. In this Government all poor people is all poor people and must take care of each and every one.” So our supporters were very upset with us. “De amount ah French I get. The amount ah French these MPs get. Because they said: But listen nah, de

PNM, when dem win they run we out de next day, allyuh leave dem and dey laughing at we and dey tinging. Yes, but we say take ah lil laugh” because they are poor people too. They are citizens too and you cannot play politics when children need food. “And dah is de difference between the Partnership and the PNM. All yuh try—doh try tuh lump us wit dat. All yuh keep dat in Balisier House. We will not treat poor people like dat.

Furthermore, under URP under the PNM is only ghost gang. Only money going all over, not a project.” Under the former Minister of Local Government and this Minister of Local Government now, over 1,800 projects across Trinidad and Tobago have been completed by URP. In D’Abadie/O’Meara, eight projects consisting of 3.6 kilometres of box drain. “And when ah tell yuh box train, box drain so well done, so pristine yuh feel tuh lie down on the pavement and take ah sleep. All de drain mark off perfect. The thing smooth, the metal covers fitting, not a lip over. URP doing dat work.” [*Desk thumping*] “So understand, when you fight and you make URP efficient and turn them into contractors so de poor people could earn a little bit more money, dey not going to rob nobody but when PNM come in, yuh go say: Or, allyuh is Partnership, poor people, out. Come in my poor people. All poor people is Government poor people and we must take care of dem first and foremost before anybody else and that is the difference. Da’s is why crime will come down.”

The People’s Partnership—“and all meh PNM people go understand dis, when PNM in power. And yuh know while dey would not vote fuh meh, dey would not vote for de Partnership because PNM is a kinda cult. Dr. Williams really get into people so dey might know dat we better than dem but dey cyah take dey finger. It hah something, something dat just directing it dey fuh de PNM but dey will come and shoo-shoo: Anil boy, allyuh really is something else yuh know. Allyuh really put all dese people on board?” Because 3,680-odd citizens of this country are serving on boards across this country. Yes, “dat mean dat now and again we go ketch ah smart man wit ah fake ting aright; ah fake resumé but as yuh find it yuh deal wit it.

But understand dis, yes. there are more people serving so, therefore, there are risks that one or two might want tuh do wrong thing, no problem. But under the PNM, man who walk hard and pong pavement, men who geh blister under dey toe, dey shoe bun up, ladies who walk up and down in D’Abadie/O’Meara—by de way dey all support Anil now eh, so PNM allyuh loss dey. But anyway, when dey finish walk and dey finish putting all dese PNM people in power, when it come tuh even ah lil board appointment none fuh you, ten for Calder Hart, seven for Ken

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Julien, eight for Monteil.” That is gone because the People’s Partnership is spreading the resources equitably so it would trickle down to a wider portion of the population so that many people would not have to choose to do crime.

No Trinidad and Tobago citizen is born bad. What we have is bad leadership from the PNM, inequitable distribution of resources, greed, which leads to a group of have-nots. Under the Partnership and when we move into second term, by the end of the second term, there will be prosperity for all, right down to the bottom. We have already dropped the poverty rate from 18 per cent down to 15.3 per cent. That is an extra 45,000 people above the poverty line in trying circumstances.

Now, the PNM—[*Interruption*] no, I now start, Member for Port of Spain South. When you do not share resources people do not have to take care of their families. “A mudda, or fadda must feed dey family.” So if they cannot get it legitimately, illegitimate ways become more feasible. The PNM is anti-labour. They went through a boom in 2004 and 2005. Gas price was US \$13.71 per MMBtu. “Right is about \$3.00/\$3.20 and everybody getting ah lil work.”

Mrs. Khan: Exactly.

Hon. A. Roberts: Under the PNM gas was \$13.71 or 13.61 per MMBtu for a sustained period, gas. Oil was up at \$147 a barrel and “de PNM tell workers: ‘Labour, tighten yuh belt, we eh hah no money fuh you.’” What does that do? People are working hard to take care “ah dey children yuh do not give dem dey increases dat dey deserve.” You do not negotiate and settle wage negotiations. They cannot, they have to then work extra hours to make up. Therefore, the quality of life of their family, the quality time is not spent, the children then begin to go “a little wayward. Dey start tuh lime wit de wrong people because daddy hah tuh work two and three extra shift and mummy hah tuh work too in order tuh keep things going. But the PNM had boom, but boom was fuh Calder Hart. Boom was fuh Julien. Boom was fuh Rao. Boom was fuh Garcia. Boom was fuh North/East. Boom was only fuh ah few. So while dey booming, 69 negotiations left.

De Hilton workers—ladies in the laundry room, cleaners—in 2010 I on de radio and dey telling me dey working on 2003 salary. But we went through boom. But de boom did not reach dem. De only boom dem get is when carnival reach and big truck pass. And dat is the PNM.” And when you do that, if the labour movement, the 69 negotiations—and Member for Pointe-a-Pierre you will help me with the statistics—have to deal with a population at least 425,000 citizens. Because each worker, if you are a worker in Petrotrin, if you are a teacher, you

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

have family, you have children, you have nennin, you have granny to take care of, dat de pension dat PNM was giving could not handle and we increase de pension. But understand dis you do not give de people de raise but yuh booming and yuh inflation gone up, cost of living gone up, inflation at 15 per cent, but yuh not giving people increase in wages and then you coming here tuh talk crime? Shame!

Crime doh come just so. Nobody eh born wid a gun and ah knife tuh come out and rob”.

Mrs. Khan: That is right.

Hon. A. Roberts: But when yuh have a government that keeps the resources for itself and does not spread it, people will lead to that. So we are fighting crime on all levels. We have solved 69 negotiations from 2008—2011.

Mr. Mc Leod: Seventy three.

Hon. A. Roberts: Seventy-three, thanks for the correction Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, 73. “Not from 2010, when we dey yuh know, 2008. Dem was dey. We had tuh come and solve it, even though we hah tuh find—de lady who use tuh sit here, \$24 billion because she went and sign ah ting tuh take care of she self” [*Interruption*]

Mr. Cadiz: “In she nightgown.”

Hon. A. Roberts:—“in a nightgown and ah what yuh call it?” A duster.

Mr. Cadiz: A duster coat.

Hon. A. Roberts: Right, \$24 billion.

Mrs. Khan: Just imagine that.

Hon. A. Roberts: “You know what \$24 billion could do when invested in the right way; how many sustainable jobs, how many people, how many more houses, the quality of life, more football fields, more coaches, more councillors, more facilities in schools? You know how much that could do to impact on the crime fight? Crime plan is not just lock up, beat up, shock up, lock up more. Dat is not crime plan. Dat is what the Member for Diego Martin West want tuh talk about. Then police would handle dat. Crime plan is sharing resources, making sure dat people can succeed, identifying talent.

As we talk identifying talent, the PNM went through a boom in 2003—2008 and we knew at that time that the country had a problem. “We had many single

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

mothers, for whatever reason. “I ain going through all de reason but we had it, single mothers, high percentage. Single mothers who, when dey hah tuh go and work, granny hah tuh look at de child. Granny could hardly see ‘bout she self. She hah tuh see ‘bout de children.” So the children were, therefore, just left really, just clean and maybe something to eat, but no stimulation, no inspiration, no workout for the brain. Then at 10 and 11 years old we put them in an exam with odda children and tell dem compete.” That is an unfair competition. “And then at dat point yuh hah prestige school and bad school. Dah is de PNM legacy. So everybody fighting fuh prestige school and de rest who eh get prestige school, well fire bun dem, leave dem out.” That is where—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. E. McLeod*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So when single mothers had to work the PNM came. “Dey say: We going and build 400 early childhood centre. Well dey had de money. Dey had everything. In five years”—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: In nine years.

Hon. A. Roberts:—“In nine years dey build 17, 17. Now here it is you identify a problem. Our mothers need to work. They do not have time to take care of their children. We need qualified individuals to take care of the children to stimulate them, to let them listen to opera music, read poetry, “do a little mathematics, colour, draw, take care ah dem, feed dem nice dumpling soup, drink a little lime juice, put dem down and when mummy come back dey bathe and dey ready and dey ready tuh go so mummy could just love dem up, put dem tuh sleep. Dat way, if they get 10 years of dat, dey move into primary school, dey get good education then they can compete. But yuh putting poor people children at a disadvantage and smiling and laughing and gallerying and dancing and show time!” It is not a joke!

But under this Government in three years, the Minister of Education, the Member for Caroni Central—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: East.

Hon. A. Roberts:—Caroni East has built—and let me, correct me if I am wrong—52 early childhood centres in three years, even though we had to deal with \$3 billion in back payments for VAT that they did not pay that they had. We had to pay \$5.6 billion that they did not pay their own contractors. “We had to do all ah dat and Clico and he still build 52 early childhood centres when they had a Minister, Esther Le Gendre said that the local contractors ain no good. She went and find Haji, Haji get an initial payment of \$50 million and buss out. Yuh cyah find Haji. Dey liming with Rao somewhere in France.”

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, yes.

Hon. A. Roberts: And now there are 24 more.

Dr. Moonilal: Who is Haji?

Hon. A. Roberts: Twenty-four more early childhood centres under construction for this Government. Why? So single mothers and poor people children can fight, have a fighting chance to succeed, and would not choose crime.

Miss Cox: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(1).

Dr. Moonilal: That is why they can—

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, if you can refer to the legislation. Go to the legislation, look at the provisions. I understand where you are going but try to connect the provisions with your contribution. Hon. Member continue.

3.15 p.m.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I am always looking for guidance. These children who now have Early Childhood Centres and could compete at the SEA level and go on, a seamless transition, will not need bail. They would not need bail. [*Desk thumping*] They would not go to the court. They would not be charged. They would not be convicted. They would not be convicted a second time. They would not be charged, because they will be succeeding as we identify their talents, provide them with the opportunity to succeed, they will turn their backs on crime and move forward. I do not expect you to understand that.

Miss Mc Donald: Put one in “de” hot spot, Port of Spain South.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member for Port of Spain South, you will have a chance to speak.

Hon. A. Roberts: Hot spot, Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Put one there. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. A. Roberts: There are only three constituencies in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, three constituencies that have never voted anything else but PNM and all three are hot spots. “So dat is why you create hot spots! Yuh make hot spot, and now yuh want ting in hot spot?” [*Desk thumping*] You should be ashamed of talking about hot spot.

Miss Cox: “Dah is why yuh eh doing nothing in yuh constituency.”

Miss Mc Donald: Yes.

Miss Cox: Dah is why yuh—[*Inaudible*]

Miss Mc Donald: “Not ah pavilion.”

Hon. A. Roberts: Please, “ah doh mind Member for Port of Spain South, but the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, ah fraid you, ah might geh slap. Leh me sit down, yes, eh.” [*Hon. Roberts sits*]

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: [*Hon. Roberts stands*] Right. “Doh slap mih. Doh slap mih.” Now, we moving on.

Mr. Speaker: Members, both, I think that you would get a chance to speak, the hon. Member that is for Laventille East/Morvant, if you are yet to speak.

Miss Cox: I spoke already.

Mr. Speaker: You spoke already. I think the Member for Port of Spain South is eager to speak and you will get your chance to speak, but allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for your protection. I must say, I admit that I was a little bit afraid there. But, Mr. Speaker, we do not want our children to apply for bail. We do not want our children to stand before a magistrate. We do not want our children in Remand Yard and, therefore, we must have a crime plan that deals with all the social, societal, class, lack of leadership issues to provide our citizens with the opportunity to thrive, and this is what we are talking about here.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

It gives us no pleasure to come and discuss a Bail (Amdt.) Bill, because what that means is that our children are going in the wrong direction, and this is why we are talking about it. I am showing the Member for Diego Martin West who keeps saying we have no crime plan, that our crime plan is a thread that goes through every single Ministry; that starts with the People's Partnership Prosperity for All manifesto and it is not a Vision 2020 which transforms into a vision 2030 overnight with the same authors.

It is not a document that must not be read, because they have brilliant documents, PNM, brilliant writers, they were formed by writers, they create documents that read very well. They are brilliant, the problem is they do not read them and they definitely do not implement them.

The UNC brought dollar for dollar, it was "half ah GATE", good. The PNM came and went three-quarter GATE, because they went to everybody, not dollar for dollar, all on the academic side PNM did well. They came and improved that so they went three-quarter GATE. This People's Partnership, understanding education, sustainable jobs and the movement, upliftment of families for generations, has gone and opened the whole GATE, because we now gone to technical and vocational skills, because not everybody is mathematics and English. So we are identifying talent, giving a pathway to success which means to look to the left to go bad, makes it that little bit more difficult for young people to do that.

Over the years this country with so much revenue, some people say if it was managed properly, Heritage and Stabilisation Fund should be about \$300 million. Right now, Partnership has raised it to \$93 billion—sorry, \$350 billion. Right now it is at TT \$93 billion.

There has been a consequential breakdown in family and communities, why? Because again of policies and this is our crime plan. We do not build boxes like "KFC snack box" and put them one on top the other, and put people in it. The Minister of Housing and Urban Development and Member for Oropouche East is creating communities. Yes, they would take a little longer to build. Yes, they will, but when you have quality, quality starts at home. When you could sit in a nice house and feel comfortable, do your homework, and the electricity working, not some Korean fixtures, that if T&TEC puts current through it, the whole place burn down. Then you could step outside and have "ah lil football field and a cricket field, and a jogging track, and ah swimming pool, that is quality ah life. Not putting snack box on top snack box, on top snack box, and put people and tell dem, vote, vote, vote. This is what instigates crime and criminal activity,

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

breakdown of family, breakdown of living conditions, that is what has happened. So do not stick yuh head down and say wait for de next election, rah, rah. Okay, fantastic, but you have to deal with people and give dem an opportunity to thrive.”

Sport: critical area. The policy of this Government since 2010 has been to open all facilities free to the population. Free, because it is “de people own, but under de PNM, under de Member for San Fernando East, secondary schools football yuh want to use yuh own stadium; pay \$5,000. Where a school going to get \$5,000 to pay to use a stadium? You want to do track and field, you have to pay to go. Granny want to do a lil exercise on some machine so that she would not get osteoporosis, she ha’ to go and pay. This Government say no pay, it belongs to you, go and use it and open it up, and all sporting facilities in Trinidad and Tobago, will be free to everyone, except the ones under de PNM, because de PNM former mayor Louis Lee Sing charging children to play tennis in King George V court, and when ah call him, ah say, bossman dah is not de policy of the Government, and even though you are in a different party, you are a member of the Government; the policy is free. A tournament, three days or something \$26,000 for children to play tennis, dat is de PNM and understand dat”.

Hon. Member: But he could be the leader of the PNM.

Hon. A. Roberts: No, no, no, whoever—“I going and geh back mih card and vote against he.”

But anyway, so now we see nine community sporting centres being constructed. Yes, the Eddie Hart in Orange Grove. No green space gone, 85 per cent “ah de” green space remains. Right now the population only uses about 30 per cent of the green space, but it will—all it will do is enhance the green space, nobody taking anything from the people. It will be enhanced for the people. People want to play cricket, go and play cricket, and “den you could have a shower, and leave yuh things in a locker, and yuh children could go and swim in a lil pool and get taught to swim there, so we doh drown when we go and lime”.

If you prefer to play squash, you could go and play squash. “If netball is yuh ting, go and play air-conditioned netball and then shower off, and go in yuh maxi and up de bus route and go home. All families could come and do whatever they want. You want to do yuh jogging track and walking track and exercise, machines and so on. You want to go in de gym and lift some weights, do some plyometrics, go and do that; is the people own. So do not believe the mischief about somebody coming and take—nobody cyar take anything that belongs to the people. It is for de people, by de people, of de people, enhance it for de people. So ladies doh

have to go and bend down behind tree and change, and go in maxi sweaty and so on. All dat done. So yes, it is building, as soon as dey get all de approvals for at least whatever the law is, dey go start, as soon as dey geh dat it will start, so doh frighten.”

And also all nine will be local contractors, with local money. Why is this important in the crime fight? Because you create jobs, when you use—that is why we are on a buy local, spend local, appreciate local campaign. Every dollar you spend of your own here, every dollar you use of your own and ANSA Merchant Bank, a local company, they raised \$495 million, and all the nine contractors who have been selected, all that tender are local contractors who hire local people, local consultants, local designers, local engineers. Why? Because when you spend a dollar here it goes around—the marginal propensity to consume of different people, the multiplier effect. One dollar spent in the domestic economy could lead to great increases in the overall GDP.

So we use our people. We appreciate our people. We respect our people. We create jobs and, therefore, we “doh need and should not need in years to come, that is why there is a sunset legislation, a Bail (Amdt.) Bill, because we will have so few criminals that we might not need—the Remand Yard might have breeze, might be able to play a cricket match in Remand Yard. Once we get the issues right and deal with the social issues, the economic issues, the educational issues, all ah dat is crime plan, and the Member for Diego Martin West cyar understand dat. He wants ah Vision 2030, borrow the Member for San Fernando East plan and just take off de label and stamp it back. We not taking off no label, we creating in each Ministry, innovative, creative ideas to serve the people in a better way.”

I am glad—I hear that the Member for Diego Martin West says the Member for Siparia is afraid to take action and it is in a report, Auditor General’s Report—the sport and I quote, a short quotation, Mr. Speaker. In that report:

The misspending and corrupt and personal practice in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs boggles the mind.

First and foremost, it was the Ministry of Sport, “dey eh hah no Youth Affairs since 2011”, but that is all right, he does not understand, and an Auditor General’s Report as everybody knows does not involve a Minister. It involves the Permanent Secretary, the policies. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy has policies, procedures, documentation and so on.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

I must commend that Auditor General because it is the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago that we got an Auditor General's Report now for now, a real time report. We waited on an Auditor General's Report from THA from 2003, 2004, 2005. We waited on an Auditor General's Report on Calder Hart when he was in NIB way back in 2004, 2005, but no big thing. We like that. But you see, what the Auditor General's Report does, talk about procedures, paper work and so on based on the Ministry's procedures. Ministers doh sign cheques, cyar give money, doh touch money, but then you see the Permanent Secretary would respond to the initial report and answer any concerns, and then the Ministry of Finance and the Economy would either say, boy, yuh do stupidness or aye, well done."

Well, "leh mih" read for the Member for Diego Martin West because after that report, there is a circular here from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Mr. Speaker, to the accounting officers and receivers of revenue, August 06, 2013 and it says:

You will recall that by Minister of Finance and the Economy Circular No. 4 dated June 18, 2013, you were directed to furnish the Comptroller of Accounts by July 22, 2013 your response to the observations—the observations—of the Auditor General on your 2012 financial statements.

I have received detailed responses from each of you and I am indeed gratified by the quality and timeliness of the responses, for this I wish to extend my sincere thanks.

As we come to the end of another financial year, I exhort you to continue to exercise the due care and diligence required in the expenditure and collection of public moneys, maintenance of accounting books on records and preparation of financial accounts.

So the Permanent Secretaries were given observations that were printed in a newspaper report and the want-to-be Prime Minister, the Member for Diego Martin West still talking about it, those observations were met, were answered, were queried to the satisfaction of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, the Auditor General and all the departments. So I wish him to stop misleading. I would use stronger language but the Speaker will pull me up for being unparliamentary. And you would not be so mischievous again also, because I know you are an honest, good woman, good principal. When is St. Francois all inclusive? "Yuh going?" Send tickets, right.

Now, the Dutch disease—for those who may not know, Dutch disease occurs in an economy that is blessed with gifts. Our economy, our people we are blessed with oil and gas. We were blessed with them since 1908. We thank the Member for San Fernando East, yes, “doh mind ah could give yuh licks, ah could also give yuh praise.” Because we give you praise when praise is due, for taking the hard decision to monetize the gas, to go into that direction, because the world economy went towards that and, therefore, we were presented with greater revenue. So good decision. Bad decision to put Calder Hart and “dem to run de money—because dey run with de money, but good decision to create de money was very good, and I give him credit for that.”

But what happens with the Dutch disease is when “yuh have ting easy, hard ting yuh doh focus on; too hard. Tourism: too hard to make all dem beach to compete with Bahamas, Barbados, Cayman Islands and St. Kitts, forgot that. Music: “oh gawd Jamaica and dem gone ahead we cyar compete with dem; forget dat.”

Manufacturing: alright, well, “yuh have a few manufacturers, but yuh know in Central America and so on, dey done gone with dat. Doh worry wid dat too much, because ting nice, ting coming easy, suck it out de ground and we doh have to worry. Dat is what happens with Dutch disease, but in a finite resource, Dutch disease go come back to haunt yuh, because eventually dat thing go run out, de niceness and yuh would have nothing.”

This Government has become aware of that, and the diversification in the economy is showing in the budget documents when you read the revenues, when the non-energy sector increases by some 18 per cent in their revenues and contribution to the budget, you know that the growth poles are working, you know that the diversification of the economy—you know that sport tourism is now working, you know that manufacturing is going, so therefore, we can ensure a sustainable future for all, and 2.6 per cent growth predicted for 2014 means greater jobs created, less potential to stand before a magistrate and ask for bail. That is the crime plan.

3.30 p.m.

“But yuh see—how much time I have, Mr. Speaker?”

Mr. Speaker: Twelve more minutes.

Hon. A. Roberts: “Ah goin good, man.” Now I could also deal with religious freedom and so on. We are dealing with the overall crime plan. This Government

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

respects, loves all religions—Orisha, Baptist, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, born again, Pentecostal, Rastafari. Everybody gets assistance financially and respect, consultation in the work because these churches do the work that we want done.

When parents are a little bit weak or they are single mothers and their time is spent working, churches and NGOs put in there and they help; they assist in guiding our young people. This Government, through the Ministry of the People and Social Development especially, has been helping all these NGOs to do their work.

Under the previous regime, boom, big money, budget \$49 billion and YMCA getting \$10,000 a year. That is not equitable. That will not help. This Government is helping, assisting all the NGOs who are doing the work, whether it is battered wives, whether it is children. We are taking care of our children. The Children Authority is coming, maybe too slow, but it is coming. It was not on the cards before.

We have the Children's Life Fund where we can help children who are sick. Over 82 children have received some form of assistance through that fund. We do not have Jerry Narace saying take, \$40,000 or \$60,000, and go with that. Your child needs \$1.2 million for a liver transplant, the PNM says take \$60,000. "How you could say that and then go and knock glass and eat shrimps and drink Scotch. How you could do that and people children suffering? You see the difference. Is not show time. Showtime, that is for Machel and Bunji, not for us here. Dey have no show time here. Is work time, people time; time for a little love and caring. So allyuh enjoy allyuh show time. I glad for allyuh."

Food security, another way to ensure when a population is well fed and can take care of themselves; when children are not hungry, they can achieve better. Their talents can be identified and they can achieve and move forward.

Under that regime, big boom, big money. What surpluses? Big thing; \$400 million for agriculture. This Government, under pressure, deficit financing; that Clico issue, VAT issue, backpay dealing with 73 wage negotiations of 2008, \$1.2 billion in food security. You understand the difference in price inflation down from 34 per cent, down to 10 per cent, 11 per cent. Overall inflation at about 5.6 per cent rather than 15 per cent.

You know, "dey asking" about the crime plan. That is the crime plan. Take away the need for people to steal. Take away the starving feeling from "dey" belly. Take away the feeling of a mother who cannot feed her child and giving them sugar water in Trinidad and Tobago, the land of milk and honey, the

Member for San Fernando East, I borrow his term,: milk and honey. There are people who cannot even see milk and honey unless they steal it. So this is the crime plan, make food affordable.

“The Prime Minister give a little gift to the nation, the Member for Diego Martin West and dem laugh. Wha da go do? Eh heh. You know what? Two hundred thousand poor people say thank you for that little bligh [*Desk thumping*] with the oil and the rice and so on because you see some of us doh know wha it is. Dey not in touch with the people. Dey doh know what it is to be hungry. I doh know wha it is to be hungry. I come from two lawyers. I was always good. But you know, when you talk to people, if you really like people, you could feel dey pain. You could feel dey hunger if you really like dem and you really listen. So I thank the Prime Minister for giving ah little bligh for people to get ah little ease because any little ease poor people get is appreciated.”

Well, the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the PNM, in an article, said that the Member for Siparia is afraid; she is afraid to deal with her Ministers and afraid to deal with corruption and afraid of everything. Okay. Well, let us look at the facts, Mr. Speaker. Mary King, former Minister, admitted she put her advisor on a committee to see about 128,000 things. She admitted she was in the building when tenders were opening. Fired! Dealt with! One time!

Let us look at the PNM. Calder Hart admitted to giving Ng Chin Pow, his brother-in-law a \$368 million contract. He was not fired; he was praised 45 times by the Member for San Fernando East and the PNM. He was praised and uplifted until he ran. So who is afraid? Who is afraid? The Prime Minister dealt with it, fired a Minister, boom, one time, for \$128,000; \$368 million, Calder Hart is the best.

Up to two months ago in this House, when the Member for Diego Martin West was talking about his Vision 2030, he boast about Calder Hart. “Calder Hart still geving praise now from the man who, in August 2003, went to San Fernando East and told him this Calder Hart man is ah dangerous man. Now he singing praises because they flip-flop because they want to come in power. Okay, well gallery, but de people watching. So allyuh show time.”

Section 34: a Member for St. Joseph. We now have a new Member for St. Joseph; he should thank the Member for Siparia because she dealt with the issue. A man “come” and mislead the Cabinet, she dealt with it. Fired! And did not have discipline, removed two from here and that is why St. Joseph is here because this Prime Minister “doh play. She doh make no joke with the people money, taxpayers’ money.”

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(1) please. Relevance.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, again I know you are coming to the end of your contribution, but please, try to link those points to the provisions in here.

Hon. A. Roberts: I am linking here because, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, we want the time to come when Calder Hart will have to apply for bail, where Rao will have to apply for bail, where Garcia will have to apply for bail. We wait with bated breath and ask the DPP when oh when, but we wait.

But when the PNM, Ken Julien went to invest in Bamboo Networks, Christine Sahadeo told him no. She was a Minister in the Ministry of Finance with respect to investments. She said do not invest in that company, it “eh” good; \$31 million went with Ken Julien and Christine Sahadeo was fired. But you are talking about the Member for Siparia being weak. Check yourself.

When the airport lights issue came up, under our administration, there were some questions about whether there was a process; whether the board existed and so on. The Prime Minister said, re-tender one time. Do it over. Squash it. Start over. Decisive leadership, but the Member for Diego Martin West saying “she frighten”.

But, in Tobago, when Orville London want to pay his cousin Anselm, big money, “the media make a big ting, he back off. He come back and pay \$486,000 to he cousin. The Member for Diego Martin West eh say nutten yet. Nutten wrong with dat. So family to family, is okay in PNM, but you have the audacity” to say that this Prime Minister is afraid to deal with corruption. I say not. She acts decisively.

He has not acted. Orville dancing in Tobago. I thought there was one leader of the PNM. I heard him say that; there is one leader. So why has that leader not dealt with that? Because we are dealing with the bail indictment amendment here. These are very serious situations because small man who take tin ah milk, we talking about locking dem up, but big man who give dey cousin \$500,000, we eh talking dat; we silent night.”

When Collin Partap, a MP here in our Government, there were allegations of misbehaviour, the Prime Minister investigated, got reports both sides. Within four days, removed, fired. Acted decisively! This Member for Diego Martin West has the audacity to say that the Prime Minister does not act. But when they had potential assault or slapping in Balisier House, 10 months later, we cannot get any issue whether it was right, wrong, left, he has done nothing. Ten months, “he cyar deal with one slap.”

Hon. Member: Which we?

Hon. A. Roberts: “He cyar deal with one slap. Eh?”

Hon. Member: Who we?

Hon. A. Roberts: “The country. He want to be Prime Minister. The country wants to know if you cannot deal with one slap, how you are going to deal with 400 murder?”

Miss Cox: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(1), please. What is the relevance? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, I think you have exactly two more minutes.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Just tie up and let us go.

Hon. A. Roberts: “I am afraid of you. Doh slap me. I really afraid. Allyuh protect me, please. Mr. Speaker, please, ah quaking.”

All in all, I can tell you, understand that this Government under the leadership of the decisive, strong, intelligent Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, will continue to fight crime at all levels—root causes, social issues, historical issues, opportunity issues, job creation and the national security issues with plans from all of the Ministers of National Security; whether it was Sandy, the Member for Chaguanas West, Emmanuel George, Gary Griffith, whoever comes with their plans will have full support and utilize to bring safety and security to Trinidad and Tobago.

But understand this, that the Member for Diego Martin West cannot call the Member for Siparia coward; cannot because as soon as there is a rumour that somebody will challenge him, he “drop” the penny and run. Cowardice is a trait that once it takes root, there is no recovery, no rebranding, no respite and sad for you Member for Diego Martin West, no respect.

This PM, our Prime Minister, my Prime Minister cannot be summoned to a meeting in Goodwood Park and instructed to call early elections. We will not flip-flop like the Member for Diego Martin North/East and all the PNM who, in 2008, supported this bail amendment. We will not flip-flop. We will keep fighting for all the citizens of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that will ensure and never return whatever form of the balisier, whether San Fernando East, Riley, Diego

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Martin West, or Laventille East/Morvant, you shall stay on that side because the people say, Great is the PNM! Great is the PNM and they shall remain right “dey”. God bless! Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I take the opportunity to enter this debate and I just want to, on behalf of all of us in this House, welcome back our colleague the Member for San Fernando East, [*Desk thumping*] who has had some very significant challenges, which he has fought and is still fighting and we wish that he will continue to improve and to get back as close to normalcy as possible in the shortest possible time. We on this side we are particularly happy to have our full complement to continue in the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I know that, given what has been said by my colleague, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, the debate has now been opened so wide that if I am to address all the issues he raised, I would have to speak until morning, but the Standing Orders do not permit that, so I would want to, just very briefly, respond to a couple confusing things that he said so that maybe some other Members of the Government who speak after will clarify for us.

He did try to demonstrate the existence of certain government policies, but from the tenor and content of his contribution, as the person leading off from the Government today, it appears as though there were two things which drove the Government’s position today. One, that we have come here to condemn the PNM—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: That is right. Always.

Dr. K. Rowley: Notwithstanding the matter before us where the Government claims it is seeking the Opposition’s support, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara has a strange way of courting. He also made a case, a very emotive case, while demonstrating his Government’s policy for the existence of an affirmative action policy of governance in Trinidad and Tobago, which means that the Government’s policy is what was not happening before is going to happen now because some people were getting and those who were not getting will get now and those who got before will not get. That is the policy the Government is pursuing and this is why he can come here today and speak like that about the PNM. If I had time to engage him on the facts of those matters, to show the nonsensical content of his composition, but I am not going there today, we have other time for that.

3.45 p.m.

He did something else too. He sought to make a case for persons who commit crime on the grounds that they were deprived or they were poor. So deprivation and poverty generate crime. That is the argument of a Minister of youth in Trinidad and Tobago.

Miss Mc Donald: Senseless.

Dr. K. Rowley: This is a frightening interpretation.

Miss Mc Donald: Senseless.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Mason Hall in Tobago; going to school barefoot, coming home and not finding anything to eat and have to wait until “dey light fire and cook something eight o’clock in de night” and we had the lowest level of crime in the country—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Ah ha.

Dr. K. Rowley:—but to have a Minister of Government in 2013, Minister of youth, who come here and spout an argument that crime in Trinidad and Tobago is justified on the basis of deprivation and poverty—*[Interruption]*

Miss Cox: Foolishness.

Hon. Member: “Doh worry with dat.”

Miss Cox: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley:—that was the content of his argument—*[Interruption]*

Miss Cox: He referred to certain constituents.

Dr. K. Rowley:—and he blamed the deprivation on the PNM—*[Interruption]*

Miss Cox: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley:—and he went further in his confused state of mind to say that the PNM was discriminating, and that is what has led to the existing affirmative action programme of the Government—the policy of affirmative action—because the PNM was only giving to its own, and that followed an argument that said under the PNM, crime was at the highest. So let us examine this logic: deprivation causing crime, the PNM was only giving onto its own and crime is highest under the PNM in PNM areas.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Not making sense.

Dr. K. Rowley: So how could that ever make sense?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Contradictory. Does not know what he is saying.

Dr. K. Rowley: How could that make sense? If the crime was caused by you depriving people—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That the PNM solved it.

Dr. K. Rowley:—you would think that in your areas, you would not have crime or those areas where you are responsible for the parliamentary seats, the crime would be lowest, but he starts out by saying that is where the crime is highest, and when the PNM is in office giving to its own, in the PNM's areas, the crime is highest, yet deprivation causes crime.

Mr. Roberts: Calder Hart!

Dr. K. Rowley: I have not—Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Hello!

Dr. K. Rowley: I sat there quietly and listened to his fulminations. I did not disturb him—[*Interruption*].

Miss Cox: Diatribe.

Dr. K. Rowley:—and I demand to speak in silence.

Mr. Speaker: You have my full protection.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Sir. So this is the kind of calabash mind and calabash brain that we are supposed to listen to.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(4).

Miss Cox: “Oh, please.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. I do not believe that you are referring to the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara with calabash brains. I am sure you are not referring to him because you know that would not be proper. So I would believe that you are—just making a general remark. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I am very clear in what I said, you know. I am very clear. So if there is a problem I can speak in French if I have to, but the language of Parliament is English.

Miss Mc Donald: Spanish! Spanish!

Dr. K. Rowley: So Mr. Speaker, the Member went on, Mr. Speaker, to even blame—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Just allow the Member to speak in silence.

Dr. K. Rowley:—he was so disposed to attacking the PNM that he did not even make sense. He went on to blame the Opposition for a plethora of elections in 2013. “We are about elections, plenty elections.” We did not call a single election. We took part in four elections in 2013, none of which was called by us whimsy. The Tobago House of Assembly Election was due by law; the local election was due by law. We had a promise from the Government it will be called on time, it was called, and there were two by-elections generated by them and their misconduct, yet he comes here today and seeks to describe the problem we are facing now and the Government’s dilemma and non-performance, by the Opposition being involved in elections. We had to listen to that today.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to get to the Bill that is before us. This Bill was here before the Christmas season, and the Bill requires a certain kind of majority in the Parliament. Maybe the Government has the required majority in this House and maybe they can get it elsewhere, but those of us who were present in this House, we entered the debate and we told the Government in no uncertain terms that we are not prepared to support what the Government has brought here. Clearly, the Government did not hear that or the Government intends that its purpose is not about fighting any crime, but to conduct a debate in this House knowing it will not get Opposition support but to use the opportunity to bash the PNM. We saw it this afternoon—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: “Yeah, exactly.”

Dr. K. Rowley:—that is why they were here. They know they do not have the support to come, but they come to waste Parliament’s time to behave the way he behaved here just now. Who has he edified or informed by that conduct a moment ago? I do not know.

Hon. Member: Do not worry.

Dr. K. Rowley: But let me take you, Mr. Speaker, to what this is all about. We at the onset in this country know that all citizens under the Constitution and provisions of our law and regulations are guaranteed the right to bail, and not just bail, but bail that is reasonable. That is part of the operations of the country enshrined in our laws.

Mr. Speaker, at an earlier time because of certain developments which we thought required a deeper involvement, this Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago,

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

using the requisite majority, decided that for some crimes we will allow this guarantee, this blanket guarantee of bail as a right to be abridged, so that for some crimes which we discussed and agreed upon, we will not have bail granted. In fact, at the very early points, murder and treason, those crimes, you get no bail at all. Later on we added—after parliamentary intervention—kidnapping for ransom and a couple other crimes saying that because of what the society is experiencing, we think that the blanket requirement for bail can be amended, and we satisfied ourselves that we have done that.

This Government, stumbling around like blind man's buff—year one, year two, year three—and making no progress with respect to coming to grips with the crime scourge in the country, decided to revisit the granting of bail, and to come back to the Parliament with a whole basket of offences for which bail can now, if it is passed, not be granted. We said upfront we are not prepared to support that.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that the Government's main spokesmen to date have not gone—particularly my friend from D'Abadie/O'Meara—through the items. Let me walk you through, Mr. Speaker, Part II of the offences that will now be added to no bail conditions, and I want to explain to you, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleague from the other place who is here visiting us today, no bail here means automatic jail. That is what it means.

No bail sounds good when you are annoyed about crime, “Okay, do not give any bail”—see the other side “eh”—it means you are going to jail for about four months without trial, without nothing; that guarantees that once you are charged for one of these offences. It is against that background you have to look at this. You get yourself charged in one of these offences, you have at least four months jail to make—minimum—open to abuse if you manage to get yourself charged by somebody who is malicious toward you. That is why in Parliament, we limit the number of offences which will fall in these categories. But up comes a Government that is stumbling and bumbling, and is holding out to the population that the solution to the crime problem is no bail because apparently, according to the Government, they know that the bulk of the crime being committed are being committed by persons on bail.

Now, that argument was raised at the time when we made the first amendment that persons on bail were committing certain offences, and we should not grant bail for those offences. We dealt with that already. You have come back now with all of these—listen to them—possession of imitation firearm in pursuance of any criminal offence. The Firearms Act is comprehensive, but you see it fit that if

even an offence is committed with an imitation firearm, you get no bail. So a child with an imitation firearm, a young person, a youth or whoever it is—I think those things are banned. Are they? Toy guns are banned?

Hon. Member: Ummm.

Dr. K. Rowley: So a young person with an imitation firearm for whatever reason could find himself being jailed immediately; make a jail for whatever reason.

Then you come, larceny of a motor vehicle: now, Mr. Speaker, larceny of a motor vehicle, no bail. Now, that is a serious offence, but is that really an offence for which you want to grant no bail? Motor car theft is a serious offence, but do you want to put everybody who gets no bail—let me tell you what that is. In 2013, there were 1,047 reports of larceny of a motor vehicle; only 48 of those reports have been detected. So is it the offence? Is the problem really to give no bail to the 48 or try to find the other 1,000? What is the problem we are trying to solve here?

So according to this Government and my friend from D'Abadie/O'Meara, the problem that we are trying to solve is to make sure that these 48 persons, who you would have detected as having committed the crime of larceny of a motor vehicle that they get no bail, they go straight to jail, but you are not really concerned that the real problem is 1,000 of those reports have seen no detection—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley:—and this is where the Government is missing the point.

Receiving stolen goods: so if somebody passes—somebody receives a bag of cabbage from somebody in the market from praedial larceny, no bail. Is that what we really want to do, Mr. Speaker?

And then, gang membership: we have an anti-gang legislation that went to committee in this House; comprehensively dealt with from one Government to another. Under the previous government, we started preparing that piece of legislation. This Government came into office, we worked together and we finished it and we created what we thought was a comprehensive response to gang activity in its totality. Never mind that, the Government went and abused the law one week after it was passed into law, and made a fool of themselves with an emergency that could not do anything, but create problems for the country and wreck the economy. But to come to Parliament to make gang membership—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: From (f) to (l).

Dr. K. Rowley:—an unbailable offence. We have already dealt with gang membership under the Anti-Gang Act, and we dealt with it comprehensively by the Parliament doing what we could have done best and balanced the law. Nothing has changed in the last six months. As a matter of fact, I do not know that there are 10 people before the courts. In fact, I think there is only one person before the court charged under the anti-gang legislation and the Attorney General, at the time, when he was shown how they had miscondacted themselves and he tried to blame the law he said that they are going to come back to Parliament and amend the law. Have you seen him since? [*Laughter*]

Since the emergency, when they tried to extricate themselves from their folly of the declaration of the emergency, we have the assurance of the Attorney General that the Government will come to the Parliament post-haste to amend the law to make the law no longer offensive because it was the law to blame. We have not seen him since—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Giving out toys.

Dr. K. Rowley:—playing Santa Claus. But if it is that there was an amendment to be had on that law to give the agencies what they said was missing, the Government has not come here with it. Why not? It is the Attorney General that said that there was something to be done there to improve the police performance. We have not seen him since, the reason being he was not talking anything sensible because the law did not do anything. The police had no evidence and they locked up people, but the Government was hiding behind that: “It is the law’s fault.” That is the kind of calabash argument we get from the Government.

And then, of course, a number of the provisions are to do with gang activity. Provision (h) of clause 5, preventing a member from leaving a gang. What does that mean; closing a door, telling them do not leave, building a fence, asking them to stay with you because you are afraid to stay? What does that mean? How broad can that be?

4.00 p.m.

So you can charge somebody for preventing somebody from leaving, and that person who prevented the person from leaving, under this hugely wide ambit, that person can now go and get no bail. But the anti-gang legislation itself is rooted in no bail. If you are to be charged under the anti-gang legislation for gang activity, it already has in it no-bail provisions.

So who is the bright brain who drafted this? It has to be somebody who knows absolutely nothing about what the existing law has in it, who would have drafted this and get the Government to come back to Parliament to waste Parliament time, trying to make unailable what is already unailable. And then you come now:

“participation in criminal activity in association with gang;”

Is that not already covered by the anti-gang legislation? I suspect that the Minister is being led up a garden path you know.

There is something about you that make me laugh. [*Laughter*] I do not want to lose your humour, but I am putting you on notice, Mr. Speaker, that the first Minister of National Security of this Government was brought to this House and made to tell this House a number of falsehoods about Resmi Ramnarine, and it is only when the Government was exposed by something driven by the Prime Minister that he was made to come back here and apologize to the House and said, “I didn know, is dem did tell meh so, yuh kno”. I am putting you on notice now that you are walking that same road because I do not know who would have drafted this and caused you to be coming here to support it as something good.

Because if you are going to come here, Mr. Speaker, and talk about:

“participation in criminal activity in association with gang;”

should be unailable, when we already have anti-gang legislation for which bail is to be denied if you are so charged. What is the story? What is this? And then you come, Mr. Speaker, after recruiting gang members—and like this person is doing this deliberately, because the gang provisions are interspersed between all the other things. Is that deliberate or accidental? Or as they were writing it, whatever comes to their minds they write? So article (f) is about gang, article (g) is about gang, article (h) is about gang, then you come down, article (l) is about gang, and then article (n) is:

“demanding money with menaces;”

And you know, you get the impression that they did not know exactly what they were doing, because article (bb), which comes after (z), when the alphabet ended at (z), because (z) was incest, so that article (bb) is:

“kidnapping for ransom;”

Mr. Speaker, I know sometimes you doze off in the Parliament, [*Laughter*] but I suspect that you might have been awake. Maybe you do.

Mr. Speaker: No, I do not. I do not.

Dr. K. Rowley: Okay, right. Well then, Mr. Speaker, then you would know then that kidnapping for ransom passed through this House—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley:—and has already been deemed to be an activity, which if you are charged with that activity, you are going to be denied bail. Mr. Speaker, what exactly is the purpose? Is it the length of time? Is it the length of time, or is it the nature of the offence? That is another question we want to ask the Government. Is it the nature of the offence that is sufficiently heinous that it requires a denial of bail, or is it that something is happening now and the numbers caused you to want to do it? Because my friend from D’Abadie/O’Meara made a big “to do” in the end, saying that, “Well, okay, let us do it. It is only for three years.” Well if it is a heinous crime now, in three years’ time it will stop being heinous? If you were confident that that crime warrants no bail, because it is a heinous crime that should not be tolerated in our society and if anybody commits that crime they should be denied bail and sent to make four months in jail immediately, how is that going to change in 2018? But of course that sunset is a sop.

And then you know, Mr. Speaker:

“harbouring or concealing gang members;”

As broad as that—you do that and you go to jail, automatic jail with no bail. Does that apply to the parent, the grandparent, the friend, the innocent who does not know the person is a gang member and house them, and fete them and secure them in a building, and then you suddenly find yourself—because police turns up and all of you going down because you are harbouring “big nose” or “big foot” as a gang member, and all of you going down with no bail? Is that what it means? We are being asked to pass that into law and to put everybody at risk. Right.

So when we pass this everybody who knows anybody, or who does not know anybody, you have to ask them first, “Are you a gang member?” And ask everybody in their family and be satisfied that they are not involved in a gang, otherwise you, for harbouring them in the house by opening the door when they came in, right, you now could be harbouring them. Because the police, when they come they are not trying you; there is no trial by the police. The police will figure, this gang member is here and you are here, and that means you are harbouring them, everybody gone down.

Like now, grandson has marijuana or cocaine, the police comes, granny “gone down”. Everybody goes down especially if you live in areas that are stigmatized

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

as crime hot spots where everyone goes down, but if it happens elsewhere and you are privileged, you might not even be arrested at all because in this country you have been working very hard to establish that there are two laws in this country: one for the fortunate and one for the poor. This Government has gone out of its way to establish that, and want us to pass a law that says:

“habouring or concealing”—of—“gang members;”

How do you determine that?

We have dealt with this already with protections under the Anti-gang Act: “recruiting gang members;”

I would like to ask Members of the Government, have we not dealt with that as a problem? Have the police exhausted what is in the existing law? I have not seen that, because I have not seen any references to cases where the police have been vigorously taking people to court and being hamstrung by not having the ability to do better because the law did not say that they could do this what is being asked here—a whole series of things.

There is a body of people outside there making a case that buggery should be removed from our law books as a crime. The Government is saying, “Yes, we are going to do that”, but then the Government comes here and says, “Buggery is no bail”. So which is the real Government policy on buggery? Is it that you are really going to make it not a crime, or are you going to now make it non-bailable? We do not know because we are hearing from all sides.

And then, Mr. Speaker:

“assault occasioning actual bodily harm;”

Now that sounds, I mean, heinous. It can cover chopping somebody with a cutlass. It can also cover having long fingernails and scratching somebody. *[Interruption]* If two women get into a fight they tend normally to pull the hair and scratch. You know women, the first thing they do is pull the hair, and then if they have long fingernails or short fingernails *[Crosstalk]* they tend to want to scratch. So if you assault somebody and the person is scratched, you have in fact, in that assault, occasioned bodily harm. No bail for that, Mr. Speaker?

Dr. Moonilal: Member for Fyzabad, you know that.

Dr. K. Rowley: No bail? I will advise my friend from Oropouche East, not to make any reference to what Fyzabad suffered, because I could easily divert and digress into what is called perjury.

Hon. Member: It was not true.

Dr. K. Rowley: And I would not have to call his name.

Dr. Moonilal: You cannot

Dr. K. Rowley: I cannot? The record is there.

Dr. Moonilal: The record, the day—[*Inaudible*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, that is the basis and those are the majority of the offences here; this whole two pages of offences to become unailable is what the Government has brought us here for. That is what it is. And we have said, “You all could not all be serious”. You could not be serious, because for a start, most of it does not make any sense.

Secondly, we told you we are not supporting it, but you want to hammer us home. Look at the behaviour of our colleague from D’Abadie/O’Meara this afternoon, for a Member of the Government who wants the Opposition’s support on a matter—“beat them down with a big stick”.

Hon. Member: Terrible.

Dr. K. Rowley: And as if somehow we have some fear of Utharo Rao and Calder Hart and Karen Tesheira and Ken Julien. And by the way, he has a habit of coming to this Parliament and shouting Professor Ken Julien’s name without any respect.

Miss Mc Donald: Uh hmm.

Dr. K. Rowley: Okay, fine. I want to say again to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, there are few citizens in Trinidad and Tobago who have made a better and more fundamental contribution to our development like Ken Julien. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: That is right. That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: And while we have the likes of the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara coming here every day—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley:—bawling, “Ken Julien! Ken Julien!”, making him out to be a criminal, the governments of East Africa, one by one, have been seeking him out to be their advisor in development of their energy sector. That is what is happening.

So he is hauling him in every single day as though he committed some crime, and the Attorney General is mashing his heel, going with it to the courthouse because as far as they are concerned, Ken Julien is a criminal, but to the rest of the world he is somebody who they need urgently to help them develop their country the way he has helped to develop Trinidad and Tobago.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: You understand. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley: So let them go ahead, but I do not have to defend Professor Ken Julien, he can defend himself. I just find his behaviour nauseous, obnoxious and of no effect.

Mr. Speaker, so we are in a bloodbath right now. How many people died in the last seven days?

Miss Mc Donald: Twenty-two.

Dr. K. Rowley: Twenty-two, and the Government thinks that the way to deal with that is to come here and grant no bail. I have in my possession, Mr. Speaker, the latest crime statistics from the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch of the police service. And I want to tell the Government, the problem you are facing has nothing to do with any comparison to 2006/2008. It has to do with your stewardship now overseeing it, your actions in the last three years to have brought it ahead and the potential for any success down the road.

So when we look at last year's performance: murders, 406 for which detection was 51; larceny of motor vehicles 1,047, detection 48. But interestingly enough, there is a heading called Narcotics Offences, 474 reported, 474 solved. Try and figure that one out. Who reports narcotics offences to the police? The police. And whatever they deal with, they solve. So 474 reported, 474 solved; take comfort in that.

But let us go to the total serious crimes for which 18 per cent is the detection rate—18 per cent, but if you look at Port of Spain Division, which is the capital city and environs, detection rate 6 per cent for serious crimes which run from murder, woundings, shootings, rape, kidnapping, burglaries, robberies, general larceny, motor vehicle larceny, larceny from dwelling house, narcotics. That is the plethora of what is called serious offences. Six per cent detection rate in the capital city.

Miss Mc Donald: Imagine that.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, all those who are charged with the responsibility of protecting us from criminals should hang their heads in shame, [*Desk thumping*] and no amount of spin and presentation of false information could change that—6 per cent detection. And it is worse than 6 per cent, because the number of reported crimes does not represent the total number of crimes committed, because people have stopped reporting some of these crimes. If all was taken into account as committed, it would be way below 6 per cent, and the Government thinks that the way to solve that is to grant no bail.

Hon. Member: Lock them up and throw them away.

Dr. K. Rowley: No bail when they cannot even figure out who you are looking for, and hang who you cannot even arrest and charge and convict. That is the Government's direction—6 per cent in the capital city.

And, of course, we go to Western Division, which is the main residential area outside Port of Spain: Diego Martin, St. James—Western Division. In the Western Division, the detection rate is 11 per cent—11 per cent, and in the Northern Division it is 16 per cent, and in North Eastern Division, 7 per cent. And the only areas where there has been any reasonable detection level, south-western, eastern, where it is 45 and 48, and the next in line is southern, 24 per cent.

All the other divisions—abysmal detection rates. Until we do things to address that aspect of the problem, we are spinning top in mud and playing politics with foolishness, when our lives are at risk. [*Desk thumping*] That is what is happening here.

4.15 p.m.

We opened this debate today in 2014, with a Minister of Government speaking for 75 minutes, and I draw your attention to what he addressed. He spent half his time talking about PNM's political party business in Balisier House. I heard Balisier House more often than I heard about the police, than bail. That is the kind of nonsense that is going on in this country. So, with an overall 18 per cent detection, where for the capital city, Northern/Western Division, you are under 10 per cent, we are here talking about Balisier House and PNM internal elections. Of course, sustained attack on the PNM, let me tell you what the PNM did.

When we saw the Government floundering and trying to tell the country that the problem the Government had was that the Opposition was not fighting crime,

not for the first time, as Leader of the Opposition, we offered—and on that occasion we were accepted—the Government direct and indirect support from the Opposition Bench. We went to the Government; we met at Prime Minister's Office. We went there, not just to talk about crime and how heinous crime is—we know that—and how hopeless it looked; we know that. We went there with specific proposals which we think, if some of them are accepted, in toto or in part, that the Government has our support to get certain things done, because there is no one switch that you flick to fight crime. The fight against crime is a multifaceted fight, coming from a number of directions, focusing on the one objective, which is to give law-abiding citizens the upper hand on the criminals. So we sat with the Government.

We are not those in Opposition who said we are not here to make the Government look good. That is not the PNM's position. In fact, I stood right here in this place in June of 2010 and said to the Prime Minister, "You are a new Prime Minister, I am a new Opposition Leader. It is a new era. Maybe we can do things differently in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago." And I gave the assurance to the country and to the Government in particular, that anything that is in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, you can count on the support of the Opposition, and we will withhold our support only when we think that it is not in the public interest. As we are doing now, withholding our support for this excursion into a basket of criminal offences which you want to make "unbailable", which means that you already have problems at Remand Yard, you want to multiply it while not addressing the problem you set out to solve.

But we went to the Government when we thought we could help, and we said point one: it is the police that is responsible for protecting our citizens; not the teachers, not the doctors, not the garbage collectors. It is the police service, and therefore we start with this: management of the police service. That was last year. I heard a couple of days ago, the spokesperson for the Second Division of the police service making wide-ranging statements that it is the view of the police service—the majority of them who are in Second Division—that the management of the police service is in shambles and the police service morale is low and they are virtually, ineffectually in disarray. That is not the PNM talking. That is Mr. Ramesar, who is authorized to speak for Second Division officers.

We said to the Government then, "We acknowledge what we acknowledged in October 2010." In October 2010, we sat here; we came to this House to select a commissioner of police. At the end of a long, drawn-out, convoluted, nonsensical process, expensive at all, and we said then, and I agreed then, I said to the Prime

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Minister, “This process has to go.” The Prime Minister agreed then and is on *Hansard* saying, as we appointed the commissioner and deputy in October 2010, “The Government will come back to the Parliament immediately and we will address this matter of the appointment of a commissioner of police.” That has not happened.

So when we went to the Government, our first item was offering to the Government our support to come to the Parliament immediately, because our proposals were immediate, medium-term and long-term. Among those things for immediate action, especially since we had an acting commissioner and we were in the process of appointing another commissioner, because the Government got rid of the commissioner that the Government selected in 2010—in midterm, the Government took action to get rid of the commissioner and deputy commissioner, triggering the process of appointment again. We said, “Let us go to Parliament immediately”, abolish that ridiculous system which we all agreed is not working, and let us put in place a simple arrangement under the Police Service Commission and any other involvement we want to put, so that we can properly, in a sane and inexpensive and immediate manner, appoint a commissioner of police who would have tenure and could take charge of his men and proceed to fight crime in this country.

What has the Government done to date? Absolutely nothing! The Government is here, quite happy to keep extending the commissioner of police term, “chirrup, chirrup, chirrup”. We have a “chirrup, chirrup, chirrup” commissioner, who is not sure he would be commissioner next month or next year—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Tomorrow!

Dr. K. Rowley:—and cannot properly focus on building the police service in a sustained way, putting in place programmes that he is confident he would be there to execute, and looking and raising his men and women in a way that he can guide them to a point because, “I will be there to guide you for another year or two”. No, no, he is on a six-month basis. What has prevented the Government from taking the steps within the system to have this matter, which they agreed we should do, but which they do not intend to do? I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you why the Government has taken no action on that.

I crave your indulgence to read a letter for you. Before I read the letter—this is after the Government did not like what they met, and no government has to like what they meet from a previous government. They have the authority to change it, to stop it, to expand it, to abort it; governments can do that. What this

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

Government did was to take steps to prevent the country from having the benefit of information gathering, gathering of information on criminal activity, trying to find out up front, before they strike, who the criminals are and to be able to bring them to heel in a manner protective of our interest. The Government dismantled what they met. Let me explain to you just one facet of that dismantling, Mr. Speaker; and I crave your indulgence to read copiously from this letter.

It is a letter dated October 15, 2010. I must say, I am not using parliamentary privilege to read this. I read this letter on a public platform in St. Augustine a few months ago. I have received a pre-action protocol over it, and I have since responded to that. I have not heard anything about it since, but I want to put this on the parliamentary record for the historians whenever they come to study our history. For those who “doh” understand what has happened to us, I want you, Mr. Speaker, to listen very carefully to this letter. It is:

“To: The Honourable Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar

From: Senior Superintendent (Ag.) Surajdeen Persad

Date: 15th October 2010

Subject: Security Intelligence Agency (SIA)...

Sir,”

Now, I did not know Mrs. Persad-Bissessar was a Sir. [*Laughter*] And, you know, habits die hard. This is a mid-level police officer, a senior superintendent, who should know that he should be reporting to his superior and not to the Prime Minister. But he is here reporting to the Prime Minister, but a Freudian slip—he thinks he is reporting to his normal reporter, to Sir, so he writes, “Sir”, and he is a public servant, police officer. He knows what he is doing, so he is covering the back of his end.

So he says:

“At 12.15 pm on Monday 11 October, 2010”—listen to the time, Mr. Speaker—“At 12.15 p.m. on Monday 11, October 2010, I was contacted by the Honourable Prime Minister Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar at Special Branch Headquarters, Port of Spain (POS) via telephone number 624-2358. The Prime Minister voiced her concerns...”

Now, this is the Prime Minister, not voicing her concerns to the commissioner of police or to the Police Service Commission. She found Mr. Persad, down there in the police service, and Mr. Persad knows that it is improper for him to be

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

reporting in this way to the Prime Minister. He covers himself by saying, “I did not call her. She called me. I was contacted by the Prime Minister.”

The Prime Minister starts her tenure with that. That is how she started out. He said:

“The Prime Minister voiced her concerns over the illegal activities of Mr. Nigel Clement, Director of the Security Intelligence Agency (SIA),...”

So here it is the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, quite rightly, quite properly, has concerns about the head of the Security Intelligence Agency. What does she do, as head of the National Security Council? She does not go to the council with that, does not go to the commissioner of police. She goes down the system to an officer who is prepared to violate—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Member for Diego Martin West, has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I was reading, Mr. Persad is reporting:

“The Prime Minister voiced her concerns over the illegal activities of Mr. Nigel Clement, Director of the...(SIA), whom she said was in the process of transcribing tapes that contained her private conversations with persons. The Prime Minister instructed that the matter be investigated and steps be taken to stop Mr. Clement from carrying out his illegal activities.”

So here it is the Prime Minister is in a position to say that Mr. Clement, the head of the SIA, is doing these things, and the way the Prime Minister, head of the National Security Council, dealt with it, is to go to Mr. Persad, an acting senior superintendent. I raise this, Mr. Speaker, to let you know and to alert you and the country that the reason the Government has taken no steps so far, as it can, to have a proper commissioner of police put in place, and is happy to have this extension going on with this 10-day commissioner, is because it is the Government’s intention to make Mr. Persad the Commissioner of Police.

Hon. Members: “Awww, Loord!” [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. K. Rowley: You could “aww” as much as you like, because after this letter, the further details of which I will go into after the tea break, the next thing you know, very quietly and very surreptitiously, this officer, who on this first paragraph alone should not be considered, are you aware he is now in charge of the SIA?

Hon. Member: What?

Dr. K. Rowley: This said officer, against whom the Opposition has made these disclosures about this improper behaviour, and before we go off I can tell you, I have a list here which I will read out when I come back after tea, of all the persons who have been highly trained and who were there to gather information for the country, to protect us from criminals, and for whom they have all been fired on the advice of this officer to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think it is a good time for us to suspend for tea. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition and Member for Diego Martin West. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before we took the break I was in the process of quoting liberally from this letter from senior superintendent, (acting) Surajdeen Persad to the hon. Prime Minister. A response which he pointed out was requested by her from him, and I am quoting here again, Mr. Speaker:

“It was reported that the tapping of phones belonging to present Government Ministers and the Prime Minister is still being carried out at the SIA under the watchful eyes of Mr Clement, for the Opposition People’s National Movement. The reports are also shared with the former Head of the Special Anti Crime Unit, Brigadier Peter Joseph and Head of the SSA Mr Michael Maxima.”

Note, Mr. Speaker, he is saying it is reported, that is being done. Reported by whom? We do not know. But he is reporting this to the Prime Minister, and notice the names he called there: Brig. Peter Joseph, who we know has been fired and the public allegation with the Prime Minister; he was the head of the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister publicly accused him of

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

what is written here in this letter by Mr. Persad and he was fired and the State has since paid substantial amounts of compensation to Brig. Joseph for that wrongful dismissal at the behest of the Prime Minister.

Brig. Joseph was no ordinary citizen. In this fight against crime he was the head of the Special Anti-Crime Unit. That is how he was dealt with; fired at the request of this police officer at the special branch who advised the Prime Minister that he was working for the PNM. Then he goes on to tell the Prime Minister:

“There are approximately one hundred and thirty (130) persons employed at the SIA.”

—and note this is October 15, 2010.

“There are approximately one hundred and thirty (130) persons employed at the SIA. Out of that total, six persons are attached to the Intercept Suites Unit, where the tapping of telephones takes place under Mr. Clement’s instructions. They are supporters of the PNM and extremely loyal to Mr. Clement...The six...Intercept officers are”—and he names them—

- “(a) Susan Jeremiah...
- (b) Anna Melville...
- (c) Conrad Britton...
- (d) Christopher Ferguson...
- (e) Ann Charles...and
- (f) Arlene Victor...”

And they all were fired.

He goes on:

“In addition to the above, the following persons are very loyal to Clement and still maintain close links with the PNM and occupy senior and influential positions at SIA.”

So, he is confirming that these are senior and influential persons, and I dare add myself, highly trained at State’s expense in the fight against crime, and there are 25 persons here and he names every one of them as having links with the PNM.

- “(a) Alana Humphrey,
- (b) Denise Farray-Constantine,

- (c) Clint Eligon,
- (d) Leon Smart,
- (e) Lenore Winchester,
- (f) Carla Richards,
- (g) Beverly Hinds,
- (h) A. Kwesi,
- (i) Rachel Fraser,
- (j) Malika Thompson,
- (k) Carlene Haynes,
- (l) Diane Martin-John,
- (m) Rennette Feracho,
- (n) Martin Phillip,
- (o) Hezron Granville,
- (p) Sherry Ann Tang Yew,
- (q) Bentley Butcher,
- (r) Bevon Joseph,
- (s) Erica Bereton,
- (t) Lesliean Charles,
- (u) Glen Niles,
- (v) Laura Francois,
- (w) Janice Lewis”—

one person he is—“(unable to confirm name)”—but that person is a—
“Surveillance Supervisor”—and

“(y) Jason (unable to acquire last name)—Surveillance”—supervisor.

These 25 people, and he goes on to make comments. Under comments he says:

“The situation at the SIA warrants immediate attention. If sensitive information from that unit is allowed to be clandestinely sent to leading members of the PNM, it would undermine the legitimate constituted Government of Trinidad and Tobago and ultimately lead to its downfall.”

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Recommendations—listen very carefully, Mr. Speaker to the recommendations as recommended here by this officer Persad, October 15, 2010, cast your mind back to what has happened since then with these officers.

“The Director of SIA as well as the persons mentioned at paragraphs (4) and (5) of the report should be relieved of their positions immediately,”—and the reason for that—“in order to safeguard the flow of...information to the PNM and...other persons linked to Mr. Clement.”

Not to fight crime. To safeguard information reaching the PNM as alleged by him, that they are PNM. I recall the vote in this country is secret for a reason, but here is this mid-level officer, not reporting to his commissioner, reporting to the Prime Minister, recommending a whole plethora of officers—out of 130 he extracted 25 that he determined to be PNM and recommended their dismissal. Mr. Speaker, they were all duly dismissed. And then recommendation (b), and listen to one now, I want you to listen very carefully:

“An interim management committee headed by SIAs Reshmi Ramnarine”—and he points out she is a—“(Technical Operator)...”—but she is to head an interim management committee—“and Carlton Dennie (Surveillance Operator), Special Branch...Inspector Doolam Rekha...and Kerron Ganpat...should be appointed immediately to protect the assets of the State”—under Mrs. Julie Brown—“until Mrs Julie Brown completes her assignment...”

So, now we know where Reshmi came from and on whose advice. This was the police officer up at Special Branch making allegations against people about their right and how to vote, that he knows that they are PNM, recommending that they be fired and that Reshmi Ramnarine head the SIA.

Mr. Speaker, as preposterous as that sounds that action was taken by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. That is where the dismantling of the state security services started and, of course, he goes on. And you may recall this letter I am reading here is written to the Prime Minister by a mid-level officer out of the line of reporting. The same thing happened; we have not yet got an answer as to how Julie Brown managed to have written to the Prime Minister, telling her how qualified Reshmi was. It was Julie Brown’s letter to the Prime Minister where we first heard Reshmi had degree, she had Bachelors, she was a manager in the SIA and so on; written by Julie Brown to the Prime Minister about the same time.

Julie Brown is still heading a department in the SIA, and this officer who is behaving in this way is high up and heading in the SSA, and as I speak to you now

I am duly informed that he is abroad being trained in a crash programme of training, because as I said a while ago, it is the Government's intention to make this particular officer Commissioner of Police, after this conduct and what has happened in the last three years. I am putting this Government on notice today, that perish any thought of making this officer Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago, the people of Trinidad and Tobago will not tolerate it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say that the spy equipment should be handed over to the technical unit at Special Branch. You must know Special Branch always felt that they were in competition with the SIA and what the SIA got they should get; because we have Special Branch we do not want nothing else. [*Interruption*] A Special Branch man is advising the Prime Minister to take the equipment from the SIA and give it to the Special Branch. That has duly been effected. The SIA has been gutted, Special Branch is now in control, that is why Mr. Persad is in charge in the SSA and, of course, you know what happened there, information gathering about criminal conduct has gone to hell.

The criminals are now operating completely without any information being collected by the State to bring them under control. The country is blind to criminal conduct. That is why the detection rate is 6 per cent and 7 per cent. It is not magic. If you have done this with the state's information-gathering system, regardless of how you feel, you took a political decision, victimized the officers politically, and right now they have selected people of their choice, put them in place and are now trying to train them, and that is why this hiatus is seeing what we are seeing here now. "It eh no magic." Not that God has lost confidence in us. We have stopped managing the information-gathering system in this country. We have destroyed the system in this manner as contained in this letter. Advice given, the advice taken. Recommendation (d):

"The Head of the SSA, Mr. Michael Maxima should be immediately relieved of his position and replaced with Mr. Taradath Harrilal, a former Police Inspector at the Special Branch..."

So, Special Branch wants to build this empire at the expense of the SIA.

"Harrilal is an experienced officer in intelligence gathering and management of intelligence and served as The Personal Escort for Mrs. Oma Panday during the"—previous—"UNC"—administration.

So, this officer's idea of the qualification of Mr. Harrilal is that he was the personal escort for Mrs. Oma Panday and on this basis Mr. Maxima is to be

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

removed from his job. Highly trained specialist officers, not just trained by Trinidad and Tobago, you know; trained by input from the United States, Holland, France and the United Kingdom, just dismissed them, deemed them to be PNM, and that is how it went. That has happened.

And, of course, his last recommendation, and this is a very important one. You would hear our friend, the Minister, talking about the great NSOC, they have created NSOC. Recommendation (e):

“Steps should be taken to merge SIA, SSA, SAUTT Intelligence Unit and the CIU into a new...entity”—called—“(National Security Intelligence Agency)”. That is NSOC. It did not come word for word, but that is how NSOC got its birth—and, “that new unit should be headed by Mr. Keron Ganpat”—and—“...he should be assisted by Mrs. Julie Brown of the SIA.

So now you know, Mr. Speaker, how Trinidad and Tobago went about treating with its intelligence gathering infrastructural platforms when the Government changed in 2010, and now you know why today without fear of contradiction, we could say that the intelligence gathering unit in this country is way below par and that the police service is playing blind man’s buff. We are spending a lot of money and a lot of time listening to Government’s spin, Government lies and Government agents telling us that we are experiencing a fall in crime.

That is what it is. And every recommendation here from this letter in 2010 was carried out by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, head of the National Security Unit. Add to that, our good friend is the fourth national security Minister. Four national security Ministers, an average of one every nine months—*[Interruption]*—and this is only one facet of what they have interfered with. And, of course, in some instances they seek to replace them with some things that had not worked and some persons who are ill-qualified, and in some cases nothing at all. Nothing at all.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I told you we went to the Government with 10 proposals. Proposal number one was, let us fix the problem with the appointment of a Commissioner of Police. The Government listened to us very—I must say we were treated very cordially at the Prime Minister’s Office. She offered us juice; she offered us water; she spoke in very quiet tones. Our colleagues—we were there not as politicians, but we were there as officeholders in Trinidad and Tobago having a common purpose. I sent a team; the Government sent a team and they continued talking.

What has happened? The Government sets out to blame the Opposition. While doing this and other things, they believe they can hide themselves behind blaming the Opposition, as if somebody elected the Opposition to run the country; an Opposition which voted for the Government budget in 2010—it never happened here in this country before—saying, “we come to you, not on bended knees, but out of an interest of our constituents and the rest of the country, we want to work with you”.

What have they brought to Parliament? We went to them. We said the police service is the key. There is waste, there is corruption and there may be need for changes and expansion in some areas. We want an immediate performance audit of the police service. That was item number two. Have you seen them deal with that, Mr. Speaker, a performance audit of the police service? What we are hearing now is the Police Service Commission in today’s papers—Police Service Commission threatening the Commissioner of Police for some aspect of non-cooperation. A performance audit of the police service is required to know what we have to fix and how the manpower is being deployed and how the resources in the hundreds of millions of dollars are being used.

The Government listened to us very carefully and did nothing. And then, of course, we spoke about the need for information gathering because we acknowledge that they have dismantled the system, and we are saying no amount of spin could save us. We have to re-establish a proper information-gathering system with effective mechanisms. A 6 per cent detection in the city of Port of Spain, an 11 per cent detection in western, and 7 per cent elsewhere, that is proof that we do not have information as to who is committing the crime.

As I speak to you now, Mr. Speaker, in this very small island there are hundreds of murderers walking amongst us, going by Jacqueline’s and buying patisserie patties like us; going to the Hilton. We “doh” know who is who—
[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: The Hyatt.

Dr. K. Rowley:—because we do not have the information.

Miss Cox: Going to the Hyatt.

Dr. K. Rowley: Item number three: we have to strengthen our information-gathering. And instead of doing that, the future holds no bright horizon for us because the Government is aiming to put Mr. Persad as the next Commissioner of Police. How will that help us? A man who, on this letter alone,

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

should be facing disciplinary charges—right?—for failing to report to his superior officers—because I am sure if this letter is to be addressed to the Commissioner of Police he will tell you, “I do not know anything about that”. The Commissioner of Police will tell you that because this was between the Prime Minister and one of his subordinates. Which country in the world could that happen, where the Prime Minister could be dealing with subordinates way down the road below the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police? This country could do that. Because the Prime Minister declared an emergency—the Commissioner of Police was in Brazil. He heard it on the radio. That is how they run the country and now they want to know why the criminal is in charge, literally and figuratively.

Item number four: we have on the law books, provision for municipal police. We said, let us activate that. That is a Cabinet decision. The law is passed right here by the Parliament under the Municipal Corporations Act. Let us put a constabulary in each corporation. San Fernando has a small one already; Arima has one; Port of Spain has one, but in response to criminal activity, let us beef it up.

We suggested 100 persons and the THA 100. That would have put 1,500 police officers to the establishment one time, and you choose them carefully, and you choose them in as pure a way as possible so as not to have them polluted, and they can become a nursery for persons going into the mainstream police service, and you put on the ground, in the communities, more patrolling, and they have eyes and ears, and those officers could begin to become the first set of citizens who would talk to the police about crime in the area because right now, nobody is talking to the police about crime that they see or hear about. But if you increase the local level policing, the police can begin to get some information as to who is doing what, where and when in the blocks and on the corners.

What has the Government done? Cabinet decision, which has the full support of the Opposition, nada! Have not done that!

Hon. Member: Not true. Not true.

Dr. K. Rowley: We want you to come to Parliament. We say we are there to support you. Draft the amendment and come to Parliament. In an hour, we will support it. Expand the authority of the Police Complaints Authority so that they can receive information and act on it without having to depend on the police. I come here today, Mr. Speaker, I got a letter from the police—today I got this here, from the Police Complaints Authority—saying to us as MPs, “Constituents will come to you and complain about police misconduct. If that ever happens,

come directly to this contact at the PCA”. Great! But then the PCA should be able, having received such a report, to go and investigate it. And if that investigation shows that officer A or officer B is in breach of the law or the regulations, the PCA should be able to proceed to prosecute that person, and that is the oversight on the police service.

What has the Government done? Absolutely nothing! So instead of getting a Bill here, an amendment here, to amend that law so as to give the PCA that authority, we get a whole basket of no bail, and a big argument about PNM blocking no bail. So what can be done to help is not being done. All they were interested in—two aspects. And interestingly enough, that meeting with the Prime Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office, we got a good response from the Prime Minister on all the things we came with. We discussed at length quite cordially, but then at the end of it, there were only two things that the Government seemed to be interested in. One was something called a hanging Bill and the other one was this Bail (Amdt.) Bill.

Well, we told you upfront with the hanging Bill, that you are threatening by your amendment to make hanging an impossibility in this country because once you interfere with what is there now, which is tested and proven to be usable—and the only caveat is to administratively carry out the act within five years. It is an administrative thing. The Privy Council has already ruled, hanging is the law of the land. It does not need Parliament anymore. It has been challenged at the Privy Council, but the Privy Council has ruled, if you are going to hang, you must hang after five years of the conviction.

So it falls to the administration to get things done within that five-year period or you will not be able to hang a person. It has to be commuted. Instead of putting administrative arrangements in place to ensure that when a person is convicted, that five-year period does not expire, the Government “all over the country like drunken sailors, bawling, ‘the Opposition blocking hanging’”.

First to begin, you “cyar find nobody who commit de crime; you cyar” get enough convictions; you cannot get anything done, administratively, to stay within the *Pratt and Morgan*, but you could be spending State money and spending time talking about the Opposition preventing hanging. Absolute poppycock, if I may quote Dale Enoch. Rubbish!

It is the Government’s role, and the Judiciary, to ensure that they meet that guideline of five years. It has nothing to do with the Opposition. Our concern is the detection rate. If you cannot detect who commit the crime, who are you going

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

to hang? Six per cent detection rate and your concern is hanging? They could not be serious! And then we told you we are not supporting the Bail (Amdt.) Bill; that is the only thing you bring.

Miss Cox: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: We told you in private conversation, we are not supporting this; this is nonsense. I read for you upfront all the nonsensical components. That is what you bring because your singular purpose is to play politics to try and blame the Opposition, to tell your supporters and who “doh” want to hear and who “doh” want to see, that the reason the country is going to hell in a hand basket is because the Opposition is not cooperating with the Government.

This Opposition, we have cooperated with this Government more than any other Opposition in the history of this country.

Hon. Member: Um hmm.

Dr. K. Rowley: We cooperated so much that when they misused—
[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: The anti-gang—

Dr. K. Rowley:—the anti-gang legislation, they say is the PNM who do it; is “dem” who do it in Parliament. Blame us!

They come to Parliament before the wedding, pass law to “leggo” their friends—right?—and then they go and tell the country, is the Opposition who created section 34. Is the Opposition—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—36(5).

Hon. Member: For what?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Standing Order 36(5), imputing improper motives.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. I think you said that the Government passed laws to, am—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Free their friends.

Mr. Speaker:—free their friends. I think that is imputing improper motives. I think you should withdraw that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Withdraw that.

Dr. Moonilal: Withdraw your entire speech.

Dr. K. Rowley: I will comply with the Standing Orders, but I do not have to tell anybody in this country what happened. They know more than you, Mr. Speaker, so he could rise as often as he like. Right?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Withdraw it. Withdraw it.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I said I will comply with the Standing Orders. I withdraw the statement, but I do not have to tell anybody in this country what section 34 represents.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: The whole country knows.

Dr. K. Rowley: So if he thinks by jumping up, he will blind the country to what happened under section 34, keep playing jack-in-the-box. Jump up!

So, Mr. Speaker, they brought nothing that we can support, that we thought they would bring to the Parliament with immediacy. They did not do that. We asked them—we asked them, Mr. Speaker—to look at trying to make the relevant amendments to the existing laws or to create new laws, to make witness tampering a very serious offence with serious consequences. We even told them there should be such grievous consequences for tampering with a witness that it should be that that act may be even more detrimental to you than the crime you committed.

What have they done? What have they done? Everybody knows the last thing you want in this country here is to be a witness to a crime because you now become a target. Many of the killings we have heard about are people who only happened to have been there and perceived to be a witness. The criminals go now and kill the witness. What has the Government done since we spoke? We need to bring legislation to Parliament which would make witness tampering in any form—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley:—something that will bring you a serious penalty because what is missing in this country are consequences to your actions.

Hon. Member: Agreed.

Dr. K. Rowley: The criminals now know that there are no consequences to their actions and they are liable to escape. So in big, broad daylight in front of many witnesses, they are killing people because the witness knows that if they come forward as a witness, the criminal will take them too. So nobody is a witness. In the absence of witnesses, you cannot get prosecutions. The criminals know that more than you and I and, therefore, they are now killing with impunity.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

It is not maths, and it serves no purpose to come and tell me what the previous government did. They held themselves out as having solutions to this problem. They come and they are in the job now. I told you what they did. It is bad enough to say that you did not do anything, you know. It would have been bad enough to say they did nothing. I am not saying they did nothing. I told you what they did that was detrimental.

So today, I am saying to the Government, do not waste our time. We are not supporting this, and I am asking you, why have you not brought all the measures we thought we had agreement on and come to this House and use the Cabinet on other matters, to deal with matters you could deal with. Right? “Yuh” coming here, trying to browbeat us. We will not be bullied into passing bad law.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I intend to spend my time—my limited time here—to deal specifically with the Bail (Amdt.) Bill and not to try to play the blame game or to try to drift left, right and centre. So let me deal specifically with the purpose of this amendment.

The amendment will reduce the requirement for denying bail to only one conviction within a 10-year period. Now under the current legislation, if a person has been convicted of three specified offences within the last 10 years, he is denied bail. However, if a person is convicted of two violent offences within the last 15 years, he is denied bail.

Now, Mr. Speaker, under the proposed amendments, a person will be denied bail if he is over 18 years and is charged for any offence within the specified offences, such as rape, possession of a firearm, which I will deal with shortly, and if that person was convicted within the last 10 years for the same offence. So we are speaking about a pattern.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we deal with this, I notice too often we always try to spend time trying to defend the criminal, trying to defend the felon, trying to find mechanisms to make sure that criminal, that person could be protected. What I want us to look at in this is to look at the victim. Who is looking after their interests? Who is trying to help them? And I want to show you a simple example, Mr. Speaker—firearm. The firearm has proven to be the catalyst towards most major criminal activities, inclusive of murder.

5.30 p.m.

Someone can have a firearm, be convicted—a deadly weapon—and then be apprehended with a firearm, and then he can walk out free the very next day. That is a recipe for disaster, Mr. Speaker. Someone could have an M16 submachine gun, an AK-47—a Galil, something that could put untold damage on people—be arrested with a firearm of this nature, a deadly weapon like this and the very same day he can be given bail and then walk out.

Again, I want to stress on the importance of the victim. How does the victim feel, Mr. Speaker, if you have a situation whereby a husband has been killed by someone and then that person is arrested because he has a firearm—but the wife of that husband can actually give evidence—but the very same day that person walks out of prison because we do not have a Bill such as this? What we are doing, once again, is not looking after the victim, but always trying to protect the criminal, trying to protect the felon. What I am here to stress on, Mr. Speaker, is again not to play the blame game, not to try to point fingers, but let us look after the welfare of the victim.

The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, the Opposition Leader, he spoke about the concern that we have, that citizens are not bringing information as much as they should. When we speak about the problem with the detection rate, the problem with the detection rate is twofold. It has to do with the shortcomings we have of crime scene investigation, but also the concern that we do not have human intelligence. Why do we not have human intelligence to pass on that proper information that can be turned into intelligence, that we can then have successful conviction? That concern of the lack of human intelligence, citizens passing information on to the law enforcement officers is because:

- (a) There is a lack of trust—correct—with the law enforcement officials, but also that same perception that the law-abiding citizen might have that there can be reprisal, that they can be victimized.

Failure for a Bill such as this, Mr. Speaker, identifies exactly the angle I am getting at, which is, we are giving a “get out of jail free card” literally for individuals who can commit a crime, have a firearm that can do untold damage—he is caught with a gun. If someone has an illegal weapon, he is using that for one reason and one reason alone, to kill somebody. But we are saying that if this person is caught with a firearm, it is okay to release him and give him bail the same day, and this is where the concern will come in of that lack of HUMINT, that lack of human intelligence that cannot be passed on to the law enforcement

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[SEN. THE HON. G. GRIFFITH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

agencies because the law-abiding citizen, the victim, now realizes that listen, the law seems that it is turning towards the support of the criminal, the individual who has committed a crime.

It can go further, Mr. Speaker, where this same individual who is now caught, he is now apprehended with a firearm—and I want to stress on this firearm in this Bill. He has a gun; he is caught and he is now behind bars. He is then allowed to be released because we do not have such a Bill even though he was convicted within the last 10 years. So this is not a case of being set-up which I understand what the Member for Diego Martin West was saying, that you are afraid that this can be abused. But this is a situation where someone has been found guilty; someone has been convicted for the use of a firearm in the last 10 years. So this is not a set-up.

There has been a track record of this individual, but now he can actually once again commit the same crime, have an illegal weapon—a firearm that can kill someone—and now he can be released. He can now be released through bail and probably get another firearm that he can then probably use to pay his friend who got the bail for him, or use another firearm to go after the same citizen who reported him for the crime with him being seized carrying the first firearm. So it is a lose-lose situation, Mr. Speaker, when it is we are looking at a situation like this.

We can go further where someone was convicted within the last 10 years for rape. He raped someone; he is then apprehended again for a similar offence. But we are saying okay, you have been found guilty within the last 10 years for rape, but then you are now arrested once again for another crime similar to this, but you can now walk out of prison. And the lady who has now reported the crime of rape—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: She dead.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—what is she left with? That same individual who was found guilty within the last 10 years for raping a woman, he went back and raped another women, he is now allowed to leave prison and then go after the same woman who he just raped. How do you expect that victim to feel? I am asking us for us to look at the victim. Let us stop always trying to find mechanisms to support the felon, support the criminal. It is time we start looking after the well-being of the victim, and this is what I ask, Mr. Speaker.

When we speak about the reduction in offences by persons who are considered likely to commit or continue to commit criminal activities, there is this

concern that we have with recidivism. We have this revolving door in crime where the same persons usually commit the crime over and over. Trinidad and Tobago, we probably have one of the highest rates in the world when it comes to recidivism. So, again, it goes to the same situation with that deterrent. The deterrent is lost when someone knows that he can commit a crime with a firearm, be found guilty and then he knows that he can do the same thing, knowing fully well that if he is caught he can very well get bail the very same day with a firearm or raping someone. That, Mr. Speaker, is when we have to look at the elements for the reduction of recidivism in this country.

A Bill such as this will ensure that that recidivism rate is reduced. It cannot be reduced if we allow criminals that commit acts such as these to get that “get out of jail free card”, that they can have possession of a firearm. Again, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West actually spoke about larceny of a motor vehicle and, again, it is a fact. It is that domino effect where—on most occasions what happens? When someone commits a serious crime, what do they use? A motor vehicle. So they are usually involved in stealing a motor vehicle that they can then use for what is a more serious crime, and we can look at the incident recently with Sentinel. That is what they did, they stole vehicles.

So when we look at all of these things, it is not just to trivialize some of these offences, but larceny of a motor vehicle, recruiting gang members, demanding money with menace. Demanding money with menace, Mr. Speaker, again, it is one of the situations where we have had these gangs, these individuals, they intimidate law-abiding citizens. They intimidate persons who are trying to develop the nation. They go there, they look at the projects and they demand protection money. They tell them, “Listen, you cannot do this job unless you pay me”. But we are saying that this person can do this, be arrested and then after get bail the very next day, and then go after the same individual who reported that crime on them.

What we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is actually taking the victims and letting them know, listen, we are turning the law more towards the criminal and support them in the expectation that this law might be abused, in the expectation that some police officer realized that that individual was found guilty for a firearm years ago, so let me plant a gun and then put him in jail and he is going to stay there for 120 days.

Mr. Speaker, if we try to think out of the box so much, we will continue to affect the victims. What I ask, again, is for us to look at the victims, look at the women who have been raped, look at the persons who have been killed, look at

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[SEN. THE HON. G. GRIFFITH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

the families of those individuals who have killed, and all I am doing is looking at that. We are looking at the victims. The victims' perceived need for physical protection from the accused should be regarded.

Mr. Speaker, it will also minimize the situation of reprisal killings. Someone has been found guilty, they have been apprehended with a firearm, they have now been put behind bars, they are allowed out on bail, what happens? That is what can cause the catalyst towards further criminal activities and murder. We can look at all the different mechanisms that we can speak. This is not the be-all and end-all to reduce crime, but it is an avenue.

Once again I ask for us to look at the well-being of the victim. Look at the well-being of the law-abiding citizen who is willing to say, "Listen, I am willing to take the chance. I am willing to step out of the box and say, listen I am here to help you. I want to be one of that 1.3 million law-abiding citizens that intend to fight the war against crime against those few thousand criminal elements." But without this Bill, Mr. Speaker, without this, we are actually giving that extra edge to the criminals. We are actually telling them that, "Listen, we do not want to keep you in jail. We want to get you back out there to go back and continue to commit such crimes." And this is the importance of this Bill because we are not looking after the victim. We continue to look at the possibility of someone having this position being abused.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is much more than just looking at the only thing to reduce crime. We are looking at the situation of the detection rate. The detection rate, it is agreed, it is a fact that the detection rate is low. But rather than speak about who is to blame, we can go all the way back to the Special Anti-Crime Unit where the same CSI persons, dressed in fancy white—the detection rate was at its lowest as well. It was under 20 per cent and the murder rate was at its highest, but that does not mean that what was done then under the Special Anti-Crime Unit was not important, could not be of value, but the point being is that the detection rate was low then. The detection rate was low last year.

So instead of pointing fingers to say well in January and February last year the murder rate was 49 and 46, respectively, or that the murder rate, we have, 22 murders this year, rather than play the name game and play the numbers game, what we should be doing is exactly that is expected of us as politicians, where we are the employees and the citizens are the employers and they expect us to actually operate with a degree of professionalism and not just make decisions and vote for certain things based on what side of the parliamentary bench we are on. Because what we are seeing here is a Bill that can actually be effective to allow

those law-abiding citizens to step out of the box and have the opportunity to now say, listen, I want to help the law enforcement officers, I want to report a crime, I want to give evidence, I want to be part of the process to put the criminals where they belong, behind bars. But we are thinking of not doing this and giving the criminals that extra opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, again the importance of intelligence gathering. I heard the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, the Opposition Leader, did speak about the importance of intelligence gathering and he is quite right. It has a big factor to play. Apart from the part of this Bill, intelligence gathering would play a part to make sure that the persons, if and when they are arrested, we have the proper intelligence that can be turned into evidence. But the statement about the NSIA being the NSOC, it is really incorrect. So I just wanted to clarify something here for the Member for Diego Martin West.

The NSIA was the system for an intelligence body. The National Operations Centre is not an intelligence body. If it is we want to compare apples and oranges, we can compare the National Operations Centre to the Special Anti-Crime Unit, where again there is value to both. But, the fact of the matter is that the National Operations Centre—whereas the Special Anti-Crime Unit was seen as being competitive, seen as being taking away the assets of the law enforcement agencies and with that, that never allowed them to mesh.

The National Operations Centre is not an intelligence gathering agency that has replaced the SIA. The National Operations Centre is the ultimate communicational security platform that is seen worldwide, that allows all of the law enforcement agencies to work together, to communicate with each other, to have that sharing of knowledge that can ensure a successful operation.

When you have the agencies work in silos where one hand does not know what the other is doing, that is when you have a recipe for disaster. For example, the radar previously will be able to pick up a vessel entering our shores illegally, but then again the coast guard would not have that information because the radar is not working with the coast guard. We have situations where the SSA might get real time information of a criminal act taking place, but not be able to pass it on to the law enforcement agencies such as the police for an immediate operational response, and this is what the National Operations Centre is about. So this is just to clarify the perception that the NSIA, this was all set up to—this is what the NOC is. The NOC is not that.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[SEN. THE HON. G. GRIFFITH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

In addition to which, the perception that everything was dismantled. It is a known fact and intelligence agencies worldwide would be able to confirm this, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot have several different intelligence agencies all working separate and apart, tripping over each other and keeping information to themselves. That is what we had with the Defence Force Intelligence Agency, the Special Branch, the SIA, the Special Anti-Crime Unit. They all had their own little kingdom and information was not being passed on, and because of that it was a known fact that what we needed is to have a joint intelligence system.

So it was not that the intelligence units were dismantled. It was all combined to ensure that everyone would be working together on the same page and there will be no competition, hence the formation of the SSA instead of the SIA. It was supposed to be called the NSIA, but again, to-ma-toes/to-mat-oes, the fact of the matter is, is the SSA, what it is doing right now is ensuring that system for proper intelligence being passed into one specific unit, making sure it is monitored and controlled so that the interception will not be abused, that what may have happened in the past, but now we are making sure that there are checks and balances, there is a degree of accountability, and we will make sure now that the intelligence is going to one location and then being fed to the law enforcement agencies. So I just wanted to clarify that concept.

Mr. Speaker, again, when we look at weapons and where weapons come from, and I use the example with this situation with the firearms, we do not make weapons here in Trinidad and Tobago. Weapons are actually acquired elsewhere and brought here illegally, in similar manner to the illegal importation of drugs and human trafficking. And hence the importance for us to make sure we have those proper systems because you can arrest someone here with this Bill, and he is arrested with a firearm. But then two firearms enter our shores a couple of days later. That is where we are spinning top in mud. So what is very important is that we have a proper mechanism that if and when we apprehend these individuals through this Bill and that firearm is seized, we do not have the flow of further weapons, and hence, the importance for us to have a proper maritime security plan.

5.45 p.m.

Again, this is not to point fingers and to speak about the benefits or the good or the bad of the OPV, but looking at an offshore patrol vessel. An offshore patrol vessel is primarily focused to deal with your exclusive economic zone, to deal with your deep waters, to deal with situations from 12 miles to 200 miles out. Again, based on cost benefit analysis, it is quite obvious that if it is you know the

major flow of the illegal entry of human trafficking, drugs and weapons, it comes from the Gulf of Paria. There is a saying that you do not use a sledgehammer to kill a fly. You are not going to use a 90 metre OPV in the Gulf of Paria between South America and Trinidad and Tobago mainland in the west and the south coast. What you need are interceptors, what you need are hovercrafts, what you need will be—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But we had those.

Mr. Sharma: Go and guide them man. Brilliant!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—UAVs, and that is what you need. You need to have a radar that will be working in tandem with these agencies through the National Operations Centre.

Miss Mc Donald: That is what we had. That is what the OPV—*[Inaudible]*

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: The offshore patrol vessel is primarily earmarked to secure your exclusive economic zone which will be 12 to 200 miles in the deep waters which will be the north and the east coast.

Mr. Sharma: “Doh worry, you will talk after.”

Hon. Member: We had interceptors.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, and again, we have to look at the importance of when it is you select these things, because it is very—you must be concerned when you are looking to purchase an OPV at a cost of \$800 million from BAE—a company that has been found guilty by 17 countries—that has been accused of paying kickbacks to 17 different countries. Then, we have now looked at the similar type vessel, long range patrol vessels from Colombia, from Korea, from China, from Holland, and all of these countries, they are selling similar type vessels for \$400 million, which is \$400 million less than the BAE OPV. So again, when we make decisions to secure our borders, we just need to make sure that the taxpayers get value for their dollar.

We can also look at the importance, Mr. Speaker, when we are speaking of the holistic approach of national security and the apparatus of the selection process. We can look at, recently India, they have just shut down their contract with Augusta Westland because of the allegation that Augusta Westland was involved in bribing a Government official. When we look at these four helicopters we have acquired, we paid US \$85 million for a helicopter that the cost for it is TT \$85 million.

Hon. Member: Six times the price.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: So we will want to know why it is that we acquired helicopters at six times the market price, and then we cannot use the helicopters as much as we should because of all sorts of technicalities and red tape that turn these helicopters, not into a military operational asset, but a civilian type asset that they could not even have been used during the blackout.

Mr. Sharma: That is how the PNM does business. Such a waste.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West spoke about the importance of “let us do things differently” and that is all I ask here. That we have to look at the importance of doing things differently and making decisions, not just for the sake of saying yea or nay, but looking at the importance of what we need to do to make it right, to do what is right.

We are looking at the concerns that I spoke about with citizens being afraid to pass information on to the law enforcement agencies; that lack of trust. That lack of trust that does not allow them to pass the information. This, Mr. Speaker, allows that trust. It gives the citizen that opportunity to know, listen, this man has been found guilty with a firearm, a deadly weapon, within a 10-year period. If I know that I have seen him with a deadly weapon again, I know that I can now make that call. I could go to the law enforcement agencies, and I know that if and when that man is arrested, he is not going to be released and come after me because I have now reported him, and that is how important this Bill is. It gives the citizens that opportunity to pass on that information and not be concerned that there is going to be some type of reprisal killing because he or she has done their job as a law-abiding citizen to help the police service.

Again, which is why it is we have one of the systems—we have realized that because of the low detection rate, it has to do with the concern that citizens cannot pass information on because of that lack of trust, and hence the reason that we are introducing the concept of VIPO, making every law-abiding citizen a virtual police officer. It gives you that opportunity to pass the information on in confidence through cyber, and it gives you the opportunity now to be a part of the system because people want to help, Mr. Speaker. Every law-abiding citizen wants to see every criminal behind bars but they are afraid and this is why, again I stress that this Bill will minimize the likelihood of reprisal killing, it will minimize that situation where that person can retaliate and come back out if it is that he was found with a firearm that could have killed someone.

Mr. Speaker, we can also look at the importance of the computerized statistics. The computerized statistics, again, it is very important towards pinpointing criminal elements, seeing where it is that they have moved. But we do not just use CompStat in a framework just to look at criminals. CompStat is now being used by the law enforcement agencies by actually looking at the threat assessment and pinpointing where the law enforcement agencies should be, which is why recently we launched the Rapid Response Unit.

The Rapid Response Unit—for the first time, we are putting systems in place to measure performance, to make the law enforcement officers accountable for their actions. The GPS, we have not put it in the police vehicles in case the vehicles are stolen, we have put the GPS there to monitor the movement of these vehicles, to make sure that vehicles can be placed in strategic locations around the country, and if at any time a citizen makes a call, we have a Bill like this, and the citizens can now say, “Listen, there is a situation here, there is a man with a firearm, he is next door”, we can now ensure that you have a rapid response and no longer would you hear, “Well, ma’am, we do not have a vehicle in the station”.

We now have 77 vehicles with 51 operating 24 hours a day throughout the country making sure that within minutes maximum, that vehicle could turn up at the scene of a crime, turn up at the scene of a situation, that can also minimize the situation that might have been a domestic disturbance or a situation of two guys in a bar arguing, and by not having that immediate response, you can turn a very small criminal matter into a murder, and that is the importance of that rapid response. But, it goes hand in hand with the fact that if you have a Bill like this, the citizen can now know I am going to get a rapid response through the RRU, I know there is a National Operations Centre that is going to immediately take the feed of my 999 call or 911 and contact that vehicle, but I also know that through this Bill, when I call the 999, I can be assured that person is not going to get bail and be able to leave the very next day, and then come after me after I reported that criminal activity.

Mr. Speaker, just before I close, again, I want to show the concern that I have that we continue to look after the well-being too often of those who are against the law. In the last few months, I have seen that every time we state something that is for the good of the country, for the good of the law-abiding citizens, you get people who have to make a statement in contrast, “but what about this; but what about that?”—which is good.

But it goes overboard when, for example, we have situations with tens of thousands of persons who are illegal immigrants in this country and I stand firm

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[SEN. THE HON. G. GRIFFITH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

and I say that I have to look after the interest of the Trinidad and Tobago people, I have to look after the interest of the law-abiding citizens here, I have to look after the interest of persons who will come into Trinidad and Tobago looking for a better way of life but they do not have that foundation so they will come here without a letter from their employer. They do not know where they are going to live, they do not have any money, they do not have a job, they might end up on the streets and turn to a life of crime. But certain people jump on the bandwagon, “No, no, turn Trinidad and Tobago into a shopping mall, let it be open house”. Mr. Speaker, not on my watch, but we jump on the bandwagon to try to say that, “Listen, this is what we need”. It takes more than just hugging up—giving the President of the United States a bear hug to know how to deal with foreign affairs. *[Laughter and desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, what I am speaking about—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Standing Order 36(5), Mr. Speaker, imputing improper motives.

Mr. Sharma: That is her achievement! You know that is a fact. That is a fact.

Mr. Speaker: Well, he did not mention anybody’s name.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Who else hugged him?

Hon. Members: Yeah! *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no, he did not mention anybody’s name. Continue, hon. Member. Member, the Member feels offended, you did not call anybody’s name, I just ask you to be cautious in making these remarks. Okay? *[Continuous crosstalk]*

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Self-confession is good for the soul. I apologize if fingers were pointed. But the importance, Mr. Speaker, has to do once again with looking at concerns. We speak about VIPO and persons have fear that I am trying to do their jobs. I speak about the importance of computerized statistics and people voiced their concern. I speak about the importance of us not giving gangs contracts, people jump and say, “Well, it is their democratic right”.

This Bill, we are given the opportunity, yet again, to defend the law-abiding citizens. It is time that we support the victim and not the criminal. It is time that we support the law-abiding citizens—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Correct!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—and not the criminal. It is time that we support and defend our country and not those who are bent on destabilizing it. The time is now and the time to support this Bill is now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, with your leave and before we go to the next speaker, you will recall earlier in the proceedings, we had, in fact, granted approval to an application made by the hon. Member for Fyzabad—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: La Brea, La Brea.

Mr. Speaker: La Brea rather—sorry, my apologies—that a matter has qualified to be raised as a definite matter of urgent public importance. We therefore have to interrupt the business of our House in order to refer to that particular matter.

May I advise the House that the debate will last for one hour. There are two speakers from the Opposition Bench. The hon. Member for La Brea will speak for 20 minutes, the hon. Member for Point Fortin will speak for 10 minutes in that order, and thereafter, the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs will have 30 minutes to respond to the actual interventions by those two speakers.

So, at this point in time, with your leave, we were supposed to start at 6:00 pm sharp but I do not want another speaker to rise on the Bail (Amdt.) Bill and be interrupted, so with your leave, we can begin the debate on this particular urgent matter of public importance. The hon. Member for La Brea.

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER

Failure of Government to Address Oil Spill

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffery (*La Brea*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed ironic that the Bethlehem of the Trinidad and Tobago petroleum industry, and indeed the international petroleum industry, should be subjected to so much contempt, so much disrespect, so much disdain and so much contempt, bearing in mind the tremendous contribution of that same Bethlehem that I am speaking about. The Bethlehem of which I speak is La Brea and the south-western peninsula.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to share with you something about La Brea and the south-western peninsula. In 1857, the very first oil well that was drilled in the world was on the periphery of the La Brea Pitch Lake at a depth of 280 feet and

Failure of Gov't to Address Oil Spill
[MR. JEFFREY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

they got 15 barrels of oil. In 1866, we had another success in Aripero when the first successful commercial oil well in the world was found. Mr. Speaker, that was the impetus—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Where you got that information?

Mr. F. Jeffery:—for the splurge of oil drilling not only in the south-western peninsula but even abroad.

Dr. Browne: You have misled him, Minister.

Mr. F. Jeffery: Mr. Speaker, so much so that by 1914, over one million barrels of oil per year was produced in Trinidad. By 1912, we had our first small oil refinery in Point Fortin which was one of the earliest in the world as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is more than that is that the revenue from the petroleum industry were used to fuel the development of Trinidad and Tobago. The asphalt from the pitch lake—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “Wha is your Motion again?”

Mr. F. Jeffery:—was used to pave the roads in Port of Spain, San Fernando, [*Crosstalk*] and several other areas and, as well, Mr. Speaker, a few international airports.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying this for us to understand the tremendous contribution of La Brea, and the south-western peninsula, for national developments. And therefore, it hurts when, in a moment of crisis, for which the people of La Brea and the south-western peninsula are not responsible, should be subject to so much disdain and so much contempt. Mr. Speaker, one has to look at what happened. On December 17, 2013 there was an oil spill, and though some members of the Government and indeed some people from Petrotrin were giving the impression that they did not know the source of the oil spill, but Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to hear from several people—not only current oilfield workers, but retirees—early o'clock, mentioning that the oil spill is bunker fuel.

I could not understand when the president of Petrotrin and several others were saying that preliminary tests showed that the oil is not bunker fuel, but that is by the way, Mr. Speaker. What is extremely important is what happened after the 17th. On December 18, the oil reached the south-western peninsula. From Otaheite down to La Brea, and then we had from Chatham down to Cedros. In that Otaheite to La Brea area was about one mile and a half of thick, black crude, the

whole beach and even on the shore. Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious thing because the people along the south-western peninsula, on the coastline, they depend on the marine environment for their livelihoods.

Many people use—they go to the mangrove and they “ketch” the crab, they “ketch” the oysters. Some would go in the sand for “chip-chip” and so, Mr. Speaker. With that oil there, that was out. The fishermen could not go out, so it means that the boat owner, the sailors, people who help remove the fish from the boats, who take off the engine and so on, Mr. Speaker, they too were without an income. But more than that, there was a stench in the atmosphere, hydrocarbon gases and on the 18th, the Environmental Management Authority came down, they did their tests and recommended the immediate evacuation of the residents in the Coffee Village area. That was agreed to by Petrotrin. And Petrotrin decided that La Brea Community Centre was the ideal place for the residents to go.

Dr. Browne: We need to fire that whole board.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: But, Mr. Speaker, if you go to La Brea by the Community Centre and you watch the condition of the community centre and you think about the contribution that those residents in the Coffee area have made to this country, you will recognize that it is gross disrespect and very insulting.

Dr. Browne: Heartless.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, 150 persons were to be accommodated in that La Brea Community Centre that is structurally weak. The roof in the community centre, Mr. Speaker, is leaking.

Dr. Browne: It is a concentration camp.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: There is one functioning toilet and one functioning shower for 150 persons, male and female. Mr. Speaker, that hurts.

Dr. Browne: “Nah man.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: You could not be serious, if you want to treat the people of La Brea and environs with—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Dignity.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—dignity. You could not be serious.

Dr. Browne: They “doh” care.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: So, Mr. Speaker, to add insult to injury, the few people—the people down in the Coffee Street area, they have their “lil” fridge, they have their

Failure of Gov't to Address Oil Spill
[MR. JEFFREY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

“lil” stove, they have their “lil” TV. Mr. Speaker, no arrangement was made to secure the premises of these residents. Let me assume they had gone to the community centre, what would have happened to their fridges, and their stoves, and their TVs when “they gone”? No arrangement was made, Mr. Speaker. The residents and “dem” decided that for two reasons they are not going to the community centre. One, the condition of the community centre and two, their belongings that “it take” so long to pay off for. “Dey was going to give up like that.”

As a concerned Member of Parliament who knows the area well, together with the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: “She doh know the area.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—we recommended, Mr. Speaker, HDC units in Huberts Town, Guapo; in La Fortune Estate and in Southern Gardens, Warden Road, because there are enough vacant and habitable houses to accommodate all the residents in the area.

Dr. Browne: Have a heart.

Hon. Member: Hear the cries “ah” the people.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, early o’clock “eh, I talking” about the 19th or the 20th, I had made that recommendation. I had spoken to—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Since last year.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—Government officials; I had spoken to Petrotrin and I have even mentioned it in the national community. But, Mr. Speaker, just to show you—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Yes, I heard you say it.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—the love that they have for people in La Brea. And I want to quote from *Newsday*, December 31, page 5, article written by Clint Chan Tack. “We talking bout” 13 days after the EMA had recommended the immediate evacuation of the residents in the Coffee Street area, and I quote:

“Asked how many of these persons would receive temporary accommodation and when this would happen, Mc Leod replied, ‘The number that we have is still being corroborated. I could not say that they are going to be resettled tomorrow or the next day, but we are working assiduously towards dealing with this as effectively as possible.’”

Mr. Speaker, they are talking about a case where the EMA said immediate evacuation; 13 days later, “yuh cyar find a place for those residents”. Mr. Speaker, this is day 23 and not a single resident from the Coffee Street area has been relocated.

One resident, Mr. Speaker, drew to my attention, he “say” listen, when there is a flood in the Caparo or Caroni River, and people’s homes are flooded, HDC unit is never a problem for them to get, but for the people of La Brea, that is a problem.

Hon. Member: What is the difference?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: You “doh hah” to worry about that, but “da is a fact”. Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: Do not stoop to that, La Brea. Do not do that.

Mr. Speaker: Could you address the Chair, Member for La Brea.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, it hurts when we see a situation like that, that a simple HDC unit is beyond the reach of innocent people. You must understand, Mr. Speaker, that oil spill was not the doing of any resident in La Brea or the south-western peninsula. It was not their doing, Mr. Speaker, and therefore it is hard for a people like that to have to pay a price for their innocence.

Mr. Speaker, they were advised not to cook because of the strong hydrocarbon scent in the atmosphere. There is a national—let me get the name right—National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (2010) and on page 23, “Health and Safety”, hear what it says:

“The first imperative”—of an oil spill response—“must be spill prevention and measures must be instituted to mitigate the potential for a spill. If a spill incident occurs, safety of life is the highest priority and should never be compromised regardless of the environmental imperative.”—“...never be compromised...”

But, Mr. Speaker, they compromised the HDC units. In other words, the La Brea people—HDC units too good for them. I cannot stay here, Mr. Speaker, and smile when I see a thing like that happening.

Mr. Speaker, several residents had to seek medical attention. Petrotrin organized a medical outpost in the La Brea Community Centre, and I made a little check. There were 178 persons who went to that institution. Dizziness—and Mr. Speaker, the Coffee area is not an area with 5,000 people, it is a small community.

Failure of Gov't to Address Oil Spill
[MR. JEFFREY]

Friday, January 10, 2014

And hear the figures: Those complaining about dizzy spells, 25; headache—and we are talking about splitting headache as I was told—33; ear, nose and throat burning, 49; cold and fever, 21; chest pains, 28; diarrhoea, 18; abdominal pains, 22.

Mr. Speaker, I “doh” know how long again the people in La Brea will have to remain to continue with that kind of condition. In the scenario of the medical condition, some parents had to take their children down to the Point Fortin Area Hospital and some went to private doctors and they were advised that their children should not return to the area until it is back to normalcy. Mr. Speaker, what is that telling us? That the area is not suitable for habitation at this point in time. And I want to repeat my call for the immediate evacuation and relocation of the residents, whether or not it is going to be temporary—[*Desk thumping*—is not the matter, but the immediate; not one day later should my constituents continue to subject themselves, Mr. Speaker, to that kind of condition.

It is tough. It is tough, Mr. Speaker. In that La Brea area, even though the hydrocarbon scent is very strong, there is no mandatory blood and organ testing being done. Even those people who are working in the clean-up, no tests are being carried out on their system to see whether or not—how the effects are. Mr. Speaker, I have looked at—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: “Dey doh care.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—oil spills in Mexico—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: “Dey doh care.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—and some in Louisiana, Mr. Speaker, and the effects could have tremendous implications for the residents.

Dr. Browne: It is a priority.

Mr. Imbert: You would think they are less than human.

Dr. Browne: They are opening big teaching institution and they “cyar even give de people ah check-up”.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, no arrangement is being made to say well all right, we have the oil spill now and therefore every six months or every three months, we will be coming to do tests, to monitor, to see what the implications are, Mr. Speaker, nothing like that. No buffer zone was established.

Hon. Member: Take care “yuh doh talk on this, you know.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: No buffer zone, Mr. Speaker, was established as well.

Mr. Imbert: Callous.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, we cannot be serious, because really and truly, when we look at this National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, let me read, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

“The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago...is conscious of the need to preserve and protect human health and the natural environment from the ever-present risk of oil and chemical spills.”

Mr. Speaker: Member for La Brea, you have two more minutes.

6.15 p.m.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago:

“shall, therefore:

Assign the responsibility for the prevention, abatement and combating of oil pollution within the country’s territory, including its Exclusive Economic Zone...”

Mr. Speaker, the whole question of compensation is a big issue. We hear about the EMA fining Petrotrin \$20 million. But that is for the clean-up and the restoration. But what about those residents who are without a source of income as a consequence of the oil spill? Because they still cannot go in the mangrove. “It still have plenty oil in the mangrove and there is a stench in the mangrove with dead carcasses for them to contend with.” They still cannot go out and fish. So who is compensating those residents?

Mr. Imbert: Nobody.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “When T&TEC come to cut light bill, who paying? Who going to pay the light bill fuh dem?” Who: the hairdresser, the caterer, the auto electrician who could not get any business done because people refuse to come down in the area because of the strong hydrocarbon scent? Who is compensating them, Mr. Speaker? Who?

Mr. Imbert: Nobody.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Who is compensating, Mr. Speaker, those parents for the stress that they have to go through? Who is compensating the residents, Mr. Speaker, who have to contend now with their own medical bills? The situation is indeed one for us to take stock and I call for the following—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: Lincoln Douglas.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—(1) the immediate relocation of the residents, (2) compensation for the residents and I am not only talking about the—*[Interruption]* yeah I am winding up, Mr. Speaker—boat owners but all the residents in the area should be compensated, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Point Fortin. *[Desk thumping]*

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is just a 10-minute intervention I understand, but let me say that this was quite a fiasco and a disaster and that it is very clear—it still is, it is current—to us that the only major oil spill which took place was the oil spill in Pointe-a-Pierre on December 17, very clear to us.

There were cries of sabotage. At one point I heard two, five. It went up. They tried to link sabotage to the number of oil spills. That clearly was not so. It was one major oil spill. As a matter of fact, the two final cases of sabotage, which, I think they are putting forward, I believe those may have been staged to lend credibility to the claims that they had been making all along to cover up the fact that this was all a problem at Petrotrin and—*[Interruption and crosstalk]* That is true. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, who would ever put on a scuba diving outfit and go down to the bottom of the sea with a blowtorch to try to penetrate that line and not blow themselves up in the meantime. There was no question of sabotage. It was all a question of bad operations on the part of Petrotrin and I am very, very clear about that.

The point about it is the officials at Petrotrin and those persons who were in charge of this exercise clearly knew nothing what was going on. Initially, they thought that this thing could be cleared up in 24 or 48 hours but they were wrong and it is because they had no idea of the amount of oil that had escaped and was at the bottom of the seabed. It was very, very, heavy oil and it got mixed up in the silt and the sand and they were clueless as to what happened.

Why should that be rocket science? No one could understand. Because in any event you had a tanker which was loading, which was reading a certain amount and you had—and obviously, sorry, the barge would have been loading and should have had a certain amount of oil in it. You had a tanker which was dipping, sorry the tanks which were dipping and, therefore, what was not in the tank and not on the barge clearly was spilled and that is not rocket science at all.

At first, we were told it was just about 7,000 gallons, which is equivalent to about 100, just over 100 barrels. Then we heard about 2,000 barrels and 7,500 barrels. All of those things you all were saying over the period of time is because you—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: All who?

Dr. Rowley: All of you.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—did not understand what was going on. In fact, not that you did not understand, it was a cover up from day one. *[Desk thumping]* You must have known what was dipping, what was receiving and, therefore, that is your core business.

When you went into office Member, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, you said on the first day of office, when you made that photo, when you took that photo opportunity at Parex in Princes Town, you said that your focus was going to be on oil. Well if your focus was on oil, you would have been paying attention to Petrotrin and what was going on in there, and you had no idea of what was going on.

Mr. Speaker, this was nothing more than incompetence and cluelessness on the part of the officials of Petrotrin. *[Desk thumping]* And Mr. Speaker, I will tell you something when BP, that recent bp disaster took place, there was a radical shake-up of the board and the management and I want the Prime Minister of this country and head of the energy committee to ensure that there is a shake-up in the board of Petrotrin. *[Desk thumping]* That is what must happen as a result of this—and also the management.

The management is clueless. The president is rudderless. He is past 60 years old. *[Desk thumping]* Mr. Khalid Hassanali should go. And I understand the succession plan identifies the manager, refining operations to take over. He too is clueless. He knows nothing about refinery operations, absolutely nothing! *[Desk thumping]* He is a marketing man. He was never recommended for the job and yet still I understand that he is the one to replace Hassanali. The board has to go. The president has to go and that person who you have earmarked for the job must not get the job either. He is not qualified for refinery operations at all. I am talking about your VP, refinery operations.

People at—let me tell you something—Petrotrin are just not qualified. You have a man who came from chubby, the chubby man came from—what is the factory that makes chubby?

Dr. Rowley: SM Jaleel.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: SM Jaleel—and became the VP of strategic development. You could tell me, Mr. Speaker, how was that transition made? What was the requirement; once you were involved in liquids, it does not matter whether the liquid is sweet drink or oil? They accepted that person for that position there. It is nonsense, Mr. Speaker, that is going on in Petrotrin and that is why you have that incapacity and incompetence in Petrotrin.

The HSC person at Petrotrin was clueless in the handling of this. He is the person who said that only one bird was killed and that the environment was hardly impacted. That was not the case at all. But you know the person who really was quite knowledgeable on HSC in Petrotrin and would have been better equipped to handle this situation, they hounded her out of the job to give this person the job there and he is clueless, Mr. Speaker, clueless. The end result, I say, is bad operations.

There is a point that I want to make as we talk about this particular barge, the Marabella. I believe that that Marabella is illegally operating in the Gulf of Paria and that is something I want the Minister to respond to. It is a single-hulled vessel and I know that, Trinidad and Tobago has signed on to MARPOL, which is the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships and it is a legal requirement that any vessel which carries oil must be double-hulled and I understand that this one is single-hulled and that you have been getting the waivers to operate with this single hull but it is dangerous and there is the likelihood that in the event of any kind of collision, you could have a mammoth oil spill again and I want to make that point and answer me on it.

The other point I want to make, the other question I want to ask, as I am here, is whether Trinmar is still ISO 14001 certified for HSC as well and whether it was renewed, because I understand that, based on the audits, Trinmar did not qualify, did not qualify.

But I go back just because I am rushing because of time. I go back. The end result, I make the point that this National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, which I am sure the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries will speak about, obviously you were not able to turn this into a very workable and dynamic action plan because action was very clearly lacking. This is a document, yes, but it has to be turned into an action plan and action was very clearly lacking throughout those 17 days.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of it all, health and safety was not prioritized at all and that is critical to the success of these operations and, therefore, I would say, based on that, you have failed. Ten years from now, 20 years from now, those mangroves will not have recovered. The persons, we do not know—[*Desk thumping*]
—10/20 years from now—what kind of ill health those persons would suffer from.

Mr. Speaker: Two more minutes.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You have not said anything about the characteristics of the oil that was found, whether or not the kinds of chemicals that were in there, whether it contains benzene, whether the level of the benzene was acceptable, whether those persons are going to suffer from heart and renal and/or cancers. You have to comment. This is the kind of PR that you should be giving; giving information that is valuable to the persons who have been affected, not the kind of spins that you all have been putting on, with you going down then the Prime Minister,. I understand you all are now paying a PR company to assist you all. That is what is going on there. [*Interruption*] Not serious?

Let me just end on this point. The Prime Minister on the 24th said:

The matter is being contained, there is no cause to panic or fear. Petrotrin has almost completed clean up in the affected areas. The situation at Coffee Beach was not as drastic as it was portrayed in the media.

Yet still, the day before, you and your Minister of Energy had declared the disaster a three-tier spill, a three-tier spill—[*Interruption*] sorry, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. You and the Ministry had declared it a three-tier spill.

What is a three-tier spill? Large spills requiring substantial resources and support from regional or international oil spills. They are events that have the potential to cause widespread damage and that is what has happened, widespread damage. But there you have very contradictory statements coming from your Prime Minister and coming from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, where you said that this had the potential to do widespread damage, which it did; and the Prime Minister on the other hand felt: well this was not as drastic and not as bad as before.

Quite frankly, the Prime Minister should go on this one. You Minister of Energy and Energy Industries should offer your resignation as well. You [*Desk thumping*] would have been at the helm. You would have been at the helm of all of this and it was a disaster and it was handled very, very badly. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: Very good.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I start off, you know, first of all let me congratulate and thank the Member of Parliament for La Brea for bringing this very important Motion to the Parliament. I understand I have half an hour and time tends to fly very quickly in the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I am being distracted. I would like to speak in silence, please, Member for St. Joseph. Mr. Speaker, the Member for La Brea started off by referring to the south-west peninsula as the Bethlehem of the oil industry and that is correct. In 1857, he pointed out the Merrimac Company drilled the first oil well in La Brea. In 1866, he pointed out that, quite wrongly, that the first commercial well was 1866. I would like to correct history, 1866 was not a commercial well, it was an exploration well by Walter Darwent. In 1908, the first commercial oil well was drilled in Guapo by Arthur D. B. Thompson.

Dr. Browne: What about the oil spill?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: So I just wanted to put that history on the record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Let the Minister speak in silence, please.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: It is not my intention, Mr. President, to use this occasion—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Speaker.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—Mr. Speaker, to use this occasion to score any political points.

Dr. Rowley: You have none to score.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: I believe that there comes a time in the history of a country where we must always seek to rise above the politics and when this oil spill happened, the Member of Parliament for La Brea would attest that he and I spoke a couple times on the phone about how we could immediately intervene down there and work together with him. Mr. Speaker, I must say he is very passionate, as he always is, but he was always cooperative with Petrotrin and

with the authorities and we empathize, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, with those citizens who have been affected by this oil spill. I want to—I am however encouraged, Mr. President, by the collaborative spirit—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—Mr. Speaker—that has emerged to correct this problem and to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, between December 17 and December 26, this country experienced a series of oil spills and the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin has made an allegation against Petrotrin as being the people behind the engineering of the oil spills. That—if she has such evidence, I invite her to take that immediately to the police. If you have evidence that Petrotrin engineered—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “She is a total waste of time. Doh waste yuh time.”

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—other oil spills beyond December 17, 2013—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is not what I said.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: That is what—okay. Well if you have any evidence related to the oil spills, take that evidence to the police.

6.30 p.m.

Two reports have been made to the police in respect of the Rancho Quemado spill, Trinity has made a report to the police. If you have evidence, take it to the police. With respect to Riser Platform 5 in Trinmar, a report has been made to the police. If you have evidence, take it to the police.

Dr. Rowley: There is no oil spill.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West, remain silent while the Member—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. President, the most serious—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, Member, oh God allow the Member to speak in silence, please.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—the most serious of these oil spills occurred on the morning of December 17, 2013 in Pointe-a-Pierre, on the Pointe-a-Pierre

Failure of Gov't to Address Oil Spill
[SEN. THE HON. K. RAMNARINE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

jetty during—as the Member pointed out—the loading of the Marabella barge. Some 7,500 barrels of fuel oil, and fuel oil is a product of the refining process, some 7,500 barrels. One barrel, Member of Parliament for Point Fortin who is not a petroleum engineer, one barrel of oil is 42 gallons of oil. So multiplying 7,500 by 42, you would get 315,000 gallons of oil. So some 7,500 barrels of fuel oil were lost.

The Institute of Marine Affairs, Mr. Speaker, confirmed in a preliminary report that I received, that the oil which affected the beaches on the south-west peninsula, especially in La Brea, was fingerprinted to the fuel oil that escaped from the Pointe-a-Pierre jetty. That is the advice coming from the Institute of Marine Affairs. In the first two instances, as I mentioned—in two instances, the Rancho Quemado instance and Riser Platform 5, Petrotrin has advised that there is compelling evidence to suggest sabotage. Investigations are ongoing, as I said, by the national police.

In respect, of the events of December 17, 2013, Mr. Speaker, December 17, 2013, Petrotrin's internal security department commenced an investigation into that event and, as a consequence, 12 employees have been suspended.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Why them?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: These suspensions have been deemed by Petrotrin [*Interruption*] as precautionary and are intended to preserve the integrity of the investigation. Naturally, Mr. Speaker, given the frequency of these spills and having them occur in such a narrow window of time, there was speculation of the element of sabotage. Mr. President, this matter has engaged—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker. Speaker!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Speaker, this matter has—thank you, Leader of the Opposition—this matter has engaged—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Most important contribution for the week. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—the National Security Council of Trinidad and Tobago, and as a consequence, Mr. Speaker, the defence force, Petrotrin's internal security and the police have heightened their level of collaboration.

Mr. President—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Speaker, sorry. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: He was almost President.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—the Member for La Brea and the Member for Point Fortin cited and referred to the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan. I want to say that the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan was finalized by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in October 2013, a few months before. Work on a new National Oil Contingency Plan was initiated by my predecessor, the former Minister of Energy, now Minister for Public Administration, and that effort involved a multiplicity of organizations—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: What, “yuh geh credit, man”.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—and that national oil spill contingency plan replaced, Mr. Speaker, the 1977 oil spill contingency plan which, of course, would have been 36 years old.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, no. May I?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: No, I am not giving way.

Hon. Member: Sit down. *[Crosstalk]*

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: You had your opportunity—*[Interruption and crosstalk]*

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Yuh” cannot be standing.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, just take your seat for a minute. Member for Point Fortin—*[Interruption]* yes, I know, but if you wish to rise on a point of clarification, you do not just jump up. You seek clearance from me and the hon. Minister, and it is only if he gives way, then you are allowed to speak. You got your chance to speak. Hon. Senator, continue, please. *[Desk thumping]*

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will continue. I am not giving way. The Member had her 10 minutes and I will now have my time.

So the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan of 2013 replaces the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan of 1977. Of course, the world in 1977 was a very different place. As it regards Trinidad and Tobago’s upstream oil industry, there is a lot more activity, there are a lot more players operating in our waters. We had that famous incident in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 as a major industry event that has caused countries all over the world to revise and to upgrade their oil spill contingency plans. The oil spill contingency plan, as I have mentioned, was done

Failure of Gov't to Address Oil Spill
[SEN. THE HON. K. RAMNARINE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

in collaboration with a multiplicity of national organizations and oil companies in Trinidad and Tobago, and it meets international standards as regards the International Maritime Organization, the (IMO's), mandate.

Mr. Speaker, as the oil spill occurred, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs in receipt of the first report in accordance with the plan that was allegedly collapsed, according to the Member for Point Fortin, established the Tier 2, incident command team to assist Petrotrin with the management of the oil spill. The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan incident command team comprise: the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the EMA, the Institute for Marine Affairs, the coast guard, the air guard and the OSH agency. So when we criticize, we criticize all these agencies that, in a collaborative manner, worked together very quickly.

As the situation unfolded, Mr. Speaker—because the situation, of course, is not a gun shot and somebody is shot and they fall down dead and that is the situation; it is an unfolding and an evolving situation—as the situation unfolded it was determined that international assistance was required and I took the decision, Mr. Speaker, to raise the response level for the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan to Tier 3. That means that we sought international assistance from Oil Spill Response Limited of Fort Lauderdale, and within a very short space of time, two 767s landed in Piarco International Airport, with the equipment that was required and a couple days afterwards personnel from that company flew in from the United States and from the United Kingdom.

In concert with the Ministry's efforts, Petrotrin established two incident command centres—one at the marine operations base in Point Fortin, and the other at the Point Fortin central production office—to address response activities, clean-up remediation and community and environmental issues. Petrotrin also established its own centralized incident command centre at Santa Flora.

I want to deal with this issue of the evacuation of persons from Coffee Beach, because while the Member of Parliament for La Brea was speaking, I was in communication with the Chairman of the EMA. And I showed Dr. Gopeesingh the text messages from the Chairman of the EMA. Just to make sure that I was talking to the Chairman of the EMA, I went outside and I rang him just to make sure, you never know it could be somebody else has his phone. He confirmed to me that the EMA has never authorized the evacuation of the residents in the Coffee Beach area.

I think the Member of Parliament was referring to a newspaper story, and, as a Member of Parliament, you may want to get your source of information directly. This is what the Chairman of the EMA just told me: that any recommendation like that would have had to come from him, and he did not make that recommendation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Him alone.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: And him alone as the Chairman of the EMA. I think you were referring to a newspaper story.

So, Mr. Speaker, going back to the response. To optimize the clean-up activities, in excess of 200 contracted persons from within the affected areas were deployed. In addition, approximately 100 Petrotrin personnel are involved in this exercise at present. The main method for the removal of the oil and the contaminated sand is mechanical clean up using backhoes and manual labour using shovels.

The contractors that have been selected are contractors from the general area, contractors such as Tiger Tanks and Kaizen Environmental. The status of the clean-up, Mr. Speaker: in excess of 3,000 barrels of fuel oil have been recovered to date. When we speak about focusing on increasing oil production, what is on the beach in La Brea is not crude oil; it is fuel oil.

I see a former Minister of Energy saying that, “well, I focused on refining and, therefore, I was right and you were wrong”. Well, the product on the beach is from the refinery. I received a text message from one member of staff saying that they were very shocked that a former Minister of Energy would say something like that, clearly not knowing the difference between a refined product and crude oil, but such is life. [*Crosstalk*] Our colleague, the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, would know the difference between fuel oil and crude oil having worked in the refinery.

Mr. Speaker, 10 of the 13 affected beaches have been substantially—Mr. Speaker, how much more time?

Mr. Speaker: You have until 6.57 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have 17 minutes again.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Ten of the 13 affected beaches have been substantially cleaned and are being rehabilitated. Clean-up work is currently in progress at Pointe Sabe beach and nearby beaches including the mangrove.

Failure of Gov't to Address Oil Spill
[SEN. THE HON. K. RAMNARINE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Polluted sand, Mr. Speaker, is being removed and sent to temporary storage sites at Guapo and Point Fortin where it will be remediated. To date, Mr. Speaker, 50 truckloads of contaminated oil and sand have been sent to these sites.

Mr. Speaker, air, sea and land surveillance are conducted daily, or as required in affected areas. Data from these surveys are used in formulating clean-up strategies. More than \$10 million have been spent thus far in the environmental clean-up along the south-west peninsula. And we are hearing that we did nothing, that we are twiddling our thumbs somewhere in Port of Spain.

Low power flushing of the mangrove is currently taking place. The initial clean-up work—and there are two phases, there is the heavy clean up, and there is the light clean up. The initial clean-up work, which is the heavy part of it is estimated to be completed in February 2014—I will stay away from giving an exact date, because dates always move—and will be followed by ongoing rehabilitation work and environmental monitoring in the affected areas until all areas are restored to acceptable conditions as determined by the EMA.

In terms of medical support: I am advised, Member of Parliament for La Brea, that a medical facility and employee assistance programme support services were set up. I will look into the concerns that you have raised, Member of Parliament for La Brea, because you have been one of the more genuine people that I have encountered in my three and a half years in the politics, very unlike your colleague from Point Fortin.

Dr. Browne: No, no, no, you cannot say that. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, 36—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, I think you could just withdraw that.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Okay, Member for Point Fortin. [*Crosstalk*]

[*Mrs. Gopee-Scoon stands*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no, you cannot be on your feet at the same time. Member, could you sit, please. You made a statement about “genuiness” and thing, and the Member has taken offence. I ask you to just withdraw that statement, please.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: But still not trustworthy. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my contribution [*Crosstalk*] we must rise at some time, Mr. Speaker, in our political

lives, above politics. It happened in England during the Second World War, when after Germany attacked England, Churchill formed a Cabinet of national unity and invited the Opposition to be part of his Cabinet. They rose above the politics to navigate England through its darkest hour.

I think that Members of Parliament should not take their personal grudges and transplant that personal grudge against a company into the politics of Trinidad and Tobago. Some people harbour personal grudges for some reason, I do not know, but do not bring your personal grudge into the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. It is tantamount to corrupting the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Sharma: Because of a bungalow. “Yuh want ah bungalow?”

Dr. Gopeesingh: Because of a bungalow.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: What is that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Is because of a bungalow.” [Laughter and crosstalk]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Speaker, they should not—[Interruption]

Dr. Browne: Imputing improper motive.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—house any grudges. [Laughter] So, Mr. Speaker, [Crosstalk] medical facility and employee assistance programme support services were set up on December 18, 2013 to meet immediate needs of residents at the Lake Asphalt building. Lake Asphalt is nearby. That medical facility was later moved to the more accessible La Brea Community Centre. The Member has raised concerns about the quality of service at that centre. I commit to look into that immediately—as we leave this sitting here, I will call Petrotrin and they have been alerted already via text message, Member for La Brea.

The facility is staffed by medical personnel and services are available every day, Sunday to Sunday, 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. and after 6.00 p.m., services are available at the Petrotrin Medical Centre, administration building in Point Fortin. Petrotrin has an ambulance service available at the La Brea Community Centre; that is available for 24 hours. As at January 07, 2014, Mr. Speaker, 210 persons visited the La Brea Community Centre for medical treatment by a medical team comprising, nurses and a medical doctor.

Home visits have been rendered to the baby born in the community during the oil spill, as well as to an elderly patient who was deemed to be non-ambulant, which means that he cannot be transported via an ambulance.

6.45 p.m.

In terms of other provisions made, provision of meals for impacted residents started on December 18, the day after—the day the spill kicked into La Brea. Petrotrin provides up to 115 meals to residents three times per day; that is, 345 meals per day. Petrotrin has advised that they also provide temporary employment for residents in affected areas to assist in the clean-up operations. Approximately 120 residents from La Brea have been retained by Petrotrin and contractors for the clean-up exercise.

With regard to compensation—the Member spoke about compensation—I am advised by Petrotrin that to date some \$2,667,900 has been paid out by Petrotrin covering 236 boats and 32 vendors in various fishing villages. I will repeat that: To date—and I said, to date—some TT \$2,667,900 has been paid out by Petrotrin covering 236 boats and 32 vendors at various fishing villages, and that is to date. There are more discussions taking place.

Hampers and food items were distributed during the period December 24 to December 26, 2013. Toys were distributed to 100 children within affected communities on December 24, 2013; and back-to-school items and schoolbags were distributed to 100 children in La Brea on January 03, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, there will be lessons learnt from this experience. The Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs will be requesting a full report from the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan Incident Command Team and Petrotrin on the series of oil spill events. Petrotrin has already submitted a comprehensive report to the National Security Council.

With regard to Petrotrin's follow-up activity from this point on, there are many actions that have to take place. The first one is the complete clean up and rehabilitation resulting from these spills; continued engagement and collaboration with communities impacted; collaboration with the EMA to institute a rehabilitation plan, which would include monitoring of mangroves, beaches and the near-shore environment; the conduct of a natural resource damage assessment study, including floral and faunal assessments; complete assessments and investigative reports on all incidents to ascertain causative factors and institute resultant recommendations; assessment of total cost associated with environmental incidents; heightened security at all the company's installations—and I will shed some more light on that; the institution of an elevated and comprehensive communication system and network; the reassessment of the

company's internal procedures for handling emergency situations; and the institution of appropriate systems to facilitate recovery of the company's image—its corporate and social image—and operational standing.

Mr. Speaker, the share price of an energy company stands on three pillars. The first one is the net present value of the company; the second one is the reserves of the company, whether they be natural gas or oil reserves; and the third factor is the reputation of the company. It is estimated that reputation constitutes two-thirds of the market capitalization of a company and if you want evidence of that, look at what happened to the BP share price after the Macondo oil spill. There was a collapse in the BP share price.

We are cognizant of the need to rebuild the Petrotrin brand. We are cognizant of the need for Petrotrin to rebuild the trust that it once had in those communities along the south-west peninsula. The company has committed—and the Member for La Brea and I have spoken about this also—post this oil spill, to have several corporate social responsibility interventions in the areas La Brea to Point Fortin, and that will be part of the rebuilding of the image of the company as we move forward.

As has been mentioned, the Cabinet has established a ministerial team chaired by Minister Ganga Singh and a multidisciplinary team of professionals is to be soon appointed by Cabinet to oversee Petrotrin's action plan for the remediation, rehabilitation and reclamation of the affected ecosystems and outreach to communities.

In moving forward, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs intends to address two issues. The first issue is the initiation of an industry-wide facilities audit. This will not only be limited to Petrotrin, but will encompass all upstream companies, the refinery, Atlantic—formerly called Atlantic LNG—and companies at Point Lisas. That, of course, is the remit of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs as the regulator for the energy sector. The second major pillar, moving forward, is to produce a comprehensive security strategy for the energy sector. This will be done in collaboration with the Minister of National Security and the National Security Council.

With regard to the facilities audit, the energy sector that we all benefit from as a country, that produces 44 per cent of our GDP, 50 per cent of our revenue, 80 per cent of our exports in terms of value and 90 per cent of our foreign direct investment, operates on aging infrastructure. The infrastructure, as it relates to

Failure of Gov't to Address Oil Spill
[SEN. THE HON. K. RAMNARINE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Trinmar, has been out there in some cases since 1955, when the first production of oil started in the Soldado fields. That infrastructure, for those of us who have had the privilege to see some of that infrastructure, is very worn and aging.

I am further advised that new discoveries of oil in the Soldado fields will be in the range of 25 million to 40 million barrels of oil and for those new discoveries to be economic, you cannot go and put brand new platforms. You, therefore, have to extend the life as far as possible of existing assets to make the economics work. So the facilities management particularly at Trinmar is going to be very important in the coming decades.

As I said, I want to rise a bit above the politics and, as our colleague, the Member for Chaguanas West always says, that is for another time; but at another time, we will talk about the rundown of Trinmar between 2002 and 2010, but that is not for today.

Hon. Member: Not tonight.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: That is not for today. Mr. Speaker, with regard to security, we live in the age of terrorism. We are all part of that global problem right now. A couple years ago, BP had a very serious incident in Algeria where terrorists stormed a facility in Algeria and killed employees of BP and contractors and we have had attacks on oil installations around the world. I am not saying that will happen here, but we as a responsible Government, we have to take steps—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: An irresponsible Government.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—to now protect the country's most valuable assets and this is something which I will be in discussion with, with the Minister of National Security in the coming weeks as we seek to put a plan in place to secure, not only the oil and gas installations in Trinidad and Tobago, but also our power plants in Trinidad and Tobago because we now have some six power plants, I think it is, in Trinidad and Tobago that essentially provide all the power for this country.

Mr. Speaker, in my three or two minutes left, I want to say that the response to the oil spill along the south-west peninsula, with regard to that response, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through Petrotrin and other state agencies—and there were many state agencies involved—commandeered all resources and personnel within Trinidad and Tobago and beyond Trinidad and Tobago to deal

with that problem. It is ongoing and we expect to have the major part of the clean-up completed. *[Interruption]* Well, you all are in Opposition and must say everything we do is wrong, so that is fine. *[Interruption]*

We have mobilized all the resources that are required to bring that situation back to a level of normalcy in the south-west peninsula and, moving forward, and looking forward, we commit to the facilities audit of the entire sector, not just Petrotrin and to a comprehensive security strategy for the sector.

I thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central. We resume our debate. *[Desk thumping]*

BAIL (AMDT.) BILL, 2013

Dr. Amery Browne (*Diego Martin Central*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, we might wish to indicate that the debate on the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013 is now being resumed; just for anyone who might be a little confused. In fact, a little earlier, a few minutes ago, the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West asked a question across the floor: What does this oil talk have to do with the Bill? Clearly he was completely asleep during that particular intervention. *[Laughter]* I think he now has found his moorings.

Mr. Speaker, this is serious business. I rise to contribute to this particular debate in a context that is very sobering because we currently find ourselves in this country in the midst of what must be one of the worst Januarys in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, with regard to blood spilling and bloodshed. This must be one of the worst Januarys in the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

When I listened to the hon. Minister of National Security a few minutes ago, he had a particular theme and I would like to repeat that theme. It was very simplistic. Let me say it was very simple. His theme was: What about the victim? We need to talk about the victim. We need to seek the side of the victim. It is a theme that has been echoed in the past by the Member for St. Augustine and many other Members of this Government who had a very different world view before coming into office, but who now seek to justify all of these half-baked, poorly-thought-out measures by simply appealing to the emotions of the population and saying we are thinking about the victims.

But, Mr. Speaker, that level of thinking and that thread of logic is simply not good enough for the House of Representatives and I would want to say that is very poor justification for this particular amendment Bill. Look at the victim.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Look at the victim. We are thinking about the victim, but my message for the Minister of National Security, wherever he may be at this moment, is this: we are all victims in Trinidad and Tobago of this crime scourge. [*Desk thumping*] We are all victims and, therefore, the approach has to be much broader than they are suggesting. Our citizens are reeling, reeling, frustrated, besieged, under attack, under assault, frustrated and feel under physical threat. There is an assault taking place, Mr. Speaker, and it is not the volume of the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara that I am referring to. I am referring to the criminal assault taking place outside of these walls every single day. If you take up the newspaper, you turn on the radio, you look at your television, you cannot escape the reality.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am saying that, but at the same time it is clear that there are certain persons in this country and in this House that are somehow escaping that reality because we heard two contributions today that were very much disassociated from reality: one by the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara which has already been properly dismissed by the Member for Diego Martin West, as completely—well I cannot say irrelevant, but not connected to anything of substance in this debate; and another by the Minister of National Security who simply says he supports the Bill because it has some connection to the victims and somebody has to think about the victims. Mr. Speaker, I think we need to go a bit deeper than that.

It is clear that this Government simply does not have the answer to the homicide situation in this country. They do not have the answer and you have citizens and activists and so on out there who are almost starting to make suggestions because they are confused by the Government's lack of direction.

You hear talk about a new SOE that people are suggesting. First time I am hearing citizens actually telling their Government now maybe they need to think about a SOE because they looked at the conditions that led up to the last one—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Maybe they need to call an election.

Dr. A. Browne: Well, we will get to that. They looked at the conditions that led up to the last one with lots of rumours, but very little substance from the Government in terms of justifying that state of emergency. There was no Bail (Amdt.) Bill brought to the House at that time, but there were 11 murders and a state of emergency.

Then the citizens look at their country today and see 22 in 10 days and they are saying well maybe the Government is going to come with a state of emergency. Unfortunately, their Government, our Government has really come with nothing whatsoever.

7.00 p.m.

And, Mr. Speaker, nothing that I say here today—or anyone in this debate should say—should take away from the importance of individual responsibility for our circumstances as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. There is a need for a focus on individual responsibility for our circumstances and our outcomes. There is a need to focus as well on family responsibility, because we still have too many families—mothers, fathers and others—who are aware that their children are involved in some of the offences listed in this amendment Bill and who do very little about it. So there is family responsibility as well, but we cannot escape the reality that there is the State’s responsibility. The case I wish to make here, Mr. Speaker, in the context of this Bill, is that the State has certainly been failing its responsibilities to secure the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] It has been failing. [*Desk thumping*]

And when you have murders occurring in the literal shadow—I cannot say a stone’s throw away because it is even closer than that—of a multi-million dollar police post—our brothers and sisters, citizens of this country are gunned down—and when you see the police that eventually respond to that homicide, they are not even from the police post, they are from elsewhere, people had to ask questions, and only then it was revealed that this police post has been dormant for months, not in use, having already been lavishly opened and with celebrations. And, of course, the Minister used the opportunity to “gambage” and talk about gang leaders and this and that, but we still have citizens falling right there on that very spot and nothing is being done about it.

I am afraid that a very horrible ruse has been played before the citizens of this country because this current administration, Mr. Speaker—I want to remind this country—campaigns heavily and extensively on the issue of crime and security.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Dr. A. Browne: I want to repeat that, Mr. Speaker. This current Government, now entering its fourth year in office or five, came into office on a particular mandate that they sought; campaigning heavily and extensively on the issue of crime and security, and their No. 1 focus was not on motor vehicular theft and who steal who glasses and mangoes, et cetera, it was murder. That was their No. 1.

I want to remind the citizens further, Mr. Speaker, about the black jerseys and the Keith Noel’s committee and the marches and the coffins and the bells—well they get a few bells recently [*Laughter*]—and the red paint and the candles and

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

the marches and all of that. They were not divorced from that, you know. Maybe I should not use the word “divorced”. They were very much associated with those activities because that was part of the campaign into office. It was a march into office based on the homicide rate.

Mr. Speaker, we see some of those same characters silent as Mary’s little lamb as we are in the midst of an unprecedented epidemic of bloodletting in this country, and you really have to ask the question: are people really founded on principle as opposed to party politics? And we know the answer when it comes to their position on homicide in Trinidad and Tobago.

And then they came to us with a vacuous manifesto which made extensive reference to the crime scourge at the time, and extensive reference to the homicide rate and measures they wish to take, they promised to take to help the nation through that particular period. Well, they have gotten us through and into an even worse period, at this time, and I will talk a little bit more about that as we proceed.

And, Mr. Speaker, when they came into office—they won an election and came into office—they replaced a Government that could not rest on any laurels when it comes to crime. That is a fact. They met a country in crisis with regard to criminal activity, but they met something else. They met an administration that was seeking and working very hard, and spending money to at least try to put concrete strategic measures in place to deal with the root cause of some of these violent crimes and atrocities and offences that we are talking around and talking about today. That is what they met. They met a number of measures, which I do not have to dwell on because they are well known, with regard to air, land and sea defence which would have helped deal with the influx of the drugs, guns, other contraband and issues that are plaguing us to this day.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is a saying in medicine, “first do no harm”. If you approach a patient, your first duty is to do no harm. So if your intervention is going to harm that patient, it is better you do not touch them at all. And, Mr. Speaker, this Government’s approach, at minimum, to our security services, should have been somewhere along those lines—first do no harm—but you know what the first thing that they did was, Mr. Speaker? Harm to the very systems that should have been protecting us today. It is the exact opposite, and I referred to them before as having a reverse midas touch, this Bill does not cure us of that particular disease at all.

They came to a nation that was very unhappy about homicide; about receiving stolen goods; about the gang war and gang membership; about shooting and

wounding and all of those things. They came to that nation and told them that they have a crime plan that they would unveil: “Vote for the People’s Partnership because they can do better.” They can do better than those that they met. Mr. Speaker, look at where we are today; look at where we are today.

Mr. Speaker, I am not proud. We on this side are not proud of the fact that murders in this country were at the highest level in the year 2008. That is not a point of pride, that is a point of sorrow and dismay. There is no pride in that. But the fact is, the Minister of National Security always refers to his computerized statistics, and I will talk a little bit more about that a little later because he is selling a fallacy to the nation that statistics in themselves are essentially valid and must be accepted, the way they are putting it across. I would not dwell on it, at this moment, but the fact of the matter is homicide rate peaked in 2008. No one can be proud of that. There is no pride in that, but systematic steps were being taken during that period to protect our borders and our coastline—first do no harm—but they came in and they did harm.

The fact of the matter is, in 2009, the homicide rate went down as a result of some of these measures starting to come into train. It went down. That is a fact. They never say that; they never acknowledge it. It went down. Do you know what happened in 2010, Mr. Speaker? It went down further—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Hypolite: That is right.

Dr. A. Browne:—in 2010. Some of those same units were still under operation. They had not yet fully gotten their grip on the dismantling of protection and security in Trinidad and Tobago. Guess what happened the very next year? Take a guess in 2011?

Hon. Member: It went back up.

Dr. A. Browne: But the Minister’s computerized statistics do not seem to be telling him that. The homicide rate rose once again, and they always brush over this issue and talk about, “Well, murders were high before us and it came down.” No, it started to go back up; 2011 saw a rise in homicides.

What happened in 2012, Mr. Speaker? It increased in 2012, it increased in 2013. In 2011, there was a state of emergency and that interrupted. So Mr. Speaker, peaked in 2008; went down in 2009; went down in 2010, in 2011; came back up in 2012; went up further in 2013; and already for 2014 we are on par with Jamaica in terms of homicides, and Jamaica last year went up to 1,200 murders. We are neck and neck with them for 2014.

Hon. Member: Are you serious?

Dr. A. Browne: I am serious. That is the reality. So this should be sobering. There is no cause for celebration anywhere in this House or anywhere in this country when it comes to crime and efforts to deal with crime. But, Mr. Speaker, the bad news is that this Bill does nothing whatsoever to improve Trinidad and Tobago's No. 1 crisis or condition with regard to murder on our streets. This Bill is irrelevant to that particular reality.

Mr. Speaker, but that is not what they promised us, and I want to refer very quickly to two references in the manifesto of this Government. Some of the symbols on the manifesto have now fallen by the wayside, but they still refer to their manifesto, so I will do so today. My first reference would be page 25 of their manifesto under: "Attacking Crime Nurturing Humanity—Making Our Society Safe and Our Citizens Secure" and I quote:

"The first step we will take"—Mr. Speaker, this is a Government making a commitment—"involves addressing the issue of white-collar crime and corruption, the second addresses the fundamental challenges of effective management of the institutions of law and order..."

"The first step we will take"—we the UNC and friends and accomplices— involves addressing the issue of white-collar crime and corruption..."

And where are we with those issues today, Mr. Speaker? Record levels of white-collar crime and corruption in Trinidad and Tobago. I will give you a few examples that are relevant to you, Member for Oropouche East, very, very, shortly. [*Interruption*] Talk to your former colleague, Mary King, I think she would enlighten you in that regard. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, that was page 25, and then for the benefit of the Member for Oropouche East, who seems very offended when we refer to white-collar crime and corruption—I do not know why he got so offended. I am going to refer to page 12, and this is under the Government's first 120-day immediate plan of action. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Oropouche East has come directly opposite, and is deliberately interrupting me in my contribution. I want to point that out to you, Mr. Speaker. He is deliberately interrupting me.

Mr. Speaker: You have my protection.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Get back to your seat.

Dr. A. Browne: Yes, anyway. Mr. Speaker, they do not want to hear from their manifesto because they know what I am going to tell them.

“We will prepare an immediate action plan for containing criminal activities and reducing the number of murders—this first phase will be from June 2010 to December 2010.”

Mr. Speaker, we are now January 10, 2014, in the middle of an unprecedented epidemic of this same issue that they promised to solve with an immediate plan of action. They come with this Bail (Amdt.) Bill; they come with talks about bad is the PNM; and they come with talk about we are somehow thinking about the victims, therefore, this Bill must be supported.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the only flaw of the Minister of National Security’s presentation at all because he completely ignored the reality that the detection rate is also at a record low in this country. For serious crimes, specifically for murder and homicide in Trinidad and Tobago, certainly, less than 10 per cent, and the Member for Diego Martin West has pointed out a particularly low detection rate for some reason in Port of Spain itself.

So Mr. Speaker, this Government has failed in its mandate to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are in the bloodiest January in our history. They failed in their mandate. What is their response? I heard a Minister saying in the media recently, “Oh gosh nah, stop.” Mr. Speaker, “Oh gosh nah, stop.”

Dr. Rowley: “After de fast.” [*Laughter*]

Mr. Imbert: He gone and fast again.

Dr. A. Browne: That must be part of the crime plan, you know because at least we heard that. We are not hearing about the crime plan—“Oh gosh nah, stop.” Mr. Speaker, they have failed.

Mr. Imbert: Did they stop?

Dr. A. Browne: We hear the other response, “Hang dem high; hang dem high.” That is the crime plan, not hang anybody you know, say it: “Hang dem high.”

7.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have a message for this Government from the citizens of this country, “You cannot hang who you don’t catch”, and this Government is

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

catching no one, so obviously they can hang no one. They are completely upside down, Mr. Speaker. We have had, by my count, one, two, three, four, five, six Ministers in the Ministry of National Security—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Wow!

Dr. A. Browne:—since May 2010. We have had John Sandy, Subhas Panday, Jack Warner, Collin Partap, Emmanuel George, and now the non-captain, Gary Griffith. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, in my humble view—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: And Embau Moheni.

Dr. A. Browne: Moheni somewhere sowed himself in there. Seven. Mr. Speaker, in my humble opinion, none of them ever made sense when they were speaking, but in the last few weeks we have had a special dose of that from the current hon. Minister of National Security, in terms of not making any sense, and really offending the sensibilities of the citizens of this country. And already in a few weeks he has said more than all the other Ministers put together in terms of verbiage, but already he has made far less sense than all of them put together.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that offended our citizens, and must be dealt with in the context of this Bill, is this thing about—in 2013, six out of 10 murders were associated with criminals and criminal activity. So if you are not a criminal you do not need to be worried about crime in this country. If you are not a criminal you do not need to be worried about crime in this country. Mr. Speaker, those words were like salt on the womb of so many of us who have been touched by violent crime in recent times. The Pastor who was slaughtered on New Year's Day, and his family, one would have to ask the question, "Were they criminals?". Were they associated with the criminal enterprise, and somehow did they deserve that horrific fate? The young man who was beaten in Cocorite and burned alive, was he a criminal? And I could tell you, he was in no way, shape or form, associated with criminal activity.

These poor housewives and gentlemen in their homes who are being attacked, assaulted, beaten, destroyed, shot, chopped, stabbed, how are they to take any comfort from the words of this Minister of National Security? I really want to condemn the statements that he has been making and give him the advice, "It is better to say nothing at all than to offend the sensibilities of our citizens who are already under siege". If you are not a criminal you do not have to worry about crime, but somehow everyone is worrying about crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Insulting the intelligence and the dignity of our citizens, much in the same way as my colleague has been lamenting about what is going on in La Brea, and some of the pronouncements being made by the relevant Ministers. I mean, how would the Pastor feel about that?

Mr. Speaker, not making sense is also an accusation that could be levelled at the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara. He could stand guilty of the same offence, because the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara said today:

Murders are too high but all other crimes have come down.

That was his balm for the pain of the citizens:

Murders are too high but all other crimes have come down.

He spent a little time ranting and raving around that issue. He gave an example, Mr. Speaker, of motor vehicular theft, and he said, in his style—he has a very colloquial style:

“So yuh work hard for yuh car and at least now dey wouldn’t thief yuh car.”

[*Laughter*] First of all, it was completely irrelevant to the Bill but, secondly, he was using that to counter the fears and the trepidation of citizens about 22 murders in 10 days.

“At least yuh get to keep yuh car because yuh work hard for yuh car.”

Hon. Member: An inanimate object.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, my dear colleague is saying a car is an inanimate object. Mr. Speaker, there is another reality; dead people cannot drive. [*Laughter*] Dead people cannot drive anything so it is no comfort. It is not a counter to people being killed to say, “People can keep their cars”, because dead people cannot drive anything at all. They might be driving in a hearse, but they are not driving the cars that they worked hard for—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Being driven, being driven.

Dr. A. Browne:—being driven—and when you kill someone you take away everything, their ability to do anything at all, and that is part of the reality, dead people cannot drive. So we just want to sweep that off the record in passing.

Mr. Speaker, the nation is bleeding and this Government is not doing anything positive, and at least I want to acknowledge the fact that none of them even stood up here today and really tried to make a case, that this Bail (Amdt.) Bill is going to help us address those 22 murders in 10 days, because that would have been a

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

very brazen case to make, but if it is not doing that, Mr. Speaker, it is not relevant to the priorities of this nation, it is not relevant to the crisis that confronts our people as we speak and, therefore they are not doing their jobs. That is just my view.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara also committed another atrocity when he mentioned, en passant, that the children—he talked about the Children's Authority—very bold face of him—and he said it was—what did he say? It was moving slowly but as least it is moving, and it was not on the cards before. Mr. Speaker, that is not true. The board of the Children's Authority was appointed in 2009, and it was only thereafter that they have been complaining that they have not been getting the required support from this Government appointed since 2009.

I want to remind the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara about an incident in 2011, when a young man was slaughtered, taken away from us, a child by the name of Daniel Guerra, and this country was presented with something called the Daniel Decree, because the Prime Minister at the time cried and wrote a letter to the deceased child which she read in front of the nation at a press conference, and she then appointed a special committee to look into the crisis of attacks on children, and she appointed two chairs. I have never heard of this being done before in terms of a Prime Minister associated with the plight of children. She appointed two chairs to that committee; one was the Member for Caroni Central, Minister Ramadharsingh—this is in 2011 “eh”—the other chair was the Member for Chaguanas East, who is suddenly looking down, the hon. Stephen Cadiz.
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Very quiet.

Dr. A. Browne: Both of them were appointed to chair this committee to deal with this crisis and implement the Daniel Decree, and, Mr. Speaker—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: He stopped marching.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, worse than stopping marching, according to the Member for Diego Martin North/East—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: He stopped marching.

Dr. A. Browne:—he stopped marching—worse than that, being appointed to a position of responsibility—I am responding to something the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara said about the Children's Authority—these two senior

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

Ministers, having been appointed to that signal responsibility by the Prime Minister, I want to ask: How many meetings were convened for the implementation of the Daniel Decree? Mr. Speaker, I am asking it as a rhetorical question, and I do not want my friend from Caroni East to strain himself at all because I already know the answer.

Hon. Member: Caroni East?

Dr. A. Browne: Chaguanas East. I am sorry, I left you out. It is Caroni Central and Chaguanas East, and he knows who he is.

Mr. Speaker, you know how many meetings were convened for the implementation of the Daniel Decree? You know. Not a single one.

Hon. Member: Jesus Lord.

Dr. A. Browne: None! None!

Hon. Member: None?

Dr. A. Browne: In December 2013, the media caught up with the hon. Minister and they asked him, "What about that committee to implement the Daniel Decree?" Remember the tears, the attending funeral, letter to the dead child; a letter written to him, read out for the nation. Not a single meeting. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: "Doh say that."

Dr. A. Browne: Two years had passed, not one, and the Prime Minister herself who had given that commitment to the nation obviously did no follow-up whatsoever, and guess what happens now with this latest child murder? The same playbook is used. The same formula: a committee is appointed, a chair is put in place, and we wait for another distraction, because as I told someone recently, some public officials in this country, they do not look at the clock, they look at the calendar because they know if enough time elapses, the population will get distracted by something else. The Member for St. Augustine knows exactly what I am talking about. He is familiar with the phenomenon, both in Opposition and in Government.

Enough time, another crisis will come along, so these 22 murders are galvanizing us now but the Government is just hoping something else will come along. Yes, the oil spill is a problem, something else will come along and the citizens will just be distracted as we go and somehow we will be in another

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

election campaign and let the money flow once again. Mr. Speaker, my duty will not let me allow that to pass without comment and Members on this side will continue to do their duty under the Constitution.

So I was referring to the Daniel Decree, the abysmal failure of this Government, and then the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara would have the temerity to stand up on the Bail (Amdt.) Bill and talk about—the Children's Authority is moving slow but at least it is moving now—absolute assault on the sensibilities and intelligence of any right-thinking citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, there was no work done, no recommendations, no findings, no analysis, no meetings whatsoever, no accountability by these two chairs. One who is a “mediaphile”, as it were; very, very media friendly but no results and now children are just as vulnerable today, or more so when you look at the statistics.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say in the context of this particular Bill, that one of the big problems in this country has not been flagged by any speaker in this debate except the Member for Diego Martin West, and that is the reality that there are little or no consequences to doing the wrong thing in this country. There are little or no consequences to doing the wrong thing in Trinidad and Tobago, from the streets, to the home, to the Parliament, to Government, to party politics, to the medical fraternity, to the legal fraternity. Anywhere you look there are very few consequences, little or no consequences to doing the wrong thing. That is going to be a problem that will continue to haunt us and that is not simply a UNC problem; it is not simply a COP problem; it is a national issue that we need to confront very early.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just draw an example which is very relevant, and I want to remind those who might be scientifically minded, that cocaine was once used as an anaesthetic in surgeries in the very early days, but those days have long passed us. So anytime, as a public official and a parliamentarian, I hear the word “cocaine” and “surgery” used in the same sentence, I sit up because if it is not a history lesson then it might be a lesson of the need for consequences when the wrong thing is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to refer to an article, very quickly, from the *Trinidad Express*, January 03, 2014, and I am making the point about the need for consequences when the wrong thing occurs in Trinidad and Tobago. The headline is “Secret Cocaine Surgery”, and I really wish the Minister of Health would have

been here for this because he needs to hear this, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I am not imputing any improper motives to him, but I want him to hear this:

“SECRET COCAINE SURGERY

A private hospital has failed to report an incident where 17 pellets of cocaine were surgically removed from the abdomen of a man who had swallowed them and fallen ill.

In an attempt to smuggle the narcotic, valued at millions of dollars, the...man had ingested 20 pellets of cocaine...”—that—“almost cost him his life.

...the man...was taken to a private hospital by a relative after complaining of stomach pains and bowel obstruction.”

That is weeks ago, Mr. Speaker.

“On December 21, 2013, the man underwent a laparotomy—a surgical incision into the abdominal cavity—where the cocaine was found meticulously packaged into pellets.”

So, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the real problem in this country not this fig leaf that the Government has brought.

“...cocaine was found meticulously packaged into pellets.”

This is a wealthy man because his abdomen, his abdominal cavity contains riches, millions of dollars in drugs. What happened here?

“The surgery...started at 5 p.m., lasted for close to three hours and was conducted by a team of five—”

Five citizens of Trinidad and Tobago stood around this cocaine-filled abdomen.

“a surgeon leading three nurses and an anaesthetist.

Sources said during surgery it was found...the man’s bowel was perforated, as nine of the pellets had penetrated the bowel and had entered the...abdominal cavity.

The Express understands that some 17 cocaine pellets were removed from the...body and he disclosed to the hospital staff that three were passed in his stool prior to”—the—“surgery.”

So he is disclosing to them. We will hear about any other disclosures.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

7.30 p.m.

“Sources claimed instructions were given by the surgeon to the medical staff to not take any pictures of the pellets and to package them in a re-sealable storage bag. The illegal drug was handed back to the man.”

Mr. Speaker, I hope you are listening:

“The entire procedure was done under a cloak of secrecy, but left staff at the hospital shocked and concerned.”

And on reading this article, myself and many other citizens are shocked and concerned, to say the least.

“Staff are also asking whether the prominent surgeon who did the surgery was culpable in not making a report to the police after removing that large quantity of drugs from the man’s body.

Because of the bowel perforation, the man’s condition deteriorated...he developed sepsis...”—according to sources—

Nine days later and after close to \$100,000 in medical and hospital fees, on December 30...”—weeks ago—“the man was transferred from the private hospital to the...(ICU) of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex...”

Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that as of this morning, January 10, 2014, the clinic in question—sources indicate it is the St. Augustine Private Hospital—has not yet been interviewed by the police of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Member: What?

Dr. A. Browne: As of this morning, the prominent surgeon in question has not yet been interviewed. That is what I have been told—as of this morning—by the police of Trinidad and Tobago. So we have this reality.

The Minister stood here today and talked about, “Well, people need to trust the police and we need to build this trust, because we are not getting the reports,” but this requires no further illumination in terms of triggering a proper investigation—no further illumination. I would want an explanation as to why, of this morning, those key steps in any investigation have not been done.

Is it really that there is one law for the well-placed in this country and another—because I have made the point and I want to say it again on the *Hansard* today: if this was a humble citizen who found cocaine at the side of the road and failed to report it, I suspect he or she would be in jail already, sitting in jail today

and would have Ministers standing here, ranting and raving and saying that once they are charged, it does not even matter if they are convicted, talking about bail and so on, but someone who appears to be much more prominent would have gone so many weeks after this had been disclosed, and those circumstances have not been properly interrogated.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about trust, the trust is lost further in this incident, because someone was brave enough to actually photograph those drugs against the instructions received. I heard another surgeon floating an alibi. He said that he did not know who it was or where the clinic was, but somehow he conjured an alibi. Maybe they were forced or whatever—threatened. But to the extent that instructions were given to the team, this thing was well coordinated. “No photographs; do not bring any cameras in here at all”; but someone had a conscience.

This tears at our social fabric, and you might wonder why it is affecting me this way, because I view this as a very serious circumstance that tears at our social fabric. You have innocent citizens who woke up that morning, said their prayers and went to work at a clinic. Workers trying to heal and help persons, who found themselves, when they reached back at home to their families, looking back at the day and realizing that they may have played a role, a conspiracy, in one of the most evil industries on the face of humanity: the manufacture, exportation, marketing, smuggling, distribution and use of a drug called cocaine.

I just want to mention the relative silence of the Minister of Health, the other physician, the Minister of Education, the medical board and others, under these circumstances; the slow response as had come to me of the police in this matter. I have to ask the question: where are we going as a country and why would we be surprised that people are falling like flies and people are not trusting the authorities with reports, because sometimes they can predict the response or the lack thereof.

Mr. Speaker, I just want that to be on the record. I am holding that up as an example. I am hoping there would be a good outcome. Maybe investigation would reveal the facts as they stand, but this requires urgent interrogation, a forthright probing, as it were—to use a phrase. The citizens need to be assured that justice actually exists. We have a Ministry called the Ministry of Justice, but that justice actually exists and is real in Trinidad and Tobago. I am not sure that is the case today.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

So the Minister talks about his statistics. He talks about his computerized statistics—I am sorry, his computerized statistics—and he lectures to the public. “I am just not speaking out of a hat. I have my computerized statistics.” But anyone who went to school would know garbage in, garbage out. The computer itself is not a detective. It is not a tool that drives down Duncan Street or drives into Enterprise or anywhere else, and does any investigation and comes to conclusions. Someone has to sit and enter the data. So the Minister telling us that, “Because it is my computerized statistics”, we just have to take it. “Only criminals should be worried about crime in this country.” That is not acceptable.

I just want to reject that line of logic or lack thereof for the Minister, because in this case no computer is needed, but a rapid response is needed. They are boasting about their rapid response, their vehicles, their pretty colours, everything else, but when a rapid response is required, it does not seem to be happening. That troubles me, and that should trouble every citizen of this country.

I just want to make a final point on this matter, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is an important one. I remember, I believe it was September 2011, there was another transgression that came to the public’s attention. You know what that was? It was a schoolgirl, my friend, a schoolgirl who had done a very foolish and odious act in making a YouTube video using foul language and being very disrespectful to the Prime Minister, saying all sorts of nonsense on that video. She was rightfully condemned by many persons because that is not something you should encourage any child to do.

You know what? Many persons were astounded a few days later: the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago called a press conference. At that stage no charges were brought. The police service knew nothing about this. No complaint was made to them whatsoever. The DPP was completely oblivious of this matter. The Attorney General called a press conference in this country, condemning the individual, before trial or anything else, and demanding that she go to the nearest police station and turn herself in. That was the response to that circumstance. Mr. Speaker, the response to this circumstance fingering the cocaine industry, is silence.

The Attorney General probably still has on his Santa hat. He does not know anything about this. The Minister of Health said, “It is not my sector. Check the Minister of National Security. Nothing to say.” The police commissioner said he would have to get a report on it; he knows nothing. But with a child, against whom no complaint, no charge was made, a press conference at the Ministry of the Attorney General telling her, “Go and turn yourself in right now.” I am

waiting to hear anyone say to any of the players in this scandal, “Go and turn yourself in right now,” and call their name in a press conference in a Government Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, this country is upside down. This Government is presiding over an empire of injustice. There is no consequence to wrongdoing in this country whatsoever. There is one law for the rich, one law for the poor, and this Bill, and removing bail in certain circumstances from a few additional offences, is doing nothing to protect our citizens from the assault that affects us the most.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Hon. Member for Diego Martin Central has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Member.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you. I appreciate it, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues on both sides of the House.

The reason I chose to spend some time on that matter, number one, it affects me greatly, and number two, it is the whole social justice aspect which I will not dwell on at the moment. But number two, it is my view that one of the common triggers behind all of these symptoms—receiving stolen goods; the gang membership in Trinidad and Tobago; the car stealing ring; the coercion and encouraging; the possession of bulletproof vests; arms, ammunition; harbouring and concealing; threatening; extortion; demanding money with menace; manslaughter; robbery with violence and aggravation; severe bodily harm; grievous sexual assault; kidnapping; ransom demands, et cetera—one of the common causal factors, is the same cocaine industry and its unfettered reality in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, if we are to deal with this, as the Government says it would like to do, we need to deal with that.

I want to say, to be very crystal clear, that this industry would not be as successful in this country, as it is, and there would not be such a paucity of arrests and convictions—we got a lot with marijuana, but very few with cocaine—there is a reason behind that, and it suggests that this industry is being well facilitated at every single level in this country.

Mr. Deyalsingh: At the hospitals too.

Dr. A. Browne: Every single level—not excluding the medical industry. They are players at every level. Mr. Speaker, this is happening, in my view, every single day, and it is only when something goes wrong, society gets a little chance to get some insight into or a precious opportunity to get a grip on this beast. When something goes wrong; when a mule gets sick. If this mule did not get sick, we would never know. He would be in London today enjoying his spending money, or in New York or wherever else, Member for Mayaro; Dubai.

This is a precious, special opportunity, and if we see no evil and hear no evil and pretend that all is well, and we do not encourage immediate action and we do not use our pulpits, our positions of influence with society, to make some pronouncements, Mr. Minister of Health, at least in principle, then we are failing the country. And I know the Member for Tabaquite would agree with me in his quiet moments.

So let us use these opportunities more, and not just when it is a matter of advantage, a little school child. Say something, do something, establish a point of principle, because there is the next one. There is the young intern, somebody might call him and say, “Listen, take out a little bullet, nuh; yuh pardner on de block get shoot.” But he knows that “pardner” was involved in a robbery. “Doh say nuttin nuh, we will give you a little \$5,000, a little \$10,000.” With this backdrop and with all these public officials being silent on such a serious complaint, what is the signal we are sending to the rest of society?

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, it is only when something goes wrong it creates a precious opportunity, and it is what we do in these circumstances that will determine whether we might save a child from being a glassy-eyed addict sitting at the side of the road or not.

7.45 p.m.

The other thing that I would encourage the police to look at is who paid the bill.

Hon. Member: “Hm mm.”

Dr. A. Browne: Because in these circumstances you have to follow the money.

Hon. Member: FIU now, FIU.

Dr. A. Browne: FIU! Well, police have to come in front. Follow the money, Mr. Speaker. This is a precious opportunity, but it does not appear that the

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

Government is in any way concerned or associated with this matter, and let the chips fall where they may. I do not know what they are going to say, “go to the police; go to the police.”

Mr. Speaker, I could talk a bit—when we are speaking about organized crime and its facilitators, there was a gentleman of Italian origin named Mario Puzo who wrote a book called *The Godfather*, familiar book to many of us. A book called *The Godfather*, and one of the—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: Great book.

Dr. A. Browne: Yeah, a great book; great film. You saw the film you did not read the book.

Miss Ramdial: I read the book. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Browne: One of the pivotal scenes in that book and in the film that was made on Mario Puzo’s book was the wedding scene. And you know what was special about that wedding? What was remarkable is persons from all walks of life—and this is a wedding associated with the Don himself: the congressmen, the judges, the police captain, people high in society were not even afraid to gather at that wedding and associate themselves with the captains of the mafia industry. And I just wonder, Mr. Speaker, if ever we were to have a scene like that in this country what signal would we be sending to our children.

If we would find ourselves as public officials in the same social space as persons who are on 97 counts of fraud and white-collar crime in the United States of America today, what signal are we sending to the same young people and children that might find themselves charged with these crimes and who might ask, what about us?

Dr. Moonilal: Rohan Sinanan.

Dr. A. Browne: What about us?

Miss Mc Donald: Why would—

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Oropouche East is saying that he was at such an event and he saw a Mr. Sinanan at that same event, I condemn them both if that is what he is saying. [*Interruption*] I am not playing any games with the Member for Oropouche East today.

Mr. Speaker, [*Interruption*] again, this is an example, number one, of trying to interrupt me—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: He was not there.

Hon. Member: He said his wife.

Mr. Imbert: He was not there, neither Sinanan.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: He was not there.

Mr. Imbert: He is telling untruth.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I am glad these issues are raised, you know, because you are hearing what is coming up and I am listening. My ears are wide open as well. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: The chairman acknowledged too.

Mr. Imbert: He was not there.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on because the Member for Oropouche East clearly has gotten very defensive, but I just want to reassure him, I am just speaking about a scene in a book called *The Godfather* and the kind of gathering that this wedding triggered in the book. [*Interruption*] I do not know why he is screaming and ranting and raving.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch on two or three other points, one of which was triggered by the Member for D'Adabie/O'Meara and it was dealt with, to some extent, by my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, and that was his premise that poverty leads to crime. [*Interruption*] What would you say, that poverty leads to crime? And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to make one statement on that and move on. I am responding on behalf of every humble citizen of this country, every family who is struggling to make ends meet today and who may have been struggling in years past, every family who is trying their hardest to make an honest day's work match an honest day's pay, send their children to school, hold down a little job, bring some money home and raise their children in the right way. Every humble circumstance citizen of this country, I want to disassociate us from that thread presented by the Member for D'Adabie/O'Meara, that poverty leads to crime. [*Desk thumping*]

We reject that 100 per cent and I can tell you categorically, my own family which has emerged from abysmal poverty over the last two generations rejects that out of hand. I do not know what he is talking about, Mr. Speaker. But I could tell him some of the things that do lead to crime, and it is when young people are faced with obvious neglect. Obvious neglect, obvious injustice; that can lead to the type of thinking. I will give you—I wonder if I should give that story very

briefly. I remember when I left school. I think it was after Form 5 at Queen's Royal College. I had done very well and I was looking for a job and I sat with one of my parents and we wrote applications everywhere, to every bank, every insurance company, all and sundry got a nice standard letter, introducing, giving how I performed in school and all the other extracurricular activities, seeking employment. Every single one came back, "We will keep your application on file." We wrote about 60. "We will keep your application on file; we will call you should a vacancy arise." Just one responded positively, Mr. Speaker, and that was a hardware store in Cocorite. A hardware department, they offered me a very humble job at that time.

Mr. Speaker, I remember going to work in my jeans and overalls and different things like that and I would see passing into the store after work, persons who were in school with me, who were smoking weed, who were breaking "biche", who never passed a single test in their life. Right! The fringed elements of a school system coming in, dropping in after work with their shirt and tie and cuff links, and who were working at the bank. I might not be the only one with this experience; there might be others, who knows—the Member for Barataria/San Juan can empathize he said—because their daddy was somebody and their mommy was connected to somebody, and they were doing very well, they got nice cushy jobs.

I remember as a very young person doing some introspection and sometimes I would even feel embarrassed as to where I was working, because I said, why was I spending, exerting so much energy trying to do the right thing and working so hard, going blind somewhat, studying, when it seemed that I was not—society was not quite giving me the rewards at that time, and I just probably had to work a little harder like many of us have done to progress. But I remember having those thoughts.

I am saying that to say that it is not really poverty, but when young people—and I could relate to some of their circumstances—when they are confronted by incidents of discrimination or failure to thrive based on merit, but seeing people thrive based on other characteristics and circumstances, that can lead to them making decisions that could result in the wrong—[*Interruption*] You understand or you do not? Right!

So, Mr. Speaker, I say these things because the Minister of Sport, who was the former Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, had a precious opportunity and his successors in the youth sector have had a precious opportunity in the form of a

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

multi-million dollar three-storey piece of infrastructure, facility in St. James called the St. James Youth Facility, to intervene in the lives of thousands of young persons. Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: You have until 8.10 p.m.; 10 past eight.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you. He and his successors have had a very precious opportunity to intervene in the lives of thousands of young people in the western peninsula which could circumvent a lot of this and prevent a lot of these offences.

Let me tell you what I mean by that, Mr. Speaker. It is not that we have been asking the Government to build anything for these young people. It is that we have been telling the Government it is already built. Mr. Speaker, that facility was completed in 2010. It was handed over to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs at the beginning of 2010. To this day not a single child has received any training or any facilitation at that multi-million dollar facility. The yard is being used by victims of the cocaine industry, while our children continue to struggle to survive.

So, I am saying if the Member is at all concerned about crime and prevention of crime, it is issues like those that continue to fester that should be addressed with blinding urgency and alacrity so that we would not have to deny any one of those children bail. They would have some additional hope and they would have one less excuse as well, because we need to take away excuses when you talk about individual responsibility. Yes, so they are blaming the lack of a youth centre, well present, hand over that centre, make the programming available, make the training available, the vocational assistance available, and then, yes—*[Interruption]*—of course you have to hold them to account, but do not keep that building, and it was nicely painted, nicely fitted and it is sitting there. It is an insult to every passerby and every resident, because they see it in their community for four years and they are saying, what is the Government waiting on? Are they waiting on election 2015 to do a nice reopening again with a scissors and tape? What is the problem? And there are other facilities in the western peninsula and elsewhere in the country that are already built, and people are asking, what is the delay? What is the delay?

If it is some infrastructural flaw, I do not know. If there is some infrastructural issue, why has not a nail been struck? Why has not a brick been moved or a board been shifted? Why has nothing been done in four years—that is the question—if we are talking about a Government being concerned about crime, the prevention of crime, the homicide rate, serious crime and the assault on the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? So, the young man who beat and burned Leroy in Cocorite

a few days ago as one of these 22, whose funeral I attended; who knows, maybe he himself could have attended one of these programmes and have been involved in something constructive as opposed to his destruction, taking away from a community one of its characters, a part of our social fabric.

Mr. Speaker, so it is not as if this Government does not have within its means—I spoke about the individual responsibility, the family responsibility and the responsibility of the State. All of these must be focused on and are relevant, but it is not as if the State does not have within its means many avenues that can be acted upon very urgently to help buffer our citizens from this epidemic of crime and murder. It does. But my premise today is that the Government has been failing in its responsibility in many, many ways.

And, Mr. Speaker, I said three more points and I just want to, again, touch on something the Minister of National Security said as part of my conclusion. Because in the conclusion of his remarks, he referred several times to recidivism and, again, not using any direct evidence but trying to—because you always speak to the lowest common denominator out there or someone who may not be paying attention, might have the parliamentary channel on in the background. So, he threw out those words and somehow tried to create a picture or might want us to assume that the Government has evidence that the persons who are being targeted by this amendment, the Government has some sort of proof that recidivism is connected to the crimes that are being committed today, but we have yet to see any such proof.

I just want to ask the Minister a very specific question and he will have opportunities to respond, and his colleagues would have an opportunity to respond on his behalf today, and he can refer to his computerized statistics that seem to be his guru on everything. He can refer to his acting Commissioner of Police or anyone else. Bring out all the statistics, bring out your computers, bring out the NSOC. I saw the NSOC photographs with a lot of flat screen televisions in a room. *[Interruption]* Bring all of those flat screen televisions out and give us this one fact that will assist us in digesting this amendment Bill. *[Interruption]*

Let us start, Mr. Speaker, with analyzing the 22 we have had for 2014, and I have not checked my phone or my iPad, but it may be—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Twenty four.

Dr. A. Browne: Well, you see we need to speak quickly because the number changes by the hour.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Mr. Speaker, let us start with the 22 that I was aware of as of this morning, and I want to ask the Minister of National Security, how many of the 22—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Twenty four.

Dr. A. Browne:—the perpetrators of the murders that we have had so far, given the low detection rate, how many of those 22 have already been convicted in the last 10 years of possession of imitation firearm in pursuance of any criminal offence; of larceny of motor vehicle; of perverting or defeating the course of public justice?

8.00 p.m.

Was the gentleman who shot his wife in the head and put a shotgun to his chin and blew his head off, is he involved here at all? What is the relevance of the Minister's assumption to this amendment Bill and how is that connected to the crisis this country is in today? That is the question I am asking, Mr. Speaker, because I do not want them to just leave it up in the air. I want them to make that connection to the murders we have had for 2014 thus far because they are trying to create the impression—and the Minister has been creating the impression—he has all of this information; he knows who all the gang leaders are and who should and should not get contracts, but he is missing something and I want to give it to him today.

He already has the power with the police service to arrest, to detain every single one of those persons he is talking about, far less for getting a contract. “If they in jail, they not goin to get any contract”. He has that power. He has not been using that power but he has been using the gift of gab to try to convince people that he knows something and he is going to do something. So “doh run yuh mouth” and so on. If you know who these people are, arrest them; have the police use the anti-gang Act and arrest them.

Dr. Rambachan: That is for the DPP.

Dr. A. Browne: What DPP? Come on! Stop hiding behind public officials. So if the Minister knows—because he is saying he can block them from getting contracts and he is always complaining about mysterious Cabinet colleagues and people who are facilitating it. Right? He knows who they are. You have the tool. We, in the Parliament, gave you the tool to deal with it, and it was a very harsh Act, you know—a very harsh Bill. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What contracts you talking about?

Dr. A. Browne: You know. If even you are associated with a symbol—right?—or an insignia, or any item of clothing, et cetera, that could somehow be construed as linked to a gang or gang membership, far less for being a gang leader, far less for the Minister having the information to say that to the public, but they are not arresting them.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying, besides all the Government's old talk, besides this fig leaf piece of legislation that they have not properly justified, I am saying this Government has failed in its mandate. I am saying we have yet another Minister of National Security who has proven he does not know what he is doing; he does not know what he is talking about. I am saying if the Government is serious about dealing with crime and homicide, and the epidemic that confronts this country, they would start to set the right example; they would start to demonstrate that there is consequence when wrong is done; they would consider withdrawing this Bill altogether because it does not respond to the current crisis that is on our hands and they would seek—I will put it politely—a fresh mandate from the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, they do not have the answer. This nation is now almost completely lawless and it appears as if our leaders do not care. A plaster like this cannot cure cancer in no way, shape or form.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that a few years ago a President of the Republic, a senior official, told us—warned us—about being in a failed state—the danger of being in a failed state, and I would want to say that if those warnings were relevant then—and I think his words were well-placed; his concerns were well-placed—I wonder how he would describe our condition today. And I am hoping those with power, or without power, or who might have power, would find ways to speak to the nation as well because some of those in public office today are very silent on some of the pressing realities that they should be speaking about ad nauseam. They are speaking a lot about things that really have no relevance to the crisis in which we find ourselves.

In terms of the social aspect that the Minister of National Security made passing reference to, we had a plan in this country just a couple years ago, to decentralize our social services so that we would have a social worker and social assistance in every neighbourhood and community of Trinidad and Tobago. The pilot phase was actually implemented in the Sangre Grande region and the programme was posited to work its way right across Trinidad and Tobago.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Mr. Speaker, that has all been abandoned for the sake of self-promotion and a Minister and his entourage in front of the cameras doing walkabouts and handing out hampers and cards and so on, the decentralization of social services, bringing that assistance and that buffer closer and closer to our families, that does not exist. So we find people being set on fire, shot, et cetera, at a record level in 2014.

We see domestic violence at an all-time high resulting in homicide. You are not even getting battered people coming to the station. You are getting a report of a dead body or bodies, in a household. It has happened before. It is not new, but I am just saying the Government is not responding to it properly. And if that social sector plan is somehow re-discovered and re-ignited, maybe down the road we could start seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. The Government is not responding. Hampers and cards are not going to solve that. It takes thinking; it takes caring and it takes strategic implementation. They have wasted years on issues like this—people being shot, stabbed, chopped, beaten and burnt.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to end with a quote from a pastor—not the Member for Arima. I would not be quoting him today. A pastor who—a Seventh Day Adventist pastor who officiated at the funeral of Leroy, who is one of the victims for 2014. Leroy was a humble man—very humble man. Some say he had mental issues, but he was part of the fabric of the community of Cocorite. Someone from outside of that community came in, beat him brutally, set him on fire and left him to die by flame. Mr. Speaker, at that funeral—it was very well officiated by this particular pastor. He gave an analogy to the gathered audience and I thought it was so powerful I would share it in today's debate.

He said if someone brought a large jar forward and filled it to the cover with rocks—with large rocks; fill that jar with rocks—would you say that the jar is filled? And he waited for a response. Some said no, some said yes. And he said—*[Interruption]* No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no. He said, “What if you then take gravel and you pour it into that same jar and the gravel fills up the space between the rocks that had filled the jar, you would realize the jar was not filled and there was still room for gravel. Is the jar now filled? No. You take sand and you pour it into that same jar, you would find there is room for a lot of sand in there. The jar was not filled. Is it filled now? No. If we take water—a jug of water—and you pour it into that same large jug, there is still room for water.

Mr. Speaker, you can draw many lessons. And I sat there—and you can draw many lessons from that particular analogy. But if you start with the water and the sand, there would be no room for the gravel and there would be no room for the

rocks. The reason I share that in this debate is that if you do not have your sequence correct and you do not have your priorities right, you will not achieve anything positive. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, you put that at a national level in the context of all of the activities that this Government has been engaging in, and the important things that they have paid no attention to whatsoever, it appears as if—it seems to me as if—they have their priorities in exactly the reverse order, and if they have started 2014 with this fig leaf, unjustified amendment Bill, it tells me that we are not building our house on a bed of rock; we are building it on sinking sand.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Tabaquite, Minister of Works and Infrastructure. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, many of our colleagues on the benches of the Opposition have engaged in different kinds of excursions today, excursions one way or the other, excursion to the St. Augustine hospital, excursion into a letter written by one Surujdeen Persad, excursions here, excursions there, excursions everywhere, and seemed to have deflected from the essence of what this debate is all about, which is to bring about a higher level of security and comfort to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition read out all the offences for which bail would not be granted in terms of this Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member:—moving material in Tobago.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: —and he made it appear in his contribution, very deliberately I would say, as if on the first commitment of these offences, the person will be denied bail for 120 days—very, very skillfully tried to create the impression that, you know, on the first offence, but he did not really go back to say about there are other amendments that have been made to the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, which I will refer to and so on.

So it is important, Mr. Speaker, that we go back to the Explanatory Note of the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013 and read it properly into the record to show what is for debate here and what is really before the House. And the Explanatory Note says:

“The purpose of the Bail (Amendment) Bill, 2013 is to amend the First Schedule of the Bail Act, Chap. 4:60 and to substitute a new list of offences

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

Friday, January 10, 2014

for which a person who is charged for any such offence”—and now come the important words—“and who has a previous conviction for any such offence during the last ten years will not be entitled to be granted bail.”

And I think that these words are instructive because it is the essence of what we are talking about and not as positioned by the Leader of the Opposition and maybe other speakers on the other side:

“...to substitute a new list of offences for which a person who is charged for any such offence and who has a previous conviction”—

Mr. Samuel: That is the wording.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—“for any such offence during the last ten years will not be entitled to be granted bail.”

Mr. Samuel: That is the thing. Read it again.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Next line in the Explanatory Note:

“However, where the matter has not started after one hundred and twenty days, the person is entitled to apply to a judge to be granted bail.”

Mr. Samuel: Read that again.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker,

“...where the matter has not started after one hundred and twenty days, the person is entitled to apply to a Judge to be granted bail.”

So the law intends to protect even the person who is not granted bail.

Dr. Khan: Giving them a chance.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And that is why we are before this House. We are not here to just take away the freedom of anybody, but we are here to protect everybody.

Mr. Samuel: That is right.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: But in the protection of the rights of those who have offences and those who are before the court, we must also protect the rights of those who are not before the courts and who are law abiding and who want to live a life according to the law. We must create a safe and secure environment for them, and that is the crux of this debate that is taking place here this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, it was very uncanny, and I think, you know, it is getting to be a habit of the Leader of the Opposition, to come and read letters into the parliamentary records. First, was about email and “emailgate” and what have you, and create a scandalous state of affairs for which the Leader of the Opposition has so far not brought any proof, and for which that matter is under investigation. But let me say here today that I have given to the Integrity Commission, through my lawyers—I have given my lawyers instructions that the Integrity Commission can examine my emails to see whether what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is true or not, and I want to tell you that it is an absolute lie what he brought before this Parliament—what he did.

Mr. Speaker: I think you could use better language. Please, please.

8.15 p.m.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you. All right, Mr. Speaker. He is a stranger to the truth. Mr. Speaker, today, he brought another letter written by another person, Surajdeen Persad, I believe, if I am correct is the name of the person, and I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition were to become Prime Minister what will become of people like Surajdeen Persad?

Hon. Member: He gone!

Hon. Member: He gone through.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: What would become of him? Why is it that the Leader of the Opposition is attempting to criminalize the characters of certain people in the country?

Hon. Member: [*Desk thumping*] Good point.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Why? Why is that happening, Mr. Speaker? Why? Why is that happening? What is wrong with Surajdeen Persad that you have to draw his name into the Parliament and to create a scandal around him? Why are you doing this? Is Surajdeen Persad the only one; or are you trying to affect the future potential of people to rise to the top in this country by what you are bringing before the Parliament like this and creating scandal?

The one thing that this Government has not had to do is, go on the newspaper and have a headline like today, on *Newsday*, Friday, January—“PNM does not hate Indians”. In the UNC and the People’s Partnership, we have never had to say things like this because we are one of the most cosmopolitan parties that you will have in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Well said! Well said!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: One of the most cosmopolitan.

Mr. Sharma: The most.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: So that you come here and try to scandalize and criminalize people. I think it is absolutely wrong and must be condemned. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition should learn from the Member for Diego Martin Central in terms of the quality of the contribution—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Nah, nah, nah!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—that he has made. But then again, the Member for Diego Martin Central was the pick of the Member for San Fernando East to be his replacement and, therefore, that cannot happen. So there is a war that will continue between the two.

Dr. Browne: Standing Order 36(5).

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5).

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—they speak about the administration of—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: The leader is imputing improper motive?

Mr. Speaker: What did he say wrong that you are objecting to, Member?

Mr. De Coteau: You “doh” want to be a leader?

Dr. Browne: You are asking for an explanation, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes. You say he is imputing improper motives.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, yes, I think the Minister is seeking to draw me, as a Member, into an implication that is improper. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Continue. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Member for Diego Central was very happy today when he saw the Member for San Fernando East because it opens the doors of opportunity for him once again.

Hon. Member: Young Browne.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, they spoke about this Government not doing anything about the administration of justice. That is not true. This Government has been doing everything to support the Judiciary—the appointment of judges, the agreement upon new and increased staff for the Office of the DPP. On the other hand, we have done other things: the introduction of the rapid response unit, the highway patrol. So many things are being done in the country in the fight against crime and criminality, and I will show you that it is not just that that is involved. There are many more things that are involved.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central spent a long time speaking about an incident where he named the hospital, and I would not name any hospital because there is no evidence before me except a newspaper report in an *Express* newspaper which suggests that something was done at a hospital. But for the Member to come here and name the hospital and cast aspersions upon people against whom no proof has been presented—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Um hmm.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—that is something dangerous. That is something dangerous. Let the police do their job. And if the police find people guilty of an offence, let the chips fall where the chips should fall. But I do not think it is the right of us here to come and castigate institutions and castigate people where we do not have the proof as Members of this House.

Dr. Browne: Well done, Suruj.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: We should not do that. And if the Member has proof that it is the hospital he has named, then he has an obligation as a public servant and a representer of the people to take that proof to the police. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Browne: You backing the cocaine.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, he should, but it goes back—you see, it is a habit of the PNM to do these things. One remembers a former Prime Minister, I believe, coming—a PNM Prime Minister—into this House and reading out the medical records of a former captain of one of the airlines, in this House.

Dr. Browne: The clinic will be named tomorrow in the media.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: If the clinic is named in the media, fine. Nothing is wrong in that. Let the chips fall where the chips should fall.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

Friday, January 10, 2014

I wish, Mr. Speaker, to say the following: that any debate like this which has the effect of curtailing the freedom of a person, will generate a very active public discussion as much as it has done in this House. However, it is not only the debate which we engage in this House that is important. It is not only that debate. To me, what is also important is the debate that is taking place amongst the citizens of the country regarding this Bill—the debate that is taking place there—and I think that is of greater significance. And in that debate that is taking place, the citizens of this country, they want this Government to bring forward this type of legislation to protect them as citizens of this country, and they are on the side of this Government with respect to this type of legislation.

And while we as Members of Parliament have been elected to represent the views of our constituents, and while we are expected to appropriately and, as far as possible, correctly reflect their views, we must also listen to their views. Whether these views are being heard on the talk shows as they are, whether they are by letters to the press, whether they are in the print media, the Internet, the social media or within their communities, it is our duty to listen, and if we listen, you will hear the cries of the people of this country for legislation like this. This is why the people of this country were disappointed when the Opposition failed to support the hanging Bill, as we may choose to call it, that came before the House and, today, they are talking a different kind of language because if I go back—

Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the points of view of the Opposition on matters like this one that is before us, I seriously wonder to what extent the Opposition is presenting a case for the freedom of the criminal rather than the protection of law-abiding citizens of our twin Republic. I really wonder to what extent you are presenting a case, and you are doing that perhaps unconsciously. Perhaps unknowingly you are doing that. Perhaps you are doing it for political reasons. Perhaps you are happy to see the rate of murders go up in the country. Perhaps you are happy to see serious crimes go up in the country because you feel that that will give you some political advantage. That itself is a kind of treason. That is a kind of hate for your own country and your own society when you can see in the misfortunes of others a political advantage. It is one thing to reach the pinnacle of your profession, but it is another thing to do so at the expense of the discomforts of another person. When you think you are successful because another person is unsuccessful, then you are not successful at all. It is a great pity. It is a great, great pity and that is what is happening here.

I wish to warn the Opposition that the decent law-abiding majority of the citizens of this nation are growing increasingly tired of your attempt to derail

legislation which will have the power to place the criminal elements behind bars where they belong and allow the law-abiding citizens the freedom, safety and security that is their right in this country. And, as a group of lawmakers—which we are; we are lawmakers—we must not in protecting the rights of those convicted and charged with offences, we must not in trying to protect them somehow continue to place in jeopardy the safety of those who have chosen to abide by the law and live within the law. [*Desk thumping*] We must not do that—not because you see some political advantage in doing so. That is shameless and shameful.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition will perhaps argue that it is their right to oppose. No problem in that. That is the kind of democracy we live in. But the right to oppose is not a right that gives you the right to do things that destroy the peace in the society or deny the opportunity for greater security of the law-abiding citizen. Yes, we are in the business of politics, and this leads us up so many times to seek political advantage as I said. But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Opposition that this present Government, when we were in Opposition, always looked at what was in the nation's interest when we debated Bills like these and gave our support to what was right for Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we gave our support for. Here we are today—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Good point. Very good point.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and we must collectively give our support to this Bill at a time when it is right for Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member for Diego Martin Central earlier today told me, he says: “I believe in truth and I live by the truth”. And I believe him. He is a very decent young man—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Be careful. Be careful.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and I respect him for that because he has always spoken the truth. But he spoke some truths that are important today. He admitted in his statement that there is a criminal assault on the population. Member for Diego Martin Central, if there is criminal assault on the population, then you will also agree that there needs to be taken action that protects the citizens against those criminal assaults, and if it is that the Bill before the Parliament—the Bail (Amdt.) Bill—is one such Bill, then Member for Diego Martin Central, you must rise to the occasion, you must transcend your political—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Because you say so?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—moods and political beliefs at this point, and political connections, and say what is right for Trinidad and Tobago and this is what is right for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Seemungal: And supporting it.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: You cannot live one truth that is a truth here and live an inconvenient truth on the other hand. You must live one truth. The Member also said, and I took note of it, that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago were suggesting that the Government should introduce a state of emergency. Member do you recall saying that? You said that. I want therefore to ask the Member for Diego Martin Central what is his point of view. Is it his point of view that we should have a state of emergency in the country?

Dr. Browne: Member?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Sure.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way. My response to you—I assume it is a sincere enquiry—is that if it in anyway shape or form resembles the illegal SoE, unjustified SOE that was imposed two years ago, I will say absolutely not. In the circumstances of today, Members on this side have already given very specific suggestions, including myself, of immediate actions that the Government should take. If those actions are put in place, I think the Government would be better off than they are today with this particular Bill. My own view is that a state of emergency is not justified at this particular time. But to clarify what I said, it is not that the citizens are suggesting an SoE.

Hon. Member: Too long. Too long.

Dr. Browne: I said some citizens are talking about an SoE because they are looking at the Government and looking at the situation—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Okay young Browne.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Browne: Hold on! Hold on! They are looking at the Government and looking at the situation, the crisis in front of us and saying that the Government is not doing anything. I also made the point that this Bill—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: No, no, no.

Dr. Browne:—is not relevant

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: No, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Browne: I also made the point that this Bill—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: No, no. Mr. Speaker, that is enough!

Dr. Browne:—is not relevant to the circumstances—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members! Members, Members, both of you all cannot be on your legs. One of the challenges that we have is that once you give way to a Member and the Member is seeking to clarify points, that is the challenge that you have. So, I think that you have to allow the Member to conclude and then you will continue. Continue—

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I will no longer interrupt the Member.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin Central you are over?

Dr. Browne: I will no longer interrupt the Member for Tabaquite. I am being—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Okay, Member for—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Member for Diego Martin Central. But you introduced it and you should go back into the *Hansard* and check what you said.

Mr. Speaker, he also said that people voted for the People's Partnership Government because they thought that we could do better. We have done better. We have done better!

Dr. Browne: Twenty-two murders in 10 days is better?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Serious crimes whether you like it or not the statistics are there and the statistics were not created by the Government. The statistics were created from the reports received by the police.

Dr. Browne: Is murder a serious crime?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: The serious crimes have come down by 28 per cent over 2013, over 2012, and we have never said that murders do not continue to be a challenge. Our speakers, on this side, have said that murders continue to be a challenge but on every other category of crime, it has come down.

8.30 p.m.

Dr. Browne: Is murder a serious crime?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Murder is a serious crime. It is a serious crime and we have said that it continues to be a challenge, and we are not going to run away from it. The Prime Minister has said over and over that crime continues to be a number one concern of the Government, and the Government is going to continue to do that which is necessary in order to shape a secure environment for our citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and we take on that challenge, and we are going to continue to persist in realizing of our goal for a safe and secure Trinidad and Tobago. We are going to do it, and by God and with God's help, we are going to succeed. We are in this together, every citizen is in this together, and citizens are going to band together and try to do something about this crime, and the Government is going to lead the way. The Government is not going at all to run away from its responsibility in dealing with the criminal situation.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back in a little bit of history. Friday, December 16, 2005, the debate on the Bail (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill, 2005, and there in that debate, I want to quote former Attorney General, John Jeremie. During that debate, the PNM viewed the amendment as important due to the high level of crime, and they viewed that amendment to the Bill as a mechanism to reduce crime, and the then Attorney General is quoted on page 401 of the *Hansard* as saying:

“There is no doubt that we are living in dangerous times. The average ordinary citizen is gripped”—with—“the fear of kidnapping, murder and...violent crime, the persistence of which is an affront to everything we can consider to be Trinidadian and Tobagonian...”

And he goes on to further state:

“We earnestly believe that in the near future when historians look back at Trinidad and Tobago, how it was able to solve its crime problem and see drastic reductions in...”—crime, we—“will look back to this day in...Parliament...”

And he further emphasized the fact that the PNM then believed that the amendment to the Bail Act could have been used as a tool to reduce the level of crime. He went on to say:

The—“Legislature must seek to go the distance to discourage the commission of kidnapping offences and other violent crimes which threaten to strangle us.”

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

The then PNM Attorney General viewed this amendment as important as the society was psychologically affected by crime. To quote him:

“In other cases,”—he said—“kidnappings gone awry have resulted in murder; where things go right, they still go wrong, in this sense, because victims are scarred psychologically. Our society has been shamed.”

What is important though is that the PNM understood then, you know. They do not want to understand today but they understood then, and acknowledged that this amendment was not in accordance with the Constitution which is what they are arguing today also, and that everyone has the entrenched right to bail. But, they noted then that the right is not an absolute right, and listen to what the AG then said, “eh”—AG Jeremie:

“...it is well-established that in”—constitutional—“jurisprudence the fundamental rights and freedoms enjoyed by the individual are not absolute rights. The right of each individual must be balanced against the right of the State to protect all individuals collectively.”

He said also that the right of the individual:

“...must always take second place to society’s right, as a whole:...”

What is society’s right at this point in time? Society’s right is to be protected from the scourge of the criminals. And if it is that this Bail (Amdt.) Bill, with these series of offences, has to be passed in Parliament then we must do the right thing and pass it in Parliament. We must do that; that is the right.

So you speak one thing in 2005 but you come and you speak another thing eight years later, in 2013, and that is why I am saying put aside your political hats, put aside your attempt to gain political advantage, and for once, think Trinidad and Tobago and be a national.

Mr. Sharma: Yes, man, yes! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Be a national. If you say you are national, be a national. But you cannot be nationals—except for the Member for St. Joseph who wears the Trinidad and Tobago tie, I see everybody else wearing the PNM tie. So you take a PNM position but you do not take a nationalist position. [*Desk thumping*] That is what you are doing.

Are you against your own country and your own people? Are you willing to see your people brutalized because you want to return to power in the future? Is that what this is all about?

Mr. Sharma: It seems so!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Is that what this is all about?

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5) as a collective.

Mr. Sharma: Nonsense! [*Inaudible*]

Dr. Browne: I take very unkindly to that insinuation.

Hon. Member: Collective!

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh ah collective fool now, man. Oh God.” [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Member for Fyzabad. Please, please, better language, better language, please, please. [*Continuous interruption*] Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, you know, in that contribution of the then Attorney General, John Jeremie, he was making the point that it is possible to take away their entrenched right to the benefit of protecting the country as a whole. And you know, he went further “eh” and I will quote from him. He went further to describe how the Privy Council supports and upholds this precedent, and he gave the famous case:

“...Trinidadian case of *Morgan v. the Attorney General* 1987,”—in which—“legislation which was enacted to restrict increases in rent was challenged. The appellant sought to challenge the legislation on the basis that it interfered with his individual right to enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof, except by due process of law. This, too, was a constitutionally entrenched right. The legislation was passed with a special majority.

In determining the constitutionality of the legislation, the Privy Council balanced the prejudice that might result to thousands of tenants nationwide if the legislation was struck down, against the rental increase to the appellant himself. In this balancing exercise, Lord Templeton said this:

‘Every administration in a democratic society retains power to counter rent rises by rent control. The likelihood of rent control legislation and the form of rent control legislation depend on the current state of housing shortages and on the current political and economic philosophy of the administration.’

And, Mr. Speaker:

“This is”—perhaps—“the basis on which we approach the question of bail”—he said—“in respect of kidnapping and violent crime...the rights of the many outweigh the rights of the one.”

And I am quoting there from Attorney General, John Jeremie.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on to show you what Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds said in the House of Representatives on September 10, 2007, on June 15, 2007, and then again, Mr. Jeremie on March 20, 2007, and I can go and quote for you, July 18, 2008 on the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2008 where the hon. Donna Cox—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Who?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—said:—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Brilliant!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:

“Mr. Speaker, the Government has come to the Parliament with these measures to effectively deal with criminals bent on kidnapping for ransom, committing robberies and sexual offences, as well as destroying the peace and safety of our citizens.”

And I am quoting her:

“...Government and, in fact, the entire national community realized that certain criminal activities were becoming more and more prevalent and we realized that legislative action had to be taken to effectively treat with offences that have a serious impact on the lives of all our citizens.

It is for this reason the Government initiated the passage of this legislation in an effort to curb the freedom of those who have been placed in custody for serious offences.”

And she continued:

“...Despite all of the foregoing operational matters, the country’s legislative framework has been modernized to deal with the insidious nature of 21st Century crime and criminals.”

Dr. Browne: That is Miss Cox?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: This is Miss Cox.

Dr. Browne: Talking very good.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:

“The fact is that criminals explore weaknesses in law enforcement and the legal environment. Therefore,”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: She was reading. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: “Therefore”—and this is important.

“Therefore,”—she said—“as we strengthen the operational capabilities, the Government, with the help of the Opposition, has ensured that our country’s legislative weaknesses were strengthened. The Government’s talks with the Opposition have been productive with the enactment to the amendments to the Bail Act.”

Mr. Speaker, it is important that I say these things because this Government, when in Opposition, in the national interest, rose above any self-interest to protect the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and cooperated with the Government. [*An electronic device emits a song*]

Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Disco? [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Governments today—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Ex-tempo!” [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and governments in the past, whether it be the PNM, the NAR, the UNC and now the People’s Partnership—[*Electronic device sounds off again*] Mr. Speaker, you are providing too complex technology for my friend here, [*Laughter*] the Member for Mayaro. He is having difficulty switching off. Government today—he is just developing his new calypsoes for the new season. [*Laughter*]

Governments today and governments in the past have been spending millions of dollars on social programmes, as well as offering opportunities for training and retooling to inspire people away from a life of crime. We have spent millions of dollars—you and this Government as well. There is no citizen, who, standing on a platform of objectivity, can deny the fact that governments have bent backwards to ensure that citizens, particularly young persons, are skill-empowered. This is, perhaps, one of the few countries in the world where education is as free as it is; where opportunities are in abundance as it is, for people to retool and re-develop. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I say that I, in my heart, believe that there is no reason for people to steal in this country, no reason for people to be criminals in this country, no reason for people to engage in a life of crime in this country. There are jobs available if people want to earn an honest dollar in this country. There are jobs

available, Mr. Speaker, and it is our duty as a Government to help people, to nurture people, into sustainable jobs. It is our duty to reward, to support those who are law-abiding, who are ambitious and they want to advance themselves through legal means. But equally, we have a duty to deal with those who choose to be crooked and to adopt a life of criminality.

Dr. Moonilal: Correct, correct!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: We have a duty to deal with them also, because it is not as if they are not being given opportunities to walk the straight line and to do the right thing and to be honest and to live as decent citizens. You may ask: “Where are the opportunities? Where are the opportunities?”

Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago, the main contractor building the highway to Point Fortin announced that he needed 680 additional workers within the first six months of 2014, of which 232—if I have the number right here—were masons and carpenters, and over 350 were steel benders. People say, “Well, ah ha to have qualifications.” But they have forgotten that this Government brought in the Workforce Assessment Centres [*Desk thumping*] where you could go in and be certified as a steel bender, or as a carpenter, or as a mason, and go and present yourself for work.

Hon. Member: Very true.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: The jobs are there!

In other parts of the world, people with PhDs will go and work in an equivalent Rituals coffee shop while they earn something.

Mr. Peters: Drive taxi.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: They will drive taxi. Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Member of Parliament for Mayaro, is a successful businessman; he is a successful entertainer. [*Crosstalk*] I sat one day with him for about three hours and he was telling me his life story, and I said, “You know, I could see why you wrote some of the kinds of calypsoes you wrote”, because they came from the depth of his own experience, of having to wash dishes in a New York restaurant, of having to go and create ads and do them for TV—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Plant grass!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—plant grass, play his guitar so that he could get a meal to eat at the end of that performance and not a dollar in his pocket. Today, he is successful because he chose to do what was right, he chose to work hard,

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

Friday, January 10, 2014

[*Desk thumping*] and today, he sits here as a lawmaker and he can see it from both sides of the fence. I admire the Member of Parliament for Mayaro, because he brings a kind of experience that when you hear his story—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: So he walks the talk!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: The Member for Diego Martin Central gave his story also today, a very inspiring story. [*Interruption*] A very, very inspiring story.

8.45 p.m.

I did not turn to a life of criminality when, in 1981, having fought the elections for the ONR, the university gave me a letter signed by the then principal, Max Richards which said we cannot renew your contract in August. I did not turn to be a criminal when I bid for a job, through a company, at the prisons to teach supervision and when they saw my name they said wrong name, and we were not given the job. I did not turn to a life of criminality. I did not let the PNM's discrimination drive me to that. I stood up as a man and I did what was right and I continued to keep my vision alive and be an inspiration to myself and do what was right.

Mr. Sharma: Excellent.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, look at what has happened in this country and what is going to happen, the jobs that are going to be available. We took the El Dorado Girls' Camp and turned it into the El Dorado Nursing Academy because we have a shortage of over 3,000 nurses in this country. [*Desk thumping*] You tell me that we should be bringing 180 nurses from Cuba and St. Vincent to man the hospital? That is 180 jobs that should be filled by Trinidadians and Tobagonians. There are jobs in this country, if you want to work and if you want to spend the time—and the Governments, and not only us, the Governments are providing the opportunity to train, so why this love for criminality and crime?

Hon. Member: Wickedness; culture.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: This is a serious question I am asking. Mr. Speaker, with the building of the new San Fernando Teaching Hospital, which Mr. Speaker, I want to say something. I went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester in 2006, for surgery, which fortunately I did not have to have. And Mr. Speaker, I went to other hospitals in the United States.

Dr. Browne: Not Port of Spain General.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And I want to tell you that what was opened in San Fernando yesterday—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: Yes.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—is international, is world class—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: History.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—is first world. *[Desk thumping]* It is first world. And what I understand, if I heard right, is 250 persons have already been trained in order to work in that particular facility. Mr. Speaker, think about when the Penal, Point Fortin, Arima and the children's hospital have been built in this country—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: Oncology centre.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and the oncology centre, how many jobs will be available. How are our people preparing themselves to take these jobs? Jobs are there. You have to prepare yourself now for those jobs, and the Government is providing that. Minister Fazal Karim, through COSTAATT and others, he has started programmes to prepare people for those jobs. The opportunities are there. Therefore, to go into a life of crime is an excuse not to want to work hard and not to develop yourself. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, when you put that in the context of the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013, the Government has a right to protect those citizens who are moving forward—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Ramadhar: It is a duty.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It is a duty and responsibility and to bring this Bill—and this Bill should get the support of Members of the House, if you are all so serious about ensuring that those who want to move along the straight path are allowed to do so without fear of the criminals.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give you another example. There are people in this country who are serious, you know, about advancing themselves. A couple weeks ago, with the help of the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, through NEDCO, we launched a programme of training for 120 entrepreneurs. They were being taught in the elements of Project Management. Some of them were carpenters, some masons, they had some kind of technical skills but they did not have the capacity to manage a job. So we launched a programme over nine weeks to train them as entrepreneurs to start their own

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

Friday, January 10, 2014

business. What was so surprising to me is 120 persons started the programme and 90 finished. Seventy-five per cent of them finished. That is a high ratio of people who finished. [*Desk thumping*]

And you know where they came from? They came from the URP Programme. These were people who were getting the \$70.00 a day and so on and they decided “I want to change my life. I am not going to depend on that.”

Mr. Samuel: Yes.

Hon Dr. S. Rambachan: I am going to rise. I have a new vision and ambition for myself.

Mr. Sharma: Like the sun.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And you know what is happening to them today? In the next three weeks, each one of those persons—90 persons—is being given a job to manage the labour portion of the job. The materials will be bought by the URP. The labour component is being costed and they have their team. And then they will be given a second job and on the third round they would be able to bid on their own jobs. We are going to be able to create 90 new entrepreneurs.

Mr. Samuel: Very good.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have a Procedural Motion to deal with. The hon. Leader of the House.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 10(11), as varied by Standing Order 12(4), I beg to move that this House continue to sit until the completion of the Bill at hand and the matter on the Motion for the adjournment are raised by the Member for Chaguanas West. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

BAIL (AMDT.) BILL, 2013

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, here 90 new entrepreneurs are going to be able to get their own work and to bid for their own jobs. They have chosen the right path. They have to be supported. We have to hold their hands and walk them and we are willing to do that with other people in the society, with every person in the society who wants to do that.

Mr. Speaker, so much has been said here today about what is being done about crime, and what is not being done about crime and what has to be done; so much has been said. And it is making out as if the Government is not doing anything at all. If the Government was not doing anything, the statistics would not have shown a decrease in serious crimes. Yes, I admit we have a challenge with the murders, and we are going to deal with that as we go along. But we also have to deal with the number of domestic violence cases that are occurring in the society also. And one wonders to what extent—we have a phenomenon in the society where we need to groom people in understanding each other in a new world—in a new world.

Mr. Imbert: Only talk, talk, talk.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: I look at some of the domestic violence cases that have taken place right now and I wonder to what extent, in those cases where women have been battered or murdered, it is because the male in the society has not been able to cope and understand the new empowered female in the society. And that is proving a challenge to the male.

Miss Mc Donald: They cannot deal with people like me. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And therefore that is something we have to talk about. The society is changing its norms and maybe people are not understanding that and are unable to cope. And this brings about the dimension as to what we need to do in the schools.

Mr. Samuel: That is right.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Especially form 5, form 6, form 4s, in order to groom people about relationships.

Mr. Samuel: Yes.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And to understand each other.

Mr. Samuel: Important.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Maybe that has to be part of the new educational agenda.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Form 5, form 6, form 4.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Maybe from form 1.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Primary school.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: These are the things we have to deal with. And we are dealing with it. The Government has introduced the Human Value System in education. They have introduced it. The Minister of Education has already spoken about the introduction of parenting in the schools—on being a parent. These things are being done so you cannot say the Government is not alive to the new needs of the society, and the new challenges. But it is not just the Minister of Education or the Government. The society itself must take responsibility for what is happening and therefore we must, together, change what is amiss in the society.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Tabaquite and the Minister of Works and Infrastructure has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. W. Peters*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: That is a very brilliant point. Repeat it.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—I must speak tonight about those who are choosing to walk the narrow path. Mr. Speaker, I had to spend a lot of time at the Mount Hope Hospital—the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, from the Sunday before Christmas to two days ago, with my son who was in the ICU for 11 days. I got an opportunity to see our nurses and our doctors at work. And let me, Mr. Speaker, today, put on record my eternal gratitude to the nurses, doctors and staff at that Complex, and to the Minister of Health, [*Desk thumping*] Dr. Fuad Khan, the Prime Minister and to the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph who took a close interest in this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you there is not one nurse or one doctor who goes to work there, wanting to go to do less than an excellent day's work—not one, Mr. Speaker. I spoke to family upon family, upon family, because I spent an average of 10 to 12 hours a day there, Mr. Speaker, and every family there was in high praise of the medical staff and nurses at that hospital, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell you that. If there is a need for support, it is admin. support that has to be given to them there.

And Mr. Speaker, I found a group of persons there, mainly women, working, and they were working for a company contracted to clean the hospital. Mr. Speaker, they were in a high risk job, in my view—a high risk job. And they were doing that job with such love but you know they were working for \$12.50 an hour, cleaning that hospital. And they deserve better because they have chosen even to work for the minimum wage—but not to engage in a life of crime—and to do something useful. They too were contributing to saving lives. They chose, through what they were doing, cleaning the hospital, to save lives rather than to engage in a life of crime or other kinds of lives.

So we have good people in the society, and therefore we have to support those good people and protect those good people. And when those very people who are earning \$12.50 or those nurses who leave three o'clock in the morning to go home or those doctors who have to run out to the hospital—as I saw them coming there two o'clock in the morning to take care of patients when they were called out,—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: “Check dey trunk.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—they too, Mr. Speaker, have to be protected against criminals. And if it means that we have to pass this legislation to put these people behind bars at least for 120 days, let us do so in the interest of the good people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Let us do so, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And, Mr. Speaker, may I remind again, that if after 120 days the matter has not started, then the person has the right to apply to a judge to be granted bail.

Mr. Samuel: Yes.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: So this is not saying that the person is put away there to rot forever. That is not the case at all. The Bill is very clear in seeking to give protection even to the one who is being denied bail for the 120 days. Mr. Speaker, if we are serious as a society, we have to be serious about the laws we pass. We cannot pussyfoot about these laws again. The country wants this Government to be a serious Government. And this Government is prepared to bring serious legislation, and the country is in support of this serious legislation. And the country is willing to say to the Opposition “cross the line and vote in favour of this Bill”. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity of this contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.
[*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make a contribution to the Bill under debate in this honourable House this evening—"An Act to amend the Bail Act, Chap. 4:60".

Mr. Sharma: "Yuh looking nice."

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I should like to take this opportunity to extend God's most abundant blessings to the national community and indeed more specifically to the constituents of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, for a happy, healthy and safe 2014.

Mr. Sharma: What about Mr. Manning?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, despite the best efforts of the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara and others who have spoken on the other side, to de-emphasize and minimize the impact and the scope of the crime situation, the enormity of this crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago, the fact remains that Trinidad and Tobago is experiencing a veritable bloodbath—a body count. Mr. Speaker, it is statistic after statistic. On the eighth day of this year we had 20 murders. This has been unprecedented—that rate—eight murders in 20 days have been unprecedented.

Mr. Warner: Twenty murders in eight days.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Twenty murders—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: In eight days.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—in eight days. Sorry—20 murders in eight days. Thank you, Member for Chaguanas West.

9.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the toll for the same period last year was three, which means we have not only doubled or tripled or quadrupled that rate, but we have multiplied it by seven. Mr. Speaker, I understand that to date we stand at 24 murders in 11 days. So we cannot trivialize what is happening and try to sidestep the real issues.

The Hon. Minister of National Security, I understand, his concern and I empathize with the victims and I understand where he is coming from and I think the Member for Tabaquite did allude to that, that we have to look after the victims, the interest of the victims and safeguard everyone and indeed I agree we must do that. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this crime situation must be viewed

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

in a more holistic manner, in its entirety. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, we do not now only have single murders, we are having dual murders, two at a time, and there has been an increase in murder/suicides. Just last night there was one.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011, when we had 11 murders in three days, the Prime Minister instituted an ill-advised and ill-fated state of emergency. I say ill-fated, Mr. Speaker, since hundreds of young people, I think 450 of them, were incarcerated, some of them brutalized, only to be released hours after or days after because of a total lack of evidence.

Mr. Speaker, this time, what is this Government's response? The Prime Minister is asking for a disaggregation of the murders. I do not know why because a murder is a murder under whatever circumstance. Of course, she has called back all the police on leave—very good thing, very good—and she plans to establish widespread dialogue across the national community.

Mr. Speaker, I have to agree with Reginald Dumas that the PM's talk of dialogue might be just too late and I refer to an article in the *Guardian* dated Friday, January 03, 2014.

“Former head of the Public Service, Reginald Dumas says any national dialogue must be organised by civil society organisations and not the Government”

And I agree with him.

“Dumas said if the Government were to manage such an initiative, it would seek to direct the outcome and meet its own objectives, and those consultations could be seen as”—a public relations exercise.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I agree with this, we have been through this already. When there were all the murders on Duncan Street and they set up a police post and the Prime Minister and her entourage went down there and, you know, it was weeping with the people and holding them, et cetera, what has happened after that? What has happened after the Daniel incident? What has happened, Mr. Speaker? What has the Government done?

The article goes on to say:

“Some citizens have said on social media Web sites that the exercise proposed by Persad-Bissessar was being held too late.

Dumas too said he wanted to know why the exercise was being held ‘so late,’ the Government having been elected since...2010. He said since 2010 he had

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

publicly advocated the need for a national conversation to chart the course for future development of the Caribbean nation.”

Mr. Speaker, it seems that we have a Government that is reactive and not proactive.

Mr. Speaker, when I first assumed office and I came to this honourable House I used to ask the Members opposite and indeed the Prime Minister, I used to ask them or tell them—“I go and tell” the Prime Minister once: “My people are suffering” and I have told this to several of the Members opposite: “My people are suffering.” “And you know,” Mr. Speaker, what the answer, the response was? And I say this without fear of contradiction. The answer each time was: “They suffered for 35 years, let them suffer more. They suffered for 35 years, let them suffer more.” That was the answer!

Dr. Moonilal: No, no, Standing Order 36(5).

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: That is what I was told.

Hon. Member: By whom?

Miss Cox: Terrible!

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker; I say it without fear of contradiction. That is what I heard and I was told. Mr. Speaker, it was like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Look at what has happened. Look at where all this suffering has led us to. Look at the toll that it has had on the country; murder, after murder, after murder.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, December 21, 2013, I attended the funeral of Jah David Andrews at the Teshea Terrace at Harpe Place. I attended this funeral because Jah David was not only my constituent but he was also a neighbour—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: He died?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—living next door. You do not even know he died. You do not know these people. You do not care. He was my neighbour living next to the office of the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West and he died and the entire Harpe area, as we know it, Harpe Place, was thrown into mourning.

As the MP, and I know the people there. They are my neighbours. They are next door. They are my constituents. I provided tents and chairs for the occasion and I went. Father Harvey, Clyde Harvey, officiated and I sat there.

Mr. Speaker, as I sat there and I heard family and friends come up and there were many, many. Everybody wanted to speak and I heard them eulogize him, but what struck me is when I heard their own testimonies which they gave and I saw a real insight into their lives, which many of us who could talk here—you see and many of us even talk about poverty does not initiate or is not a factor to create crime, and that is true but this is not just poverty. This is being in the hood. This is life in the hood. And I am sitting there, Mr. Speaker, and I am looking at these people and I am listening to them and I am hearing their pain and suffering. I am seeing their misfortune. I am seeing their neglect that the Member for Diego Martin Central, my colleague, spoke of, not the poverty, the neglect visited probably by all governments and certainly in the last four years by this Government. They spoke of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at least I have to say the PNM provided a roof over their heads, Harpe Place. They were there since in the days of the PNM, built under the PNM and they love their place because many of them come to me in my office on a weekly basis trying to get an apartment for themselves because in some apartments there are 20 and 30 people and they are trying to get out and get an apartment for themselves. They do not want to move. They want to stay there and it is like a family but, Mr. Speaker, the neglect and the pain was so obvious in all that they said. And I sat there and I looked at them and I wondered, Mr. Speaker, I wondered: What is this Government doing for these people? What is anyone doing for these people? These people seem to be misguided, desolate, sorrowful, many of them. Who ever goes to the Harpe and in such places to talk to them, to reach out to them, to empathize with their circumstance?

Mr. Speaker, among the Prime Minister's plans or the Minister of National Security's plans to halt this crime situation should be a plan to institute a team of social workers, community activists, guidance officers, caregivers, community police to form a team of people who can go in to extend a helping hand to these people. Mr. Speaker, that is all sometimes they need, a helping hand, to listen to their needs, to empathize with their sorrows and to guide them in the right direction, to help them resolve conflicts and avoid conflicts. But Mr. Speaker, who goes into there? And I sat there. And as the MP I myself felt helpless. I never spoke. I just sat there sorrowful, low in the seat and sorrowful because I myself felt helpless.

And you see all that we can talk about here, there are many of us who were spared that sort of existence in the hood. There were many of us. I know Father Harvey goes there and there was a young lady, Marcia Henville who is on TV,

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

sometimes I see her; she goes there. But many of us shy away from these places and you see, all we can do now is talk about bringing legislation against them. But do we get out there to help them, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, they spoke about the lack of jobs. Many of them, I know come to see me and they have been through all these programmes and they get their certification and so and they go out there and there are no jobs. I would like to invite the Member for Tabaquite. I would really invite him. I am being objective now. I am rising above any political affiliation or consideration, Mr. Speaker. I would like him to come into my constituency because, obviously, I do not know where the jobs are. They come en masse asking for jobs and I do not know and many of them are qualified and they cannot seem to get the jobs.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I feel that if we do not tackle the root of the problem that we will always have victims because the problem will not be resolved. We could throw them in jail. Mr. Speaker, we send them to Remand Yard. Most of them would be staying there for 120 days. Remand Yard is already overcrowded, fraught with problems. Conditions are poor. Supervision is poor and the prisoners have cellphones where they can contact their peers on the outside.

Having said that, while I was sitting there in that funeral I heard people talking and do you know that that hit on Jah David was initiated and orchestrated inside of the prison walls?

Mr. Peters: “How you know dat?”

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I was not there but I listened to those who know. Some of those who eulogized and who gave testimony spoke of their term in jail. I am talking about being in the hood. I am talking about people who know what is going on in the jails. So for you to sit down there and tell me how I know that and all of that, have you been there? Have you gone to see to help them?

Mr. Peters: “I does be dey more than you!”

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: And Mr. Speaker—you have never been there! You all must learn. Mr. Speaker, the Members opposite must learn to be truthful.

Miss Cox: This is a serious thing.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: And this is serious business. I am not joking, Mr. Speaker. This was the 21st of December, in the midst of all the Christmas activity of giving out the hampers and having parties and I was thrown into a sorrow that I could not believe.

Mr. Speaker, what is the Government doing for these people? And I want to ask: where are the recreational facilities that I have been asking the various Ministers for, the Minister of Sport, Local Government, “eh” so that the young people could engage in some recreational activity and some physical activity? Mr. Speaker, I have always learnt that a healthy body breeds a healthy mind. I have asked them to help develop the Harpe. I have written. Nothing! We are in our fourth year. Nothing! They want them to have healthy minds but what are they doing to help them get healthy bodies? I heard someone say: “Look, forget all of these playing fields and recreation areas. Those things mean nothing.” They mean a lot! Why do we have sport then? They mean a lot!

Mr. Speaker, I have written the Minister of Education, asking for homework centres to be set up in various parts, including the Harpe, so that when those little children come home—*[Interruption]* I wrote you. I wrote you about that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But we do not have that authority.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Beg pardon?

Dr. Gopeesingh: As the Minister of Education, we do not have that authority.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: To develop homework centres?

Dr. Gopeesingh: For homework centres you have—

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: But you all wrote us. If it was not you, probably it was the Minister of Local Government. They wrote us asking us—well probably it was the Minister of Local Government—to set up homework centres. To this day none has been set up. So that, if per chance parents are out, if the mothers are out, the children could sit and do their homework.

Mr. Speaker, what about the schools themselves if they could remain open and—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am trying to do that.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: He is trying to do that. Mr. Speaker, South East Port of Spain is in my constituency. Many children, from the Harpe attend South East Port of Spain.

9.15 p.m.

One little girl, she could not afford the books, and they got no books from the Government. So she came to me, she and her mother, and her mother has a long “string ban” of children, and they asked me to assist, and I did. I did. I sent an

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

order to a bookstore and I bought over \$500 worth of books for her. So I saw her sometime after and I asked her: How are the books helping? How is your work going? “I have not been to school and there is no school”, and this is almost to the end of last term. No school. I could only assume—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you give way?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: No, I am not giving way. I am not giving way. [*Interruption*] I can only assume that South/East Port of Spain has opened now, but it was closed for a long while.

Mr. Speaker: Member, please.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: It was closed for a long while. And while I am concerned about my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I have—[*Interruption*] South East Port of Spain was closed for a long while Sir, because I had people coming to me complaining.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I spent \$7.5 million to repair it.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I am glad.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We repaired it, \$7.5 million, get the facts.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I am happy. I am happy.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Say thanks! Say thanks!

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: No, you are not ordering me to say any thanks. You are not ordering me to say anything.

Miss Cox: Taxpayers’ money.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: It is taxpayers’ money you used.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Yuh ungrateful.”

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: So, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Neemakharam.”

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Neemakharam.”

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, I have to ask, Mr. Speaker, yes—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member just sit. Member just sit. Hon. Members, let us not go there, please. The Member is speaking. She has the protection of the Chair.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will respond.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, you can speak after, but you “cyar be” engaging in crosstalk, and using language that is quite inappropriate. Please, continue hon. Member.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, you know anytime I speak, and if I say anything that the Members opposite do not like to hear, the insulting language that is used, is almost unbearable.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I will protect you, do not worry.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Continue.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Thank you.

Miss Cox: Insult them back.

Mr. Speaker: No!

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: “I not doing it.”

Mr. Speaker: No insulting, now.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I am not doing it.

Hon. Member: How unladylike.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, while I am concerned about my constituency and the schools in my constituency, I am also concerned about schools where I know—where other children attend whose parents I know. For example, the Malick school, I had questions, but they were deferred until, you know—the other sitting, but that school has not been opened for the academic year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: \$16 million spent on that school. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recommend—
[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: [*Inaudible*]—schools are closed.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—that schools need—because you are talking about crime, “eh”, and you are talking about all these people who we are targeting to prosecute and persecute. Schools need programmes, Mr. Speaker, they need a

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

sound character-development programme, not the type that the Minister imported from the USA for billions or millions of dollars, that is sitting on a shelf in the Learning Resource Centre—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order, you are misleading the House.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I am not giving way. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: There is no point of order like that. Continue, please.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—that they spent millions of—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, and you will respond. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—dollars for and it is sitting, collecting dust on a shelf in the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, Mr. Speaker, and it is sitting there because it is a foreign piece of material, useless and irrelevant to the needs of our students, our culture and our environment, Mr. Speaker.

What we need are real programmes created by real Trinbagonians, not Americans, that impart real long-time West Indian values to our West Indian children; that is what we need, Mr. Speaker. Values like self-respect, respect for others, compassion, integrity, generosity, helpfulness, consideration, gratitude and conflict resolution; that is what we need in schools.

Mr. Speaker, anytime I tell the Minister to go up to St. Francois and see what they are doing, he says I am blowing my own trumpet. I am not blowing my own trumpet. I have done it and I would like to share and disseminate for the good of the country, [*Crosstalk*] but they do not like to see what is done there.

Mr. Speaker, we want a programme where children could get one-to-one interpersonal reaction with a facilitator with whom they could empathize and who can guide them and assist them, Mr. Speaker.

What about the literacy and numeracy programmes in school? Mr. Speaker, if we ask the officials of ALTA how people feel when they come in and they are illiterate, and they do not know how to read and write, hear what they say: they have no self-esteem; there is anger; there is almost self-hatred; they feel inferior, and many of them get angry with society just because they do not know how to function in society by virtue of not having the skills to do so. We have those programmes in schools. Many of those people when they come to me, they cannot sign their names. You see, I am not saying we must not see about the victims, but look at the other side. We have to look at both sides of the coin, and we have to

address this issue in a very holistic manner in its entirety, Mr. Speaker, because trying to do one without the other will create an imbalance that would just cause havoc. It will never stop.

Mr. Speaker, we are sending these people—mostly young people to jail or we are here to pass legislation that would see them after one strike go to jail, to Remand Yard for 120 days, Mr. Speaker. If it is that a lot of planning and plotting goes on in Remand Yard, similar to the plot that it is alleged, the plot that was set up to kill Jah David, I think all that we will be doing, if we are packing Remand Yard with so-called, if you want to call it criminals, is creating a criminal mill, Mr. Speaker, so that there will be more crimes and more murders. I say again, these misguided people need help. I say it now.

You know, when Verna St. Rose-Greaves, Mr. Speaker, came here [*Laughter*] and she held her stomach, and she bawled—now, I thought—I was amazed, “eh”, no, but I was amazed, you know. I could not understand. But I understand the pain she is feeling for the victims, but there is pain all around, and I think my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central alluded to that. There is pain. We are all victims. They are victims too. We do not understand that those people are also victims. So we have to help all the victims, not just one set of victims, all, so that everything could come to an end.

Mr. Speaker, I too want to refer to an article in the *Financial Times*:

“Gas riches give Trinidad no escape from crime and violence”

It is dated Monday, January 06, and it is by Robin Wigglesworth.

“For 13 people...”—this is on the 6th, so they are using the figures then—
“For 13 people in Trinidad and Tobago, a wealthy island federation in the Caribbean, the new year proved a tragically short one.

The country suffers little of the economic distress that besets much of the rest of the tropical archipelago, thanks to abundant oil and gas exports.”—we are a rich country—“But its crime rate is one of the worst in the world.”

Mr. Speaker, I saw in the newspapers where the Member for Diego Martin West said that we are like Baghdad, and I heard today, when the Member for Diego Martin Central said that we are like Jamaica—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Worse than.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—but now I am going to read on where they are saying:

“The country has suffered from a homicide rate that exceeds Mexico’s for more than a decade...”

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Mr. Speaker, I have friends who live in Mexico and whenever we communicate, they always ask us to pray for them. You know what they wrote to me the other day in the email? Keep on praying for us, but we have to pray for you all more, because you all have exceeded the murder rate in Mexico. What a terrible situation we are in, Mr. Speaker:

“‘We are too rich’”—the article goes on—“‘We are too rich to be so poor,’ says Kirk Waithe, the head of Fixin’ T&T, a local activist group. ‘We are where we are because we the people have accepted it. We have a self-esteem problem...we should be the Dubai of the Caribbean.’”

But while we are rich in resources, Mr. Speaker, we are so poor in spirit; rich in resources and poor in spirit:

“The UN’s Human Development Index classifies Trinidad and Tobago as a highly developed country, government debts are among the lowest in the western hemisphere, and energy exports - predominantly natural gas - nets the state roughly \$4.5bn a year. Trinidad and Tobago even has a small sovereign wealth fund to dip into.”

I think they are speaking about the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, Mr. Speaker. The article goes on:

“Crime in neighbourhoods...is exacerbated by the proximity to South America and its narco cartels, which form links with local gangs and use Trinidad as a transshipment hub for cocaine smuggled to Europe and the...”—United States.

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh read dat ah ready.”

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker, “...the IMF notes that there is ‘evidence of significant underemployment’”—just what I am talking about—“...the IMF notes that there is ‘evidence of significant underemployment.’”

Mr. Sharma: “What is de date of dat?”

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: And the article goes on most specifically:

“‘There’s quite a lot of corruption, and it’s getting worse, says one foreign diplomat. Maybe some of the money ends up doing some good, but it’s actually feeding the criminal underground.’”

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am saying we have to look at this holistically. We have all this money and it might be feeding, one foreign diplomat saying

“corruption is getting worse”—a lot of money but it is “feeding the criminal underground”. We are not looking at things holistically, and we are not going to get anywhere if we do not. We are looking to prosecute and persecute the small man, and we are turning a blind eye to those in high places that are perpetuating and fuelling the crime of the underground, Mr. Speaker. How could it work? It is unfair.

Mr. Speaker, you see as a God-fearing person, I do not want to be a part of this. If we are not looking at this thing holistically, dealing with everybody at every level, I do not want to be part of this because I am not going to be part of prosecuting—come to this Parliament, be elected to this Parliament by all those people, and come here to prosecute and persecute them. I am not doing it, Mr. Speaker, no one must expect me to do that. I might as well take my bag and leave and never come back.

Mr. Sharma: “Take yuh bag.”

Hon. Member: All right.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker:

“Many locals lay the blame for social woes at the feet of the political elite. Trinidad and Tobago may face few of the acute economic and financial challenges of the rest of the anglophone Caribbean, yet that has allowed a succession of governments”—all Governments. We are being very objective here—“to paper over deep-seated, festering problems in areas such as education, law enforcement and the judiciary....”

Mr. Speaker, this Government came in—the point I want to make, is that this Government came in riding on the back of the PNM, they talk about: let us rise above the political thing, and we have to, and do not speak about crime, you know, from a political standpoint and all of that, but what did they do in 2010? I remember it only too well. I remembered it only too well, the Member for Chaguanas East and the Keith Noel Movement and all the hype. You know, the whole population—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: The drama!

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—was pounded with that.

Mr. Sharma: And the drama.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: And they came in and they will fix crime, and they will fix crime and look what the PNM has done. But what have they done?

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

Mr. Sharma: They will fix it.

Hon. Member: Fixing it.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: “All of our social issues are symptomatic of a failure of governance. We need to sell the populace on where it should be, not where we are... The current system hasn’t worked for us.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about corruption and impropriety in public office. I am talking about it because of what it does to those people who we are dealing with here in this Bill. Mr. Speaker, we have had several allegations of corruption among prominent members of our society, and some of them have been associated with this present Government. What is the Government doing about it? Nothing. I want to refer to an article in the Trinidad and Tobago *Mirror*, dated January 03, 2014. It speaks to:

“Four unsolved mysteries in 2013”—and they talked about

- “Email gate”

I am not going to go into the whole article, it talks about land rovers, the:

- “AG’s”—“Range Rovers”

It talks about:

- “Mysterious large daily bank deposits by Government official.”

I am just saying what the paper is reporting. It talks about:

- “Ashford Jack’s mansion”—Mr. Speaker.

Then I look at another page and it says:

“Whew! What a year”

And they talk about:

“...the \$6.8 million ‘fire truck fiasco’...”

And they talk about IOB/UWI debacle and then—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Not, debacle, debacle.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—we also have a lot of lucrative contracts awarded to companies like SIS and Junior Sammy, party financiers and Ross Advertising.

9.30 p.m.

And then, in 2011, we go back, we had the cocaine, in the container of chicken, worth \$7.4 million. And then now, this year, we had the cocaine in the stomach, not in the container of chicken, but in the stomach. Mr. Speaker, what is the Government doing about any of this?

If the Government does not address all these issues, what it is doing is perpetuating these wrongdoings which are indeed crime, might be crime of a different nature, but they are still crime and these dispossessed souls, what do they expect from the people on the lower levels? They are looking at all of this. This is the example that we are setting. Everybody is getting away with murder—no pun intended—murder of a different shade. And what are we doing? We are prosecuting and persecuting the small man. Why he alone? I am not saying we do not have to address crime on that level, but why is it the small man alone must be prosecuted?

Where is there legislation to bring all these high-flying officials to justice while the less fortunate souls, when they fall below the standard, we come here and we hurry up very quickly and try to justify why we have to incarcerate them and deprive them, infringe on their constitutional rights? Are we infringing on the constitutional rights of all those other people in high places who are fuelling and helping to perpetuate that crime on the lower levels? This is unfair. This is unfair.

Mr. Speaker, you know what I have noticed, and I have not finished my research in other jurisdictions. I need to do that because I am very interested in this. I have noticed that anytime you have a lot of corruption that the rate of crime increases exponentially with the rate of corruption.

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

As corruption grows, you have a growth in crime. Let me go back—and I am being very objective—to 2008/2009 where there were allegations of corruption in the PNM. You had a spike in crime. It came down. We come now and you have many, many allegations of corruption and what has happened? Crime has spiked again.

The operations of this Government are shrouded in a cloak of gross corruption and this is part of what is causing this murder rate to spiral out of control. It is all about setting an example. That is the example that this Government is setting. That is the example.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

You know what those less fortunate souls are probably saying? “If the priest could play, who is we?” The Prime Minister is now saying that her Government alone cannot fight crime. Was that what she was saying and you all were saying in 2010?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is the ticket on which they came in.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: I am afraid that her words have come back to haunt her—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That was the ticket on which they came in.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—and her UNC-dominated Government. Yes, thank you, Member for Point Fortin. That is the ticket on which they came into power.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It is one of the tickets on which they came into power.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: You are calling on us now and we are here and we are here to assist you all, but you are pretending now. Sometimes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will call it, using my French, *incroyable*, “unbelievable”, to sit here. I sit here *bouche bée*, my mouth is open; I am agape, listening to Members opposite as though they did not ride on this issue of murder into power.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they are now faced, however, with a Herculean challenge of reducing this abnormally high crime rate, but unless the Prime Minister has the political will to take control of her Government, firm control, and reduce this abnormally high level of corruption, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are wasting our time here. We are attempting to violate the rights of the less fortunate in an effort to resolve this untenable crime situation, but we are wasting our time if the right thing is not done.

Mr. Sharma: You are really wasting your time.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Yeah. You go ahead. Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill deals with offences committed by gangs and gang members. And I want to ask, because when I look at the Bill, from—[*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Fyzabad!

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Part II “Specified Offences” from (f) to (l), they deal with gang and gang offences. But Madam Deputy Speaker, there are gangs in other forms and fashions in high organizations—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Give me an example.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—and they do not call them gangs; they call them cabals. There are even allegations of cabals in the Government. But I am not talking about the cabal in the Government. I am not here to talk about the cabal in the Government. I am talking about cabals in other high organizations of the highest in Trinidad and Tobago.

I looked at the *Chambers* dictionary for the word “cabal”. A “cabal” is a small group united for some secret or nefarious design—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Like the PNM.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:—and a “gang”, a number of persons associating together for some purpose. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is all the same. It is a question of semantics. The meaning is the same.

Mr. Sharma: According to *Chambers*.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: The gang members, many of them assume aliases. They might have “Fresh” or “Saga Boy” or “Scrappy, “but I heard in a big time cabal, there is a member who goes by the alias of “Yellows” and I heard there is a next one called “Bag Man”.

Dr. Moonilal: Anybody called Putna?

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: It is the same thing, same characteristics. What example are those in power setting for others to follow? [*Interruption*] Monkey see, monkey do. We have cabals and we have gangs. Why do we feel that we can come now and persecute them and prosecute them and take away their inalienable constitutional rights because they are in gangs when we are in cabals? Why do we feel that? What example are we setting for our young people? This is unfair. I want no part of this.

Mr. Sharma: I agree. Next point.

Mrs. P. Mc Intosh: Madam Deputy Speaker, as an educator, I had to display impeccable decorum on my job and before my pupils and at all times. Indeed, my teachers and myself, we were very much aware that we were under a microscope and the children were looking at our every action, our very words, our deeds. We had to set standards for juniors to follow.

If those on top cannot set standards, what will happen? We have to remember that a fish rots from the head and here we are coming now to cut off the tail of the fish, chop it up and leave the head to rot. It will not work.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Madam Deputy Speaker, everything in this country is in shambles. Somebody was telling me, what are we voting for? All the institutions or all the systems, everything is in shambles. What do we have here? There are allegations of corruption in almost every government agency in this country. Even some key Government Ministers are not immune from such allegations. So many square pegs, we spoke about it, the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about it. So many square pegs have been put in round holes as a result of political patronage and overwhelming evidence of nepotism and favouritism is obvious especially in the case of party supporters and financiers.

We come here today to debate a Bill that will deprive the dispossessed and the less fortunate of our society of their constitutional rights by incarcerating them without bail. While this UNC-dominated Government refuses to address the ills plaguing our institutions and the corruption in high places, which are contributing in fair measure to this untenable crime situation, we are here debating a Bill to prosecute the lower classes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I say again, unless this Government has the political will to change this way it is conducting the business of governance in our country and to change the way that it is meeting and treating and dealing with the underprivileged members of our society, there will be no change for the better in respect of the crime situation.

This Bill is targeting one segment of our society while it turns a blind eye, it completely ignores the contributory and causative factors of the underlying condition of the underprivileged and dispossessed. To me, it does not make sense and, as such, I cannot lend my support to it. It is an unfair, discriminatory and draconian piece of legislation which should be very greatly modified. Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Alicia Hospedales (*Arouca/Maloney*): Madam Deputy Speaker—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: I wanted to respond. I had my hand up.

Miss A. Hospedales:—I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the Bail (Amdt.) Bill.

I listened carefully to the Member for Tabaquite when he said—he was making a statement—what will happen in this country when jobs will not become available? It reminded me of our joint select committee, which the Member for

Caroni East was not present at, of something we had discussions on today at our joint select committee where it was stated that there is an unwritten policy that had been disseminated among Government Ministries and state agencies with respect to not renewing contracts for persons who are working in those Ministries, agencies and that they must re-apply once the contract has been terminated and, in many of the instances, those persons are not rehired.

So when the Minister said, you know, what will happen to this country when jobs will not become available, I really wondered exactly what he was referring to. If at this current time, this kind of unwritten policy is being implemented across Ministries and state agencies, a number of persons will continue to be on the breadline.

I used to work at the Students Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education and I can tell you a number of my previous colleagues, a lot of them, have fallen into this category because when their contracts were terminated, they were not renewed and they were told that they had to re-apply and up to this day the Member for Caroni East has not come back to this House to tell us how many of those service persons have been rehired: the guidance officers, social workers, special education teachers. They have not come to tell us exactly how many of those individuals are now working in jobs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite also made reference to the fact that—he said, where do people get jobs? And he was making reference to the fact that in the government service people get jobs based on their merit, but I will like to ask him: on merit? Where? When? How?

Just yesterday, I was talking to a constituent who told me that he sent in several applications and every time he went for an interview either at a Ministry or at an agency, when they looked at his address, he is told to his face, “But you living in a PNM constituency,” and automatically he is blacklisted. This is the kind of thing that is happening in Trinidad and Tobago right now. This is what is happening.

9.45 p.m.

And, you know, it is really very troubling to hear a Government Minister come here and say all these things that really, you know, are really far from the truth in terms of what the reality is with respect to the hiring processes that are taking place on the outside, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite also made reference to the fact that he was speaking on behalf of all the people. I would like to ask him: who are these persons he is representing? Who are these persons he is talking about? Because, you know, there are several individuals and groups across the country who have expressed their concerns about the fact that the Government did not consult with them. The Government did not consult with the people of this nation with respect to the amendments that they want to make to this piece of legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like the Member for Tabaquite, the Minister of National Security, the Attorney General, the Minister of Legal Affairs—all those persons who would have contributed to this debate—to tell us when were the consultations done. Where were the consultations done? Who did you consult with when you came up with these grand ideas to make these specific amendments in this Bill?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to ask: why was the Law Association not consulted? And, you know, the Law Association—they are a group of, you know, very prominent individuals in society who have worked in the legal field and they have expressed concern. They said the Bail (Amdt.) Bill—the amendments that the Government is seeking to make to ensure that someone who has been sentenced for 10 years after completing that sentence comes out and recommits a crime, that that person will not be granted bail for 120 days. They have expressed concerns; they said that it is a tragic consequence of punishing those innocent citizens.

There are some people within the pool of persons who might be charged as offenders who might be, you know, innocently punished as a result. They have also indicated that the Government needs to tread carefully because we may become a police state, Madam Deputy Speaker. These are the kinds of things that they have mentioned.

They also indicated that measures which make it easier to punish the guilty tend to increase the risk of punishing the innocent. And they have also indicated that the current crime situation—and we all acknowledge that the current crime situation is unacceptable, as we have heard 24 in 10 days. Today is the 10th day, we have had 24 murders in 10 days and, Madam Deputy Speaker, no individual in this country can say that that is an acceptable level. We all agree it is unacceptable, and even the Law Association, they said the current crime situation is unacceptable, and we cannot support or legitimate, reasonable or measured

initiatives to reduce crime to an acceptable level, and they will support, Madam Deputy Speaker, all measures to ensure that crime is reduced to an acceptable level, but they have indicated that this Bill is not the way.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at the Criminal Bar Association, again, I would like to ask the Member for Tabaquite—if he, you know, would just come back to his seat—whether or not the Criminal Bar Association agreed. Were they consulted? You know, do they support this Bill? They said that they are unable to support this proposed amendment to the Bail (Amdt.) Bill and asked that consideration be given to national consultation because they found that what the Bill was proposing was really, you know not in—it was unjustified, Madam Deputy Speaker, it was unjustified.

They also said that the proposed legislation appears to be fast-track legislation which had the potential to erode the constitutional rights of citizens, Madam Deputy Speaker. They have indicated that they are not in support of it. So I am asking again, the Member for Tabaquite: who did he consult with? Where were the consultations held? What dates were the consultations held on? If he could tell us that because he said he is speaking on behalf of all the citizens.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, despite the fact that no consultations were held, the Members on the opposite side, including the Attorney General, when he presented this piece of legislation, he boasted and gave his own justification that this must be done because this is the way that we are going to solve crime but, really, is it going to reduce crime in this country? I am asking because the Members on the other side have not provided us with any form of justification as to why this piece of legislation must be implemented. What is your justification? None has been provided.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I too, would like to register my concern regarding the fact that no empirical research has been done to provide the justification for the implementation of this legislation. And even the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago, they have expressed their concern. They said that the measure should only be extended if and only if the empirical evidence reveals that it was successful in reducing the prevalence of that said offence or the list of offences in the schedule.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again, what is the justification for the denial of bail for persons charged with committing violent offences 10 years after those persons would have been sentenced and after being released would have gone and committed another offence, a similar violent offence, and would have been

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

Friday, January 10, 2014

charged? It could have been another violent offence, and they would have been charged and they would receive no bail for 120 days. Where is the research to show? None of the Members on the opposite side—we listened, and we listened carefully to hear whether or not they would have provided the information that would have given the justification.

Where is the research to show that persons charged with violent offences failed to appear before the court? So those individuals, having committed a crime—being released after serving a sentence—those individuals, there is no evidence to show whether or not those persons do not appear before the court after being granted bail for another offence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what percentage of these offenders committed offences or recommitted offences? We have not even gotten the figures. They came and, you know—I remember the Attorney General mentioning a case or two, but he has not provided concrete evidence—no statistics to tell us, okay, this is the percentage of individuals having committed an offence being released from prison, reoffenders—and we need to have that kind of research done.

This one was a very critical one: what would be the impact on the remand population? I know several Members on this side, you know, highlighted the problems with the remand population in prison, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is terrible, terrible, terrible. I remember years ago working as a therapist at a drug rehabilitation facility and hearing the stories of the recovering addicts, you know, the horror stories. One particular guy indicated in Remand Yard he was actually fed soup through a hole. They were pouring the soup into his hand. These are the kinds of things that happen. You know, it is really, really very terrible.

I had my own visit to Remand Yard at the Port of Spain Prison in 2000 and I was totally horrified to see the state of the cells, and to actually visualize the way that these men sleep in hammocks suspended in the air. That is how they sleep. They either get real hammocks or they have these makeshift ones made out of crocus bags and stuff like that, and they suspend them in the air one over the other and that is how they sleep, and that is only for some of the cells. It might not be the reality of all of the cells. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, again, who did they consult? Did they consult the officers at the prisons service? Did they consult them? I am sure if they answer these questions it will be no, no, no.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, it is a major cause for concern when this Government comes here to implement a piece of legislation, and they have no justification, and they have done it many times before. They have come and not

been able to justify the reasons they are bringing the legislation. You know, because they have the majority, they run it through Parliament and then face the consequences.

I remember the Criminal Bar Association saying that, you know, the Government also needs to consider the number of cases that would come up as a result of the legislation because the legislation is relatively weak. They said that they advised the Government to take steps to ensure that the legislation, when passed, will not be met with a plethora of legal challenges in the courts. Madam Deputy Speaker, they looked at it; they recognized the weaknesses; they recognized the fact that there will be several challenges that the Government will face with respect to the number of legal cases that will come before the courts as a result of the weakness in this piece of legislation. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important, the Government—I do not think they recognize the importance of empirical research. Again, it is a Government that moves by vaps, and that is why they just do things the way that they feel to.

There is a researcher by the name of Brignell who said that in order for any measure like this that the Government is seeking to implement—in order for it to be properly justified and for it to be implemented in a workable way—the Government must first do its research. It must first, you know, do thorough research in the various areas that I have identified with respect to understanding the problems that they are currently faced with and, you know, providing the empirical evidence to support the decision that they want to make.

The researcher indicated that governments need to do their research before implementing measures like this. She noted that if this is not done the refusal of bail to persons who commit violent offences would be a cosmetic one, and I agree with her that this measure is indeed a cosmetic one.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would also like to ask: where is the evidence to prove that the granting of no bail for 120 days to persons who would have committed an offence—were sentenced and now released and would have recommitted an offence—where is the evidence to show that those individuals, the offences that they have committed would be reduced? For instance, where is the evidence to show that the possession of imitation firearm in pursuance of any criminal offence will be reduced as a result of the implementation of this Bill? Where is the evidence to show that larceny of a motor vehicle will be reduced as a result of the passing of this Bill? Madam Deputy Speaker, there is no evidence, no justification. Where is the evidence to show that the perverting or defeating the course of public justice will be reduced because this Bill has been passed?

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Again, there are several specified offences in the schedule, Madam Deputy Speaker, and there has been no evidence provided by the Government to show that in passing this piece of legislation, all of these offences that they have listed in the schedule, all of them would be reduced as a result. There is no evidence whatsoever.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to raise one more point. In looking at the *Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013* I became a little concerned, and I will tell you where my concern lies, particularly, with the removal of sexual offences committed against minors, Madam Deputy Speaker.

10.00 p.m.

In 2007, when I went back to the 2007 schedule, *Bail (Amdt.) Bill*, and looked at the schedule, I saw sexual offences listed, such as:

“sexual intercourse with”—a—“female under fourteen;

sexual intercourse with”—a—“female between fourteen and sixteen;

sexual intercourse with”—a—“male under sixteen;”—and

“sexual intercourse with an adopted minor,”

These were listed in the schedule for 2007, as well as 2008, Madam Deputy Speaker. But when I looked at the 2013 schedule they were deleted, and it caused me concern, because a few days prior to us coming to debate this *Bill* a constituent of mine was brutally murdered, and even a sexual act was committed against her.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it really troubled me to see that the Government chose to use the sexual offences of a minor as an afterthought. Why I am saying it is an afterthought, Madam Deputy Speaker, because when you look at the contribution for instance, it was only on the first day that the Attorney General came here to debate. In the *Bill* those offences were deleted. Right. They were nowhere to be found. It was only after when he came here and he got on his feet, probably a few minutes into his debate, he circulated a list of amendments, and included in it was any offence under the Children Act or any Act repealing and replacing it. The sexual offences listed in the Children Act would then be included.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at a critical time in our nation when an entire country—because not only the community of Maloney was affected, the entire country was affected by the death of this young child. And, you know, at a critical

point in our history as a society where children are being sexually abused over and over, and over, the Government failed to include those offences and just brought it as an afterthought, “Okay, we deleted it here, but we will include it because”. Right. Madam Deputy Speaker, I was really, really, really very concerned about it.

I even looked at the contribution made by the Attorney General, and he said:

Let us take a strong stand and let us include sex crimes against children in this Bill. One strike and you are out. No bail.

He made us believe that these offences were not there before and, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you saw, I read it out from the 2007/2008 schedule of the Bail (Amdt.) Bills. They were there. Those offences, sexual offences against children were there. Right, Madam Deputy Speaker. So he misled the House and misled the population to believe that it was not there before, and as a result he is now including it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, that to me is very, very, very distasteful, and it really is not promoting the truth. Again, I have to ask; Why were sexual offences against children an afterthought? I am asking this within the context that sexual offences—you know, the Crime and Problem Analysis Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, they have reported sexual offences against minors: in 2010, 449; 2011, 442 and in 2012, over 400 again. Sexual offences against children in this country a major issue and should not be an afterthought. It should not be an afterthought. This is a critical issue, and it should have been foremost in the minds of those who claim to be defenders of our nation’s children.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the sexual abuse clinic in the Ministry of Health, they have registered 20 new cases. Every single month 20 new cases of sexual abuse come before them and 100 cases of teenage pregnancy. Many of those children have been abused sexually. Madam Deputy Speaker, even the Minister of Education, who sits right opposite me, in 2012 he said that out of 17,000 births recorded in Trinidad and Tobago annually, an estimated 2,500 involved teenagers who become pregnant before the age of 18. This is a serious issue, and sexual offences against children should never be an afterthought. It should never be.

It is something that should be foremost in our minds, and in terms of prosecuting and ensuring that proper legislation is in place, that should be foremost in our minds, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Minister goes on to say:

The issue of teenage pregnancy continues to be a major societal problem.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

Friday, January 10, 2014

And if you really go into the statistics, Madam Deputy Speaker, you would realize that many of those children are children who would have been sexually molested and as a result they became pregnant, or they contracted some sexually transmitted disease, HIV/AIDS, name it. They would have been victims of circumstance in that instance and we need to ensure, as legislators, that we are ensuring that they are protected.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am just referring a bit to the speech provided by the Prime Minister to the nation. She said that the nation's children are at great risk. We all agree. We agree, based on the statistics that I have provided here, over 400 over the last three years. That is critical. Sexually abused; who are the perpetrators? How many of them have actually been caught? I am sure the detection rate must be below ten, or even lower than that. How many of those persons have been brought to the court of law?

You know, in my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was faced with a very traumatic case where two children around the same age from the same household were raped six months apart, were sexually abused six months apart, one by a relative and one by a stranger, and you know what happened? That matter, even though the mother reported it to the police, the police did nothing about it at that particular point in time. That matter had to be reported to a higher level in order for it to actually be given some measure of attention, and one of the perpetrators went to court but the matter is still in court—I mean, but the child ended up pregnant, pregnant for someone who she did not know who would have molested her—pregnant as a young girl, probably at the age of 13, Madam Deputy Speaker.

These are the kinds of things that are happening in our country and we cannot turn a blind eye to it. We have to become very serious. Madam Deputy Speaker, as I go on to say, the Prime Minister said:

The nation's—"...children are at great risk not only at home and their familial environment but at other places such as foster homes...child welfare institutions..."

That is the reality. She challenged everyone to put aside partisan interest, et cetera, et cetera. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, again I am saying, days after this issue occurred in my constituency, the piece of legislation was brought to this House excluding sexual offences against minors, and then it was included again as an afterthought. That caused me a lot, a lot, a lot of concern, that issues so critical, like the ones that I have mentioned, are occurring in this country and yet

still there is not, you know, a will on the part of the Government to really do something serious about it. What about the Children's Authority? They are supposed to be the guardians of our children, and we have heard since 2009 the board has been reinstated, or it had been installed, I would say, and there continues to be a lot of problems in terms of getting it operational, et cetera. It really demonstrates the Government's commitment to dealing with the issues concerning our children.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, I heard the Member for Tabaquite said that, you know, they on this side always look out for the nation's interest, and I really wonder when, because we have heard the issues of La Brea, we have heard the issues of Point Fortin. I really wonder when they have looked after the interest of this nation. I could say that we on this side have continually tried our best to be as proactive as possible to raise those issues so that we can get the Government working, or doing something in the interest of the nation. But we know that their hearts are not in it, and as a result we would not get from them what they are looking for.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to say in closing, we agree with the views of the Criminal Bar Association, that there is need for a national consultation on this matter. We are encouraging the Government to withdraw this piece of legislation, consider consulting with the Law Association, the Criminal Bar Association, members of the general public first before you bring this Bill back to Parliament. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I, together with my colleagues, will like to say that we cannot support this Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: You would like to make a statement, or a comment?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would not be long, a few minutes, but I think it is important to respond to some, what I consider, misleading statements by the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, particularly on education matters. It seems that there is a propensity and a habit from the Member to give information which cannot be supported by facts. I am saying something but I am saying it in a different way, and it is important to correct some misleading statements that were made earlier on in her contribution.

I want to deal first of all with the Malick school. It gives the impression that we as a Ministry of Education have not been doing anything about the Malick

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

Secondary School and the students there. Let me just give a little history when we came into Government in 2010. It came to our attention that an electrical fire occurred in Block H, in the geography room in August 2012, due to what might have been faulty electric wiring.

What we did as a Ministry of Education, we subsequently put in a pad-mounted transformer to reinstate the power, and we had to do a lot more work. The fire had caused severe damage to Block H, which included a ceiling, roof and furniture, and these repairs were completed on September 17, 2012 at a cost of \$345,500. So in August 2012 the fire took place, and on September 17 we did the work on the roof and furniture, and ceiling and so on, at a cost of \$345,500.

Then the school further requested Block E to be repaired in October 2012, so from one to the other we are being asked to do other things. These repairs comprised roof, ceiling and minor electrical works, and commenced on October 06, 2012. So in October they asked for something to be done; repair Block E, we commenced work on October 06, 2012, and we completed that work on October 25, 19 days later at a cost of \$458,640.

The school remained closed as the PTA insisted that the electrical systems of the school be upgraded. So from one to the next. Then we had to do the major electrical upgrade because the PTA said the school cannot be opened and we contracted three contractors. We had to do them on separate blocks of the school, from October 11, and that went on to December 30 at a cost of \$4.722 million, Madam Deputy Speaker.

10.15 p.m.

We visited the Malick Secondary School—and I had come prepared to answer the question today, and I brought some photographs which show that the Permanent Secretary, two Deputy Permanent Secretaries, myself, the Chief Education Officer and a team visited that school on October 12, 2012, subsequent to all the work that we were doing. These are the pictures, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we visited the school to look firsthand at how we had to continue to work to bring that school back into order. [*Dr. Gopeesingh displays photographs*] That was October 12.

So in August 2012 the fire—repair completed on September 17, 2012, \$345,000. They asked for another, Block E, to be repaired in October 2012, we finished that on October 25—\$456,000. Then they wanted an electrical upgrade, we had to do it—\$4.72 million.

Hon. Member: Spent too much of time there.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: This visit resulted in the following repairs being instructed: all roofs and ceilings of the blocks of the school; laboratory upgrade; grills over the drains; pressure washing of the entire compound; replacing of deteriorated windows; termite treatment. The total cost of those repairs was another \$8.825 million, and they were completed on December 29, 2012 to facilitate the reopening of the school in January 2013.

So when they say we are not doing anything for the students and the school of Malick, this shows a falsehood in those statements. I do not want to use the language that is unparliamentary, but it is deliberate mischief that is perpetrated from the other side, to make the country and the population believe that this Government does not care for the students of Malick Secondary School.

Hon. Member: Falsehood!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Falsehoods. During the period January to September 2013, we continued to do work on that school. Painting, burglar-proofing, metal works and minor electrical repairs were conducted at a cost of \$668,898. These repairs were conducted during a school term and did not affect the operations of the school. We spent close to \$15 million in repairs to Malick Secondary School from August 2012 to December 2012.

Hon. Member: Wow!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Then up came this term again. On September 30, 2013, we did not say that the school must be closed. The teachers made the decision that the school would be closed. [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 36(1). I am a bit confused as to—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member is responding to a statement. You may continue, Member.

Miss Cox: According to what, he is making a statement.

Mr. Sharma: “Listen nah man.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It seems as though the Leader of the Opposition is afraid to hear the truth. When they make misleading statements and they are deliberate in their falsehoods that they want to perpetrate in the population, they do not want to hear the truth.

Hon. Member: Defend yourself, man, defend yourself.

Hon. Member: Mischievous!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And they seem to believe that they can say it time and time again and create mischief—deliberate mischief—and it must not be corrected, and when we make an attempt to correct it, they want to shut us up, but we cannot be.

Mr. Sharma: Truth is truth.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The truth is the truth, and the facts are facts.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Set the record straight.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So the school was closed on September 30 due to the teachers now suspecting the presence of mould in the beauty and culture room. They closed a whole school, you know, because they think it has mould in the beauty and culture room. Madam Deputy Speaker, in my office at the Ministry of Education, in the next door room, I see something on the wall, and this is what in other places they call mould. You think I am going to close down the Ministry of Education and not work inside there? The air-conditioning has a little black thing around there. You think I am going to close down the Ministry of Education because there is a little bit of black soot around the air-condition? I will get it clean; we will get it done—but do not close down the school because of that.

Hon. Member : Children suffering.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, the poor children are made to suffer because of the attempts by those connected to the school to do what is not necessary. Hear the chronology of the events: on October 01, 2013, we had a site visit by EFCL and the school supervision Ministry of Health. October 14, we received a letter indicating teachers' suspicion of mould. On October 30, CARIRI was engaged to conduct microbiology and air quality testing and swab tests. On November 26, we had to wait for the CARIRI report, because it had to be sent abroad and so on, so the teachers decide they "eh" going into the school. The principal closed down the school. The PTA closed down the school, and there is no definite thing about any mould in the school.

The CARIRI report said there were findings of no mould on the walls—no mould on the walls—the CARIRI report of November 26. So we said we would try to help them and see where they feel there is something, and on January 02 we had to get a special company to do it. Century 21 is the only company to do the

dry blasting of what they said was mould in the school—carbon dioxide dry ice blasting. It cost us \$302,000. So when we on January 02 decided to do that, it started on the 03, then on the 04 they said we are going to have to do the beauty and culture room. We completed that. Then on the 05—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, again, on 36(1), I am wondering whether this is a statement or what. I do not quite understand. [*Crosstalk*] I am not speaking to you. I am addressing Madam Deputy Speaker, not you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members, please!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, they raised it and I must respond to it. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I imagine it is going to take you another couple minutes to respond?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West raised the issue of Malick. [*Crosstalk*] So blasting of geography room. Then on January 08 they wanted the chemistry room to be blasted. Then on January 09 they wanted pressure washing of the external areas, and January 10, that is today, we did the dry ice blasting of the cafeteria. The school is rescheduled for reopening on Monday 13, January 2014. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to also respond to the question of Port of Spain South East, which the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] When the Prime Minister went to Port of Spain South East Secondary School, following the criminal activity that was taking place around that area, a number of us went to that school with her, and there I saw the massive dilapidation of that school. It was a market that the Hon. Dr. Eric Williams converted into a school in the late 1960s, and for 52 years nothing was done to what was a market. They tried to make it into a school and a lot of people were very thoroughly educated and did very well coming out of that school.

So when the Prime Minister saw it, she said, "Minister, we have to do something about it." Madam Deputy Speaker, within a four to five-month period, we sought to do the work. We did a massive amount of work in the Port of Spain South East School. Today when you visit it, it is a beautiful example of work that has been done, almost \$7 million restorative work to Port of Spain South East School.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

So when they come here to make misleading statements that we have not done this for Port of Spain South East School and Malick school, forgive me: it is deliberate mischief on their part to perpetrate falsities, and let the population believe that the Ministry of Education and this Government are not doing anything in their constituencies.

Hon. Member : Promoting lawlessness! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important for me to state that the Ministry of Education has done over 2,500 reconstruction and maintenance projects in more than 850 schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago, at a cost of more than \$500 million, utilizing more than 500 small, medium and large contractors throughout the country.

When it came to opening primary schools, we built the Febeau Village school for them in less than a year. We have schools being built in Belmont, schools being built in Paramin. We built 17 primary schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago already—all throughout Trinidad and Tobago—and we have another 21 being constructed now all throughout Trinidad and Tobago. We do not select which constituency we are going to build schools in. Also, we have built 52 early childhood education centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 36(1)—

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am responding.

Miss Mc Donald: Please allow the Member—a suggestion, please call a press conference.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, please take your seat. Member for Caroni East, tie into the Bill that is before us. I know you have your full 45 minutes, so tie into the Bail (Amdt.) Bill.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, they are trying to say that we are not taking care of schools and therefore there is crime taking place, so I am showing that we have been focusing and concentrating on ensuring that the infrastructure in schools and the environment are very suitable for the children, and when children are educated in a very suitable environment their minds are comforted and they do not grow up and go on in criminal activity later on. [*Crosstalk*] So this is what the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been doing. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Well said, well said!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So we have built 74 schools, and our children are being taken care of. The work of the Ministry of Education will not be seen now, but we can assure this population, from the quarter million children in our schools now, you will see very little crime emanating in a few years to come from those students who were in the schools, because we are taking care of them and we are protecting them.

Mr. Sharma: Well said, well said!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West also spoke about literacy and numeracy, and they believe that because there is the absence of literacy and numeracy—what are we doing about it—and therefore crime will emanate as a result. Under the People's Partnership Government we have changed the primary school curriculum, reformed it, and the early childhood curriculum has been reformed. Literacy and numeracy have improved under this administration.

We had over 125 underperforming schools when we came into power. Today, more than 100 of these have moved from underperforming to performing, and more than 100 of these have moved from performing to excelling. We are lifting the standards of our students throughout Trinidad and Tobago, with the eventual reality that these students will be properly educated and crime will fall in a few years' time from now.

There has been a 12 per cent improvement in creative writing; a 10 per cent improvement in language arts. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Minister, will you give way?

Mr. Sharma: Sit down, show time is over!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am not giving way. You can respond if you want. There has been a marked improvement in the SEA Examination. More than 70 per cent of our students get more than 50 per cent.

Miss Cox: Madam Deputy Speaker, 36(1), please. I will like to know the relevance.

Mr. Sharma: Listen to it; listen to it! You are going good.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Caroni East, I want to ask you to tie up to the Bill that is before the House, please.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Madam Deputy Speaker, when students leave school and they do not have the ability to communicate, they are not literate, they

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

are not numerate, they feel they have lost their self-esteem, their self-worth, they resort to crime.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Will you give way about a school, please? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh: I am just showing how the Ministry of Education has been dealing with this situation by improving the literacy and numeracy across our primary school education.

Mr. Deyalsingh: I just want to get clarification, please.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No, no, I am only responding. Character education was spoken about by them, what we have done, we know that there are— [*Crosstalk*] I am being disturbed, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members, please allow the Member to speak in silence. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I said I am not giving way. [*Laughter*]

Miss Mc Donald: Be a gentleman, give way.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Member spoke about character education and how students in schools without having a character education, lead to the areas of crime. We came in and met no character education in schools. No morals and values and ethics teaching in schools. We have decided that we will reform the curriculum. We reformed the curriculum and today Trinidad and Tobago can boast of being one of the few countries in the world that has in the curriculum morals, values, ethics, [*Desk thumping*] citizenry development, character development. It is not only being taught by the Continuous Assessment Programme, it is examined to ensure that these areas are in our schools.

So when they talk about character education, they did nothing about it. This is why we have the rewards of their lack of proper management of the education system and as a result of that, this is why the criminal activity is taking place.

For 38 years since independence, 1962 to 2000, it was only when the then Minister of Education, who is our Prime Minister now, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, brought on universal secondary education—for 38 years, nearly 7,000 to 10,000 students could not get a place in a secondary school. Therefore more than 250,000 to 300,000 citizens in Trinidad and Tobago, now living and alive, have only a primary school education, and some did not even complete primary school. This is where a lot of the crime is emanating from, Madam Deputy Speaker.

10.30 p.m.

They ran this country for 41 years and the education system had failed this country and we are reaping the whirlwind of their inability to educate our population and, therefore, this is why we are getting this amount of dysfunctionality and increased criminal element.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, our Prime Minister in 2000 ensured that not a child would be left behind and made sure that all students get a place in secondary school. In a few years' time, I am sure we will be seeing, that a number of these people moving out of the secondary school will continue to improve and the country will be rid, eventually, of all this widespread criminal activity.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Minister, could I just ask you one question?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So, character education, citizenry development—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Email it. Email it.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—morals, values and ethics are now being taught in our schools. [*Interruption*]

So that we are moulding the minds and the lives of our little children so that when they go out of schools they will be very decent, law-abiding citizens who would be able to—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Would you rebuild the St. Joseph Convent Girls School?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—be socially and culturally integrated into society and they would be mature and happy.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Minister, would you rebuild—[*Inaudible*] [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: What is your burning question?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Can I ask, please?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No, no, no. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Would you rebuild the St. Joseph Convent—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right, you ask the question.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Just a simple question: is the Minister going to rebuild the St. Joseph Convent Girls Primary School? That is it.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I think the Member for St. Joseph must feel gratified that the Ministry of Education has just completed almost \$6 million in work, restoration and work on the—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: That is the government school.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The St. Joseph Government Primary School. [Interruption]

Mr. Deyalsingh: That is Ian Alleyne school.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We just spent about \$6 million doing restorative and reconstruction work on the St. Joseph Government Primary School.

If it is a request that some work has to be done on the school that you mentioned, the girls school—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: The girls school.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—it is on the agenda, but you will have to find a place to put the students so that we can rebuild the school.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We will be very happy to do that. I just want to, before I close, respond—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Member. Member could you—[*Interruption*—just a second—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Thank you Member, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Minister, you know for the past year or so, or two years, I have been asking for the early childhood care centre to be built in east Port of Spain in John John. I would like to know, and as much as you are asking—receiving questions, what is the status of such? [Interruption] We have had several conversations.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Sure.

Miss Mc Donald: Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You know it is strange, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thought the same Member for—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Port of Spain South.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—Port of Spain South was saying I was irrelevant, but suddenly she seems to be saying that I am very relevant now. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No relevance, no relevance.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: From no relevance to relevant, what a *volte face*. Anyway, you are such a distinguished lady, I will respond to you.

Miss Mc Donald: You see is the old talk he is giving me, you know. All that to get—

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Leader of Opposition—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: What?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—you asked—no, no, well, Leader of Opposition Business in the House, you had asked for Belmont school to be built, Belmont is being built; you had asked for Rose Hill to be built—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: No, I am not Rose Hill.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I know. Well, Rose Hill is almost completed. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh rosy too!”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I think one of your colleagues had wanted Febeau to be done, Febeau has been completed. Diego Martin North/East wanted Paramin to be built, it is almost completed.

Hon. Member: Febeau is behind—[*Inaudible*] [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So, I heard your request for the Early Childhood Education Centre, it is on the list and we will construct it. I believe it is one of the 24 that are going to be constructed pretty shortly. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What about Belle Vue Centre?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So, I just want to respond last because it is late in the night. The Member for Arouca/Maloney spoke about guidance officers and guidance counsellors and so on in the schools. In Cabinet we had passed a note for 732 human resource personnel to be in the Student Support Services Division. [*Interruption*] We have now completed the advertisements and the interviews for all the guidance officers and guidance counsellors; we would now have at least one guidance officer for each secondary school and one guidance officer for about three primary schools. All 732 positions for Student Support Services Division will be filled, possibly, in another two to three weeks, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, January 10, 2014

So, in terms of carrying our students forward with discipline and career guidance and so on, this Ministry of Education and this Government have been working assiduously to ensure that the students are given the proper career guidance and taken care of.

Minister Dr. Glen Ramadarsingh, Member for Caroni Central and myself had a press conference almost two years ago to launch the hotline for children. So that we are helping the children who can call in to 800-4321—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Toll free.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—toll free, and get the assistance that they need.

Hon. Member: 24/7.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So, all in all, the Ministry of Education is working comprehensively to ensure the fullest development potential of our children, to ensure that no child is left behind; to ensure that the environment in which the children are being educated is very conducive by the construction of—74 schools have been completed already: 52 ECCES; 17 primary schools and six secondary schools—[*Desk thumping*] 74 schools, Madam Deputy Speaker, 21 and 17, 38 primary schools are under construction and 15 more secondary schools are under construction and 24 ECCE centres are going to start in another month from now.

So, by the end of 2014, the People's Partnership Government would have constructed close to 150 schools in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And this is where we are taking education and in the process the Prime Minister has always said that the only passport to life; the only way to prevent crime and criminal activity is by the education of our children.

Minister Karim is doing a tremendous job in technical-vocational education and skills training, and I am trying to complement his work from the Ministry of Education. So, together by an educated and literate society the criminal activity will fall eventually. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Very good point. Excellent!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It might not be in the immediate but it will be in the medium to long term.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thought it was necessary to give some clarity and facts in relation to the perpetrated misstatements made by the other side, almost on a regular basis.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

Hon. Member: “Yeah man, yeah.” [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Laventille West.

Mr. NiLeung Hypolite (*Laventille West*): Thank you kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Give us a nice 20.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Madam Deputy Speaker, one would have thought that the Bill before us is the Bill to deal with an Act to amend the Bail Act, but what I have heard for the past half an hour was an act to deal with fixing schools.

Miss Cox: Yes.

Hon. Member: Which is important.

Miss Cox: That is not relevant.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Madam Deputy Speaker, fixing schools is a very important thing by all means, very important, but he spent 15 minutes talking about Malick—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: “Hmmm.”

Mr. N. Hypolite:—15 minutes talking about Port of Spain South East, actually, it is supposed to be South East Port of Spain. I thought that he would spend another half an hour and talk about Laventille Boys Primary School—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Tim, continue.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—that is in need of a lot of repairs. Because Laventille Boys Primary School, Madam Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: You want to give way? [*Laughter*]

Mr. N. Hypolite:—is infested with pigeons. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Moonilal: Let us hear what the Minister has to say.

Mr. N. Hypolite: In addition to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, Laventille Boys Primary School—[*Interruption*—is in dire need of the fixing of its toilets, air condition, repainting, fixing of the security lighting system and water. That is Laventille Boys Primary School. Laventille Girls Primary School, Madam Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Standing Order 36(1) now?

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—is in a similar situation. [*Interruption*] The toilets in that school, Madam Deputy Speaker, through you, I am hoping that the Minister of Education will look into that, simply because it is over three years that they have been requesting assistance in having that school—the toilets in that school fixed, the air condition in the library fixed—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: What else, that is all?

Mr. N. Hypolite: The pigeons in that school to be taken care of—

Mr. Sharma: Fixed.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—and then we have—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: What about the windows, it okay?

Mr. N. Hypolite: We also have the St. Barb's Primary School, and in the St. Barb's Primary School, Madam Deputy Speaker, through you, one would hope that the Minister will take into consideration the fixing of the water system in that particular school. [*Interruption*]

Then we have Escalier—the Escalier Primary School in Gonzales needs to be demolished and rebuilt. While that is so, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would have received communication from the Minister of Education asking for three places to put down ECC centres, of which I submitted and I am awaiting—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. N. Hypolite:—from the Minister or from the Ministry, commencement of work, seeing that he is boasting of having a number of ECC centres to be built this year.

I thought that the Minister would have made mention of these ECC centres and say exactly when they would be started—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: Yes.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—who the contractors will be; what is the cost of those contracts. You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, while the Bill is supposed to be dealing with the amendment of the Bail Act—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: I was going to do that.

Mr. N. Hypolite: And we recognize that education is very important in the prevention of criminal activities—[*Interruption*—the Member for Caroni East found it fit to talk about the educational system.

But not only that, Madam Deputy Speaker, we also had the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara. And the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara decided to speak about a number of things. He started off with showtime and he spoke about showtime. I think that was a newspaper, I think that was a newspaper. *[Interruption]* And then he started talking about churches, and he spoke about Calder Hart, and he spoke about Prof. Ken Julien; he spoke about the sport company; he spoke about the Auditor General; Madam Deputy Speaker, he also spoke about URP.

Whilst speaking about URP he made mention that in 2002 when the PNM took over the administration to govern this country, that we fired all the workers perceived to be UNC.

Hon. Member: You did.

Mr. N. Hypolite: He also made mention, Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: We know what he spoke about, we were here.

Mr. N. Hypolite: No, you were not here Fyzabad. Fyzabad, you are always going outside to lime somewhere about the place, you must sit down in the House and listen at times and then you will understand—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Proceed! Proceed!

Mr. N. Hypolite:—what the Member said—what your colleague said.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Your colleague said, and I would repeat, because the Member for Fyzabad needs to hear what his colleague said. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Okay.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—that the UNC workers were fired under the People's National Movement.

Mr. Sharma: True. True. That is no lie.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Madam Deputy Speaker, that is incorrect.

Mr. Sharma: No, that is correct.

Mr. N. Hypolite: It is very much incorrect. He also said that the PP/UNC—*[Interruption]* *[Laughter]*

Miss Cox: “COP geh fired under the UNC?”

Mr. N. Hypolite: Madam Deputy Speaker, that statement that the Member made is incorrect. Actually, in 2010 when this Government took over, over 600 monthly paid workers were fired.

Hon. Member: That is not true.

10.45 p.m.

Mr. Mc Leod: That is not true.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Over 600 monthly-paid workers were fired.

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh going so good.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: So much to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that they all went to the Industrial Court.

Dr. Baker: What is the source of your information?

Mr. N. Hypolite: And not only did they go to the Industrial Court, but I am advised that by March the court will be making a decision and, thus far, it seems as if everything will be in favour—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: You “cyar” influence the court.

Mr. Indarsingh: Like you influencing the court.

Hon. Member: He cannot.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—of the workers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the matter right now is before the CPO. It is right now before the CPO, and it is my understanding that the Government will have to pay out a lot of money, probably well over \$20 million for firing those 600-plus workers. And if it is not 600 workers, maybe you would like to correct me if it is not 600, but that is what I am advised, that it is over 600 workers.

Mr. Mc Leod: It is by the Industrial Court and the CPO. *[Laughter]*

Mr. N. Hypolite: No, no, no, my friend. It is before the CPO. Okay? It is before the CPO—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Baker: But did you not say the Industrial Court just now?

Mr. N. Hypolite:—of which they took industrial action, and it is before the CPO at this point in time, and close to \$20 million, if not more than \$20 million, is what would be paid to those workers—for wanting to fire over 600 workers.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

Madam Deputy Speaker, they said that in 2002—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: “You not” familiar with the grievance procedures.

Mr. N. Hypolite: In 2002, the PNM would have fired all those who were perceived to be UNC workers.

Dr. Baker: Yes.

Mr. N. Hypolite: I can speak about—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: That is what they said.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—three persons, Madam Deputy Speaker, who—[*Interruption*] You are very annoying, I must say. You are very, very annoying, you know. [*Laughter*] And I realize why you came up here, because you are aspiring to be the Prime Minister. But let me tell you about the Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Baker: What is wrong with that?

Mr. N. Hypolite: You are probably aspiring to be Prime Minister.

Dr. Baker: I am a politician.

Mr. N. Hypolite: And as you aspire to be the Prime Minister, all right—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Baker: What is wrong with that?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Nothing is wrong with that, except that the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara spoke about elections and elections and elections and elections. We had three elections this year gone—well, last year—four elections. We won three.

Dr. Browne: They lost four.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Just to remind them, the Tobago House of Assembly, 12/nil. [*Desk thumping*] The 12 was won by the People’s National Movement led by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. [*Desk thumping*] The nil—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: Remind them.

Mr. N. Hypolite: The nil, Madam Deputy Speaker, was led by the Member for Siparia. [*Desk thumping*] They lost.

Mr. Sharma: And “yuh” still in Opposition.

Mr. N. Hypolite: When you had, Madam Deputy Speaker, the local general election—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Local general?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Sorry—the local elections, of which under the Member for Diego Martin West [*Desk thumping*] we won eight of those corporations. [*Interruption*]. You still aspiring? Because the Member for Siparia led the team across there, they got five, and that main seat—that main corporation—was a tie between the People’s National Movement and the green party. Their hometown, they lost that also.

And then we had St. Joseph, [*Desk thumping*] once again led by the Member for Diego Martin West. We won St. Joseph [*Desk thumping*] and now the maxi is overflowing. Not so?

Hon. Member: That is right.

Dr. Baker: But “yuh” still in Opposition.

Mr. N. Hypolite: But guess what, Madam Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: It does not matter.

Mr. N. Hypolite: The Member for Siparia led that team across there in St. Joseph and they lost.

Hon. Member: Um hmm.

Mr. N. Hypolite: So aspire, my dear friend. You might just make it, but do not be so annoying.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was telling you about 2002 and those three workers. I am told about a Ms. Awai who went up against John Rahael. John Rahael won the election. Ms. Awai, who went up against him, remained working in URP under a PNM administration. [*Desk thumping*]

Then I am advised, again in 2002, a Mr. Martinez that went up against Eric Williams. Eric Williams won, Martinez lost, but Mr. Martinez remained [*Desk thumping*] working in the URP.

Then we had a very known person to all of us. I think she is a commissioner at T&TEC at this point in time. She always goes up—I think it is Princess Smart. I think that is her name, Princess Smart. All right? She always goes up on a UNC ticket. She is a very strong supporter. She belongs to Laventille West, and since I

know that lady she continues to be in URP. Even between the period 2007—2010 under my hands, she remained in URP. We never did anything. We did not fire her or anything like that.

Hon. Member: It is never our style.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Madam Deputy Speaker, the People's National Movement is not about just firing people left, right and centre. We are a caring party. .

Further to that, we have—I “doh” know; you know the name Chadeesingh?

Hon. Member: Chan.

Mr. N. Hypolite: You know that person, Chadeesingh? What about Chan Chadeesingh? You know that person? Well, you cannot make Prime Minister. Go back down the road so. You “cyar make dat one”. [*Laughter*] Madam Deputy Speaker, Chan Chadeesingh was kept on, on the Betting Levy Board—all right?—and that board was one of the boards that the People's National Movement was responsible for, more so, bearing in mind that Chan Chadeesingh—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Was kept on.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—was kept on even though that individual did not support—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: What about the Minister of Science and Technology now?

Mr. N. Hypolite:—did not support us. Further to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, a number of other persons, supporters of the UNC, were on various boards. So when the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara stands up in the House and speaks about the PNM firing people left, right and centre, I know he is an individual who tends to do a lot of research, but I think he went wrong somewhere this time around, and therefore, he needs to revisit his information.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I felt it necessary to respond to those things because they were all misleading. I found it necessary also to ask the Minister of Education about the schools in my constituency because he was on a nice little roll of talking about schools. But when we look at the Bill before us, which is basically to look at not giving bail to individuals, more so who would have committed a crime on more than one occasion and to give them 120 days in Remand Yard, we have to ask ourselves whether or not that is the way we need to go as a country and as a Government, or if that is what will solve the crime situation in this country.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MR. HYPOLITE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, the crime in this country is out of hand. The People's National Movement would have put a number of initiatives in place—a number of initiatives in place. This Government came into office and they “mash up”, destroyed, got rid of. It is like a property and the perimeter walls—they “mash” down the perimeter walls. You remove the barbwire; you take away the burglar proofing; you leave the door wide open and the elements outside there will walk in and you will go down by the bar by the corner and complain, and that is what is taking place right now.

They removed everything to protect our borders, to protect the drugs and guns from coming into this country, and now they are coming up with pieces of legislation, duplication taking place in some cases, as you would see in this particular piece of legislation, where there are certain parts that you can actually use the anti-gang legislation to take care of some of the crimes that are listed in Parts II and III of this piece of legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Attorney General indicated exactly what the Bill stands for, and I think it is important to note that in the United Kingdom a study was done—and I just want to read into the record some of the findings of that report.

Dr. Moonilal: Report on what?

Mr. N. Hypolite: It is a study. It is a study on—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Baker: Where are you reading from?

Mr. N. Hypolite: They call it: “Do Prison Sentences Actually Help Offenders to Rehabilitate or Does it Force Criminals to Re-offend?” It was done by “ghareth in Crime”, and this is reported on March 06, 2009. It speaks of:

- “(1) The UK Home Office statistics show that quite a high percentage of criminals re-offend after being imprisoned, they have separated these into groups which show the percentage of re-offenders in different types of crime.
- (2) The highest percentages come with crimes usually associated with generating some form of income, this could be linked directly with the fact that they had been imprisoned and now have a criminal record.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, what this is simply saying is that by putting these individuals in prison—all right?—will not solve the crime situation, especially now that we are faced with a murder rate of some 24 murders in 10 days. Madam

Deputy Speaker, one will think that instead of looking at trying to find these individuals who have committed these crimes, what we should be doing is actually trying to prevent these activities from happening. I ask the question: What is the Government doing in order to prevent these crimes from happening?

Or is it a case of being reactive more than proactive? Is it a case of, go outside there, steal two cars, get locked up, spend some time in jail, come back out, steal two cars again, get locked up again and start looking for bail: Or is it a case of, Madam Deputy Speaker, trying to put systems in place to prevent these young persons from committing these criminal activities? That is the question that I would like to get answered.

11.00 p.m.

While that is so, Madam Deputy Speaker, one will want to look at some preventative measures. Some of them this Government came into office and met and they got rid of. One such measure dealt with repeat offenders, and that was the Repeat Offenders Programme. Madam Deputy Speaker, where is that programme today? They took that programme and they got rid of it, the same way that they would have taken the Special Anti-Crime Unit—and they got rid of that unit also—and the Minister of National Security will come into this House and he will speak about the good that unit did.

You had the Hearts and Mind Programme, another programme that would have prevented a number of these individuals, a number of these young persons from going outside there and committing criminal activities. Maybe, instead of spending \$3.2 million on a big fete up at the Queen's Park Savannah and calling it a Laventille initiative, they could have taken part of that \$3.2 million and put it into the Hearts and Mind Programme, put some more money into the programmes such as MILAT and MYPART, CCC, the Cadet Force; put some more money into the Citizen Security Programme because this piece of legislation here, that we are amending, will not have any impact on the reduction in crime and that is what we want.

We do not want to hear, come 2015, that within the first 10 days we have 25 murders. What we would like to hear is that within the first 10 days, the measures that the Government will put in place, some of which were measures that the People's National Movement would have had in place before, be used, and come 2015 January, if we have two, we have plenty. One murder, Madam Deputy Speaker, is too much in this country.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MR. HYPOLITE]

Friday, January 10, 2014

The People's National Movement, Madam Deputy Speaker, continues to state that any piece of legislation that is good and that can be used to help reduce criminal activities in this country, we will support. But if the legislation is bad and it will not do justice to the crime situation, then we will not support.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am going to be very brief, but I feel that this is important. It is crime connected and I will therefore want to say something on behalf of my constituents. But I am really rather surprised though, important as the crime situation is, I do not think this Bail (Amdt.) Bill really bears any relevance to solving the crime and the high murder rate that there is today.

However, I still find it quite indecent and I wonder whether this Government has any moral authority to come here today to discuss this Bail (Amdt.) Bill, again, after spending time last week fraternizing in Tobago with persons who are out on bail charges—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: And lying with the—[*Inaudible*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—who are out on bail, sorry, on charges of very serious offence.

Mr. Sharma: [*Inaudible*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: That to me, I mean—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: The subject of extradition proceedings.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Well, my friend, I am sorry that you spoke already, Member for Diego Martin North/East, but he wants me to expand that these persons were the subject of extradition issues and so on. But the point about it is one must remember that this is high office—high public office—and there are expectations by the public in terms of your behaviour and your standards, and what you practise certainly must be what you preach. I am not concerned with whether any Members of the PNM were there. I do not think that is so, but the point about it is, it is wrong and you have to assume the responsibility that is expected of you as a public official.

But to go directly to the Bill—because I will only be about 15 minutes, Madam Deputy Speaker—I want to say that this Bill really is totally unworkable, and what this assumes is that the prison population is going to increase. This is

what one expects having regard to what the Bill intends, that the prison population will increase. But we will know, of course—Madam, I would like to speak in silence and there is some crosstalk going on.

Dr. Moonilal: You are disturbing the Member.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members, please. You may continue, Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Yes. Thank you very much. We know of the situation in prisons. We have had some discussions only recently about the very difficult situation with regard to overcrowding and, of course, the recent riots as well. Therefore, what is the point of creating something like this that really is not practical? Just where are you going to house all these supposed criminals and so on? When persons are sent to prison, we know fully well the result is that many of them who might be just there for minor offences, they may very well be inculcated into that culture of criminality and that is a major concern.

So, the Bill really should not be contemplated when you know that you have not sorted out your prison issues, and therefore, you want to avoid sending people there to just spend enormous amounts of time, and where there will be a situation of being deculturalized, and where there is in fact a training ground for criminals. So, I am saying that it is quite impractical, and therefore, as I would say, unworkable. It just makes no sense to bring this Bill when you know you cannot really fulfil it in its entirety, what is intended to fulfil.

When you look at particular clauses—let us go to clause 5, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Member for Diego Martin West spoke about these offences and spoke to the relevance of some of them, but you look at—one of them he did not mention was (m). I look at 5(m):

“threatening to publish with intent to extort;

And I am asking myself: what really does the presenter of this mean by “threatening to publish with intent to extort”? Really, to me, it seems like it might be an attempt to infringe the freedom of the press. I am not sure if that is what is intended, and this is not something that is on the radar of the public at all. So I do not know why it is inserted there at all. This is not the subject of any public concern or so. So I do not see why this offence should be included. Really, I am wondering if this is to get at journalists and media houses and so on. I expect that when the AG gets up, he is going to respond as to the relevance of 5(m) along with the others that had been raised by previous speakers as well.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. GOPEE-SCOON]

Friday, January 10, 2014

I am turning to clause 4(3) which says that:

“Subject to subsection (4), where a person is charged with an offence listed in Part II of the First Schedule and brought before the Court but no evidence has been taken within one hundred and twenty days of the reading of the charge, that person is entitled to make an application to a Judge for bail.”

But I do not know of the list of things that are before the courts. I do not know that there are any matters that are known to really start before 120 days. So, this particular clause makes absolutely no sense. He intended this to be a solution to crime, and I cannot even say that this will be a band-aid solution because it really makes no sense.

There has been no improvement in the disposition of matters by the courts, and therefore, this Bill would have absolutely no effect in the way that it has been brought. If it is that he has statistics to prove otherwise that the court has been more efficient and matters are dealt with, within the 120 days, then maybe that will make more sense. But, as it is, I do not think so and, therefore, this really is all very nonsensical and makes no sense either.

I looked at—and the thing is we have seen similar type legislation in the past and really that has made no dent on crime at all, absolutely has made no impact at all. So therefore, I do not know that this is going to make any difference on the level of crime which we are witnessing today and it certainly is not the answer. It really is just wasting the Parliament’s time as has been said by many speakers, so I am not going to waste much time on it either.

A previous speaker would have mentioned the whole question of the detection rate as well. I think the average in terms of the detection rate is about 12 per cent in terms of murders being solved and, therefore, I do not think that this whole question of removing bail really is going to help in making us, the public, feel more secure. I think the biggest outcry now is with the murder rate and this does not make anybody feel any better at all. The detection rate remains as it is and I think that is where the Government should really lend its focus, on its ability to solve the murder rate and to be able to detect crimes and so on, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, as it is, as I said, this is nonsensical.

Then we look at other little aspects of things that were mentioned before, but I bring up the point again, the shortage of staff in the DPP’s office. Nothing has been done about it as well and that, of course, contributes to the slow process of getting matters to the court and so on. So, those are the kinds of things I think that we

would have liked to give attention to if we really want to get anywhere closer to solving serious crime and so on. The whole question of staffing in the DPP's office as well, the prisons as well, getting that detection rate up and so on.

So, all I could surmise is that this is really just a PR exercise, or maybe it is that there is nothing else on the legislative agenda. But as to say whether this is going to give any support or any comfort to the public, this is not going to do anything at all. So it is entirely meaningless, and really I think that you really have to address all of the matters that affect the criminal justice system before you attempt to come with something like this. It really is quite nonsensical, makes absolute—we have just wasted a couple hours well in this Parliament with this and we certainly will not support this. There is just no basis for doing so.

Again, as I said before, the legislation just does not deal with the biggest issue before us, which is the murder rate. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, as at Tuesday it was at 20 murders in seven days, and if you translate that to a rate per annum, you would see that it translates to 1,043 murders per annum as at Tuesday last, and that is an atrocity. It is unheard of. It is higher than any other rate in the Caribbean, passed Jamaica. Someone said earlier that it has passed Mexico as well. We are probably top 10 in the world in terms of a murder rate, and that is what it translates to. We cannot get away from it.

So all that the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara spoke about before, about crimes having gone down, this is what is concerning us right now. And, it is almost disrespectful that just on the heels of this, all that the Prime Minister is going to respond by saying is: "it is going to be a safe Carnival". But I cannot understand how it is going to be a safe Carnival. How are we—I mean, yes, we are happy to have the thousands and thousands and thousands of visitors into this country, but I can tell you I do not think any one of us wants to be outside at the night, not any of our children as well.

11.15 p.m.

When you look, for instance—it really seems a little bit silver-tongued to make a statement like that at a time when the rate is that high. When you look at what has happened in Cedros, in Fullerton this week, Madam Deputy Speaker, a really, really grotesque and really gruesome crime and Cedros has not had a murder in 10 years. It is really a sleeping village, very wonderful community, peaceful, and the people who were "slayed"—I have to use the word "slayed", I think it is a little bit stronger—these were very peaceful people, law-abiding

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MRS. GOPEE-SCOON]

Friday, January 10, 2014

persons. I met them. Yes, they are not PNM but I had a lovely chat with the wife—
[*Crosstalk*] No, but they told me, they are very open and nothing is wrong with that. Nothing is wrong with your political affiliation.

But, I had a conversation, I am their MP. I spoke with Mrs. Ramdeen sometime in November last year, and it really is quite disheartening what has happened in this village which is so very, very peaceful, and I am really looking very closely to see whether or not anyone is going to be charged with this murder. As I said, these people were actually butchered. I mean, really quite grotesque and barbaric.

Madam Deputy Speaker, and therefore, if you are coming here today—the Government that is—I think you have to come with something that really puts some comfort to the population and really sends a strong signal that you are serious about fighting crime. But this thing about having a safe Carnival, Cedros usually has a very, very good Carnival and people are out there till all hours of the night, Madam Deputy Speaker, without an excessive police force, but not this time.

As a matter of fact, I have had conversations with many persons in the community there and the Cedros people are looking forward to an election. That is what they are looking forward to now. They are very, very disappointed with this Government and, as I said, the situation, the crime has spiralled out of control, it is unspeakable.

You know, the freakish statements that we have gotten from—I can only call them freakish—the Minister of National Security where he feels he is untouchable, where he feels that people cannot criticize him. Imagine at this time, when he has so much before him, he is going to take the time to write and to respond to persons in the press to people like Dana Seetahal who has a right. She is in the legal fraternity, she has a right to make statements about the crime situation and so on, but he feels that he is untouchable, yet still, he has presented no workable solution since he has been in office, and this is all very, very, absurd of him to behave in the way that he is behaving, thinking that he is the absolute crime-fighter when, in fact, he has not contributed to the reduction of crime in this country at all and he has not been able to provide any workable situations.

So safe, no, we do not feel safe. The Prime Minister can try to—I mean, I know she said it. Maybe she has started sending out signals to the visitors who are coming in but reality is reality, and I know that many of the countries that are represented in Trinidad have also transmitted these reports to their countries. We

want the people to come but we all have to be on alert. We have to be alert because the Government just has not been able to deal with it. It is a very, very sad state of affairs, very sorry. And to bring a Bill like this—an amendment to the Bail Act—Madam Deputy Speaker, without attending to the peripheral matters, the justice system and so on, just absolutely makes no sense, and it tells you that these people are just not thinking, and for a fact, there is nothing meaningful on the legislative agenda, and this is why we have had to spend the last few hours.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, with those few words, at this hour of the night, I do not think I need to say anything else again, but the reason that the crime is as it is, and that these murders remain unsolved is because we have a National Security Council, we have a Government, we have a Minister of National Security—of course, I think, he must have been probably the fourth or the fifth one of them—that simply are clueless in dealing with the whole issue of crime.

Mr. AG, you seem to have a bright grin on your face but you have a lot of questions to answer in your winding up, and no, we cannot support this, this has been a waste of the Parliament's time. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Wining up” or winding up?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member for Port of Spain South.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: “Ahhh, yeah, yeah”. [*Desk thumping*] Good thing. Good thing.

Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I thank you for this opportunity to join in this debate. It is just going to be a very brief intervention, but before I start, permit me the opportunity to wish my colleagues, on the other side, a very productive and a very safe 2014. They will need it!

Madam Deputy Speaker, this debate is oh so important and that is because of the siege—I see the country under a crime siege as we begin this 2014 year. It is no joy of mine to stand here and play any blame game. Certainly not, because I think crime affects all of us, each and every one of us. I know a couple of my friends who have called me over the last week or thereabout, and they have shared with me, you know, the fact that they do not feel comfortable just going to do simple things that they would have done before like Old Year's Night, I know a couple of people did not go out at all. I know a couple of the churches which would normally have their midnight service, they cancelled, or some of them

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MISS MC DONALD]

Friday, January 10, 2014

might have had earlier services in the day just to accommodate, you know, what they perceive to be an unsafe environment, but be that as it may, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have to move on.

Now, I listened to the Attorney General in December when he presented this amendment, and the Attorney General said a couple of things, and the first one he said is that the lawless people are now encroaching further and further on the rights of citizens and we are unresponsive to this. I took it from the *Hansard* also. But I want to ask the Attorney General here tonight, if you recall this book, your manifesto, which is now, as the Leader of Government Business always says, this is your policy document. I just want you to recall that “120 DAYS OF IMMEDIATE ACTION”.

You see, sometimes we sit and write all this stuff and it comes right back to haunt us. The language is nice, very flowery, and when you have to implement, you realize the sort of problems you have. I am just going to read number 11 in your action plan—the 120 days:

“11. We will prepare an immediate action plan for containing criminal activities and reducing the number of murders - this first phase will be from June 2010 to December 2010.”

You also said:

“13. We will deploy police on the streets, on the beat and in the communities and increase police presence everywhere.”

And:

“14. We will initiate a process to make every police station a centre for crime containment and reduction...”

Now, having said that, I ask the Attorney General tonight, we are three years and eight months into the term of this Government, what has happened? Has the situation been improved? What happened to the plan? Today, someone on the other side spoke about the plan—“every time we stand up, Diego Martin West talk about the plan and the plan and the plan”, but what has happened? What has happened in this country? People are scared. We have Carnival coming up, we have visitors coming to our shores and people are basically scared to be out.

I know of some friends, again, who love to shop on Charlotte Street and George Street and all the little arteries there, and they did not even go out for Christmas to do their normal shopping. So, you know, crime is not just about the

little places that you deem the hotspots, crime is all over. If you look now at where the crime is being committed and whatnot, it is right across this country so it affects each and every one of us.

The AG also stated in his presentation that he is seeking—to use his language—to recalibrate the scale of justice in favour of citizens. But I also go back to his policy document at pages 26 and 27, and I do not really want to repeat it because I know that my colleague from Diego Martin Central dealt with some of the information in here, and also too, my colleague from Diego Martin North/East also dealt with some of the points here, but I just want to read this: “OVERHAULING”—the—“CRIMINAL JUSTICE”—system at page 27:

“We will re-engineer the justice system in consultation with all stakeholders to ensure swift justice from the point of arrest to the final determination of all criminal matters”

Also too, we will:

“Overhaul the penal system so that prisoners have a real opportunity to turn around their lives reducing the revolving door syndrome of repeat offenders”

Now, the AG has presented this Bail (Amdt.) Bill as a crime fighting—one of the latest crime-fighting tools of the Government. That is what is happening here. So what we have to measure is whether this amendment will actually assist in the reduction of crime. Will it?

Madam Deputy Speaker, we look at the Bill at clause—where is it?—4 and we have a situation. What is clause 4 telling us? Clause 4 is stating that where a person is charged and convicted of an offence, and this person has committed another offence within 10 years of serving his or her sentence, that person would not be granted bail. However, where the matter has not been started after 120 days, that person is entitled to apply to a judge to be granted bail.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at our very first crime plan meeting with the Government, the AG raised the issue at that particular meeting, and we, the Opposition, were in total disagreement with it. I am surprised that this Bill has made its way—[*Interruption*] that is right—to the Parliament.

Hon. Member: Five clauses.

Miss M. Mc Donald: I also want to remind this House and remind the Attorney General, as the Opposition Leader said today, we are one of the most supportive Oppositions for the longest while in this country, if not the only one.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MISS MC DONALD]

Friday, January 10, 2014

We have supported you on many of the Bills—The Interception of Communications Bill. We supported you, we worked along with you, on the anti-gang; we worked along with you on the security, and now, I believe, that we are working with you on the insurance Bill. So we have been collaborating with you on numerous pieces of legislation which we feel will redound to the benefit of our citizens.

So I am wondering whether, AG—and my contribution is really to raise questions and allow you the opportunity to answer when you are winding up so that is why I am not going to be long—you have carefully thought out the objective of this Bill. What I see as general purport of this Bill is that what you are doing, you are actually increasing the population in the Remand Yard; that is what you are doing. You are increasing that population there, and I want to find out whether, if that is what you are doing, how is this going to curb crime in the country? How is it going to curb crime? Because even if 120 days should pass, that person or persons can apply to get bail and be out on bail, so what is the purpose of this?

11.30 p.m.

And the other thing too, AG, I want you to answer, I want you to respond. Have you looked at prison reform? There has not been an effective prison reform since 1962. And I do not have to tell you, I am sure you would have visited the Remand Yard; unlike Professor Ramesh Deosaran who was totally—when I saw him on television—appalled and he looked sick when he came out there, you know, seeing the conditions in the Remand Yard. Have you looked at these things?

The Remand Yard is totally overpopulated, and the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke about it and provided the statistics in this House, and you are now looking to put more. This Government, this is what you are doing; you are looking to put more people in the Remand Yard. Have you looked at prison reform before coming with this particular measure?

Another issue I want to look at AG, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, these persons so arrested and charged are not guilty of anything. AG you are well aware of that. Under our Constitution a person is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. So the thing about it is, if you go to the Remand Yard, there are many people there will tell you they are there for 10 years—and Mr. Imbert gave the statistics. Some people are there for even 13 years—13 years.

So what we are really doing—and the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I am just going to repeat it, read from an article which showed that in 2011, that the prisons' association, Madam Deputy Speaker, said that there were more than 1,400 inmates at the Remand Yard, and the prison capacity is 1,100. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Attorney General's debate—I see it; I read his *Hansard*—is flawed because during his debate he spoke about—and I am using his language—“We have to deal with these fellas because they are convicted”. But Madam Deputy Speaker, we are not dealing with convicted persons here in this Bill. Instead, we are dealing with people who have been charged and who would be awaiting trial. They have not been convicted of anything. So maybe it is a slip but if it is—because he kept repeating it—I want the Attorney General to clear that up for me. Who are we dealing with? People who have been convicted? Or people who have been charged?

Madam Deputy Speaker, section 5(2)(f) of our Constitution says:

“Without prejudice to subsection (1), but subject to this Chapter and to section 54, Parliament may not—

- (f) deprive a person charged with a criminal offence of the right—
 - (iii) to reasonable bail without just cause;”

So it is a fundamental right of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago to have access to bail. That is your constitutional right, written under the Constitution. So what is the Attorney General doing? The Attorney General, with the greatest respect, is introducing legislation which is in danger of being struck down by the courts. And that is on the ground that it is unjustifiable. And that test is found in section 13 of our Constitution. And section 13 says:

“An Act to which this section applies may expressly declare that it shall have effect even though inconsistent with sections 4 and 5 and, if any such Act does so declare, it shall have effect accordingly unless the Act is shown not to be reasonably justifiable in a society that has...” a “proper respect for the rights and freedoms of the individual.”

So we are asking, a law like this where someone is charged but not convicted, that person is held, his freedom is withheld, and not until 120 days, if his matter does not go before the court, he can, of course get bail. But that person is held for 120 days. Is this justifiable in a society that has proper respect—that is the test—for the rights and freedoms of individuals? The AG will so answer.

Madam Deputy Speaker, by legislating that a person is not entitled to bail is encroaching on the jurisdiction of the courts. There is something called—and he is aware of it—the doctrine of Separation of Powers, and no doubt the court will

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MISS MC DONALD]

Friday, January 10, 2014

frown on such an intervention. Because you are actually saying to the court, and I will read it from the Bill, that:

“...a Court shall not grant bail to any person...”

And it goes on. Shall—mandatory; that is encroaching or usurping the discretion of the court to make a determination whether a man’s right to liberty should be withheld or not. AG will answer that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I turn my attention to something that has worried me a bit. The Member for Diego Martin West spoke about all those offences that form schedule 1 of the amendment. Section 5(A)(1) of the Bail Act—I will say the Bail (Amdt.)(No. 2) Act, 2007 currently provides that:

“A court shall not grant bail to a person charged with the offence of kidnapping for ransom...”

Because kidnapping for ransom is one of the offences on this list here, whether that person would have had a previous conviction or not. Under this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, persons charged for kidnapping can get bail if they have no previous convictions for kidnapping. Madam Deputy Speaker, I think this is a major oversight. It defeats the purpose of the Bail (Amdt.) (No. 2) Act, 2007, which sought to control, and successfully did control kidnapping by making kidnapping a non-bailable offence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, should the Attorney General look at other measures? Because this amendment to the Bail Bill is useless. It is totally useless. And should you not be looking at—as my friend here from Point Fortin said—the detection rate of crime in this country which is at an all-time low? Should we not be looking at other pieces of legislation, like the plea bargaining laws, like The Justice Protection Act, 2000—that is your witness protection programme, by strengthening it; the abolition of the preliminary enquiries. Should we not be looking at those pieces of legislation to see how we can help in the fight with respect to crime?

Taking someone and putting that person in jail for 120 days, you could go down on Nelson Street and George Street and you know, these are the targeted areas you know, and pick them up and hurdle them in Remand Yard, and the conditions there are so bad, when they come out they are worse than when they went in. Their minds are hard. “Dey heart hard.”

I was listening to your pastor today, during the tea break, Pastor Samuel. He probably thinks that I, you know just—but I listened well to some of the things he

said about the youths outside there and while he was speaking, I threw my mind back on my own constituents in those hot-spot areas, and I am wondering whether we are doing any good here, as legislators, to pass something like this Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013. We cannot, as the Opposition, lend support to this. We cannot because we see absolutely nothing good coming out of this.

When you can deal with the detection rate, then we can talk. I looked at an article in yesterday's *Newsday*, Thursday, January 09, a story by Darcel Choy, where residents along Duncan Street from my constituency, spoke to this particular reporter and they said they expect murders to continue until something more is done for the young people in the area. They said they need more stable jobs, not just temporary. They need jobs that will give them security and—as we put it—sustainable jobs.

They also lamented the continued closure of the Duncan Street Police Post, at a cost of over \$4 million. I remember I was invited to the opening, along with the Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs, along with the Prime Minister and with much fanfare we opened that police post on Duncan Street. They are supposed to house inside of there too, a homework centre and I can tell you, it stands—because I pass there practically every day—like a white elephant. Nothing is happening. Absolutely nothing is happening. Shooting out in Mango Rose; those in Mango Rose shooting across Nelson Street; those in Nelson Street shooting back across the road. Absolutely nothing is going on there.

I ask what will happen. You catch one of these guys and “dem”, what will happen? They go to jail for 120 days and they come back out, they had one gun, they get three. That is what is going to happen. What about the promise made by the presentation—in the budgetary presentation by the Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs? I remember the Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs, in his— and I have the *Hansard*. He said there is going to be a development for east Port of Spain in 2014. I remembered and I said you just tried to “mamaguy” me because it was nowhere in the budgetary proposals. The Minister of Finance and the Economy never said that.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

They still talk about—remember that, you all remember good, all we got in that budget, that \$61.3 billion budget was that cable car from Picton down to Frederick Street and back. That is all we got. But then the Minister said that there would be some kind of development. There would be. And to date we have heard nothing about it, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing we have seen. So tell us, tell us.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[MISS MC DONALD]

Friday, January 10, 2014

They are there asking for jobs; this is what it is we need. But what do we hit them? We hit them an amendment to the Bail Act. That is what we hit them, an amendment to the Bail Act without dealing with the substantive problems.

Mr. Speaker, I would not take up any further time, you know. These are the points I wanted to raise and I want to show that in Port of Spain South, my constituency, and many other constituencies this Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013 will not work. It will not work and I hope that the Government will take a second look at this, and I always say this is not the place for ego. This makes absolutely no sense, take it back, go back to the drawing board and let us look at those fundamental things that could help crime.

We came with a ten-point plan to the Government and I think the leader here spoke about it today, so I will just highlight it. The appointment of a Police Commissioner; an immediate manpower audit of the Police Service; need for an information gathering agency—since you have done away with SAUTT, there is no agency that is doing the work of SAUTT. And we are saying to use existing legislation to increase municipal police.

11.45 p.m.

I just read from your plan, your policy document, that that was one of your goals for the 120 days; to put more police in the communities and all the various neighbourhoods.

We said strengthen the Police Complaints Authority; establishment of a standing committee of Parliament to deal with crime. We said bring legislation on witness tampering. We said bring legislation on home invasion. We said there must be an urban renewal programme especially geared towards east Port of Spain. We said we need to take immediate steps to make the Caribbean Court of Justice our final Court of Appeal. Those are the 10 points we brought to the Government.

Mr. Speaker, I say no more. I await the response of the AG and to state that this Bench cannot support this amendment. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Attorney General.

The Hon. Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan SC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have listened attentively over the past two days, not consecutively, that we have debated this very important and significant measure and I think a useful starting point to bring us back to our moorings would be to remind this honourable House and the population at large

as to what the law as it currently stands is. And the law as it currently stands is that there were several amendments to the Bail Act, which sought to restrict the right to bail, and those restrictions imposed by the Legislature on the right to bail, culminated in the position where we have two streams running side by side in the law at present.

In stream one, you have three strikes and you are out. That means three strikes for certain offences within 10 years, and these are very serious offences, and the court shall not grant bail. So three strikes in 10 years for certain serious offences and the court will not be allowed to grant bail. That is Parliament telling the court, in a measure passed by the former administration, under the People's National Movement, that if you have been convicted three times and you are charged on a fourth occasion then you will not get bail. The second stream is whereby you have been convicted on two occasions for two offences within the last 15 years and again, no bail.

Now that is the starting point because when I listened to some of the contributions in the Parliament on this measure I thought that, perhaps, the concept of "strikes and you are out" was a novelty and some sort of constitutional innovation on the part of the Government, which was without any precedent. And nothing could be further from the truth. The concept of strikes and you are out, as an imposition, a restrictive imposition, by the Legislature was one that was introduced by the PNM.

The Constitution gave an absolute right to bail. Judges will determine if to grant bail in accordance with the exercise of their judicial discretion. But in recognizing the high rate of crime, the PNM brought a measure to restrict the ability to grant bail by saying: "Look, if yuh have three strikes yuh out and if yuh have two strikes, yuh out." That is the context in which this amendment comes.

And what are we seeking to do by virtue of this measure? We are simply saying: "Instead of three strikes and two strikes for two different categories of offences, let us remove the three strikes and the two strikes and reduce it to one strike and yuh out." They have erected three hurdles and two hurdles to reach the finish line, which is no bail. We are saying, let us remove those hurdles and instead of three hurdles and two hurdles, we want to have one hurdle and then no bail for 120 days. That is all we are doing. The hurdles were already erected under the PNM and we are simply taking away two hurdles so that you would be left with one. And why are we seeking to do that?

The learned Member for Port of Spain South asked for an explanation as to why and I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker. There was a fundamental flaw in the law passed by the PNM when they amended the Bail Act and sought to create a restriction on the grant of bail when you have three strikes and two strikes before you could be out.

Let me illustrate what the flaw was. In the first instance, you would have had to be convicted on three occasions for serious offences and those convictions would have had to be recorded in the last 10 years. Now, Mr. Speaker, as you would imagine, those are very serious offences. In fact, it is like larceny of a motor vehicle, perverting the course of public justice, firearm possession and matters of that sort.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these offences to which the three strikes and “yuh” out rule, introduced by the PNM applied there, these are very serious offences and they already carry a significant jail term. So, you have to get three convictions on three separate occasions in 10 years.

Let me illustrate the foolishness in that. The first time you are caught and convicted the magistrate or the judge may sentence you to 10 years. So the first time you are caught and convicted, you may get a sentence for seven to 10 years. Time is running during that time. So by the time you reach to the second conviction 10 years have already elapsed. The 10 years passed. Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Opposition here to show me a single case where three convictions were recorded on three separate occasions in the space of 10 years for that kind of serious offence and this rule was able to benefit the population. It could not, because when you get to court the first time and you are convicted for a serious offence, the jail term imposed on you would be about five to seven years. In some cases it may be 10. “Yuh get ketch a second time, you get a second conviction, well yuh get another five. Yuh done outside the 10-year period” so it is virtually impossible to get three convictions in 10 years—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good point.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—on three separate occasions for this rule to even be triggered to deny you bail.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Nonsensical.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: That was the fundamental flaw in the law that they brought to this Parliament and that is why it has not been of any benefit.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good point, AG.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: None whatsoever!

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good point.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker, it takes a case on average three to five years to come to trial and for these kinds of serious offences you are going to get at least five to 10 years and it must be three convictions within the last 10 years.

What they failed to appreciate is that that law was impractical and virtually impossible. So what we have done in this law is to say that one strike and “yuh” out and when “yuh” get release from jail, if from that time when “yuh” walk out the jail, from that time onwards until the next 10 years when you become a free man, if you reoffend and you are charged a second time for a dangerous and violent crime, then no bail for 120 days. They were proposing three strikes in 10 years and no bail at all, not 120 days, no bail at all and they had no difficulty, they had no qualms about putting such a measure and all the arguments they raised so speciously during their contributions would have been equally applicable then, when they passed a law that was unworkable and impractical and fundamentally flawed. But they had no difficulty doing so.

I heard the Member for Diego Martin North/East say: “Well yuh dictating to the Judiciary. Yuh trying to say the Judiciary is incompetent.”

Mr. Imbert: I am not trying. You are.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: He says we are not trying, we are. But, you know, they are the ones who interfered with it in the first place. How is it that argument did not apply when they were bringing a rule to tell the judges three strikes and no bail? Parliament was dictating them in the same way. But, you see, such is the convenience of the political hypocrisy—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—that pervades this debate, that they will not own up. They will not claim authorship and ownership to the fundamentally flawed legislation that they brought, that was of no use, no benefit that we are now seeking to correct. Three strikes in 10 years, an impossibility. Why? Because they did not discount the jail term.

And then they come with the next one, two strikes in 15 years for even more serious offences and they say then you could get no bail. Mr. Speaker, I have asked. I have made the enquiries and this law has not proven to be of any degree

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Friday, January 10, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

of effectiveness, workable or usable. The numbers are very, very low, because they did not discount the time you have to spend in jail. They did not realize that it takes so long to get three strikes and two strikes, that it really would not make sense. And that is why we brought this measure.

Had this been working, there would be no need to remove, to pick up two of the hurdles because this is a three-hurdle race and a two-hurdle race. That is the present state of the law introduced by the PNM; three hurdles and two hurdles to reach the finish line where you know would not get any bail. What we are simply doing is to take away two of the hurdles from the three-hurdle race and one of the hurdles from the two-hurdle race. So it is only one hurdle and the minute you cross that hurdle you reach the finish line if you reoffend. It is as simple as that.

But permit me, out of respect for my colleagues—some of whom made some very good points—to refer to some of the points made during the course of their contributions. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant started off her contribution by saying that the Bill was draconian and unconstitutional and she had hoped that the Attorney General would remember that you are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Mr. Speaker, that argument would have equally applied when they were passing the law to say three strikes and two strikes and no bail. When you say two strikes, two convictions and you are not going to get any bail at all, we are saying 120 days. They said none at all! No bail! Remain in jail! Remain in Remand Yard forever until “yuh trial come up!” And they were not in a quandary then, they had no difficulty. At that time, they did not say: Well you are presumed innocent until proven guilty so we should not interfere with your absolute constitutional right to bail. No, they interfered with the right to bail. They imposed restrictions and they told the court: “No bail. you cannot grant bail. If it is three strikes and two strikes they out! And they well know” that ours is a constitutional Republican democracy and the Constitution itself provides for the fundamental rights in sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution that we can make, we can pass laws that are inconsistent with those rights because the rights are not absolute.

In fact, in a judgment delivered by the Court of Appeal in the case of *Ishmael v the AG* on July 27, 2012, the Court of Appeal in its judgment repeated the principle and said and I quote from the honourable Justice of Appeal Nolan Beraux:

“It is now trite that most fundamental rights and freedoms are qualified and not absolute rights and are subject to...regulation and control.”

Let me repeat that:

“It is now trite that most fundamental rights and freedoms are qualified and not absolute rights”—they—“are subject to legislative regulation and control. Such control will not run afoul of the fundamental rights and freedoms set out in sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution if the legislative provisions are proportionate to the legitimate aims and objectives of the legislation.”

Dr. Gopeesingh: Very deep.

12 midnight

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: You see, Mr. Speaker, they speak about the capacity. They speak about—they do not seek to say it is disproportionate to deprive a man absolutely of his right to bail. They did not consider it disproportionate, when the PNM brought that measure to deprive you of your right to bail permanently. They sought to deprive accused persons who are presumed innocent of their right to bail permanently. When “dey say” two strikes and “yuh out”, they mean two strikes and “yuh” permanently out, three strikes and “yuh” permanently out. They told the judge in the law they passed, you are not permitted to grant bail at all. We have come with a measure that strikes the right kind of social, constitutional and legal equilibrium to say that we will deny bail for 120 days; 120 days—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: PNM was 60 days.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—that is what it is.

Hon. Member: PNM was 60 days.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker, they come now and they say, what about the capacity of the jail. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain South reminded us, that since 1962 there has been no new jail. I do not know whether the hon. Member was aware of the political irony in that statement, because since 1962 to now, it was the PNM that has ruled this country for almost half a century. I do not know if she was aware of the political irony in the statement she was making, that since 1962 to now, the jails have been overcrowded and there have not been the construction of no new jails. I want to answer the point about—and the concern which is a legitimate concern about the capacity in the jail.

Mr. Speaker, in October 2013, the Cabinet, under the distinguished leadership of the Member for Siparia, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, agreed to the construction of

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

a new remand prison on 28 acres of land at Golden Grove in Arouca. [*Desk thumping*] That prison will be designed in conformity with modern, international, security and human rights requirements. Cabinet also agreed that the construction would be managed by UDeCOTT at a cost of \$360 million. You know, “dey steups” about it, but since 1962 to now, they did not take this decision. They expect us to do everything overnight; what they did not do in 50 years, they expect the People’s Partnership to do in two or three years. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Browne: It never had a NAR. It never had a UNC.

Mr. Imbert: It never had a UNC.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Wave “de” magic wand.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: You see, crime went down when the NAR and UNC were there. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Ohhhh!

Hon. Member: Maximum security was—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: You see, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: “In 1990 dey burn down Port of Spain.” Tell us who. “Dey” burn down Port of Spain.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: “During UNC?”—and then the only facility the MSP, was not built during the PNM era. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: UNC took it down to—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: It was not them. Now, Mr. Speaker—

Dr. Browne: Burning down Port of Spain and—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. Imbert: Shoot parliamentarians.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—no, no, the statistics are there to show the truth. [*Crosstalk*] Furthermore, as we speak, Mr. Speaker, the Eastern Correctional Facility and Rehabilitation Centre presently has an intake capacity of 400 inmates in the first instance. Do you know how many are housed there at present? One hundred and four. Out of 400 spaces we have only 104. So there is capacity there. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you this: the Government has taken a decision to acquire that facility, and in acquiring that facility, we will be acquiring it in its totality, and when so acquired in the near future, we will have 1,200 new spaces in jail; 1,200 new spaces. So that will ease the overcrowding and take care of the concern.

The Member for Laventille East/Morvant, as well as the Member for Port of Spain South raised the question about the Prison Rules. Mr. Speaker, these Prison Rules, I think they are close to about 100 years old right now; almost a century. You know, under the People's Partnership, Mr. Speaker, we in December 2013 approved the new Prison Rules, 2013 after almost a century of the old rules; in December of 2013.

These rules will seek to provide for restorative as opposed to retributive justice, and these rules now depend on the enactment of the Miscellaneous Provisions Prison Bill, 2013, and that has been submitted to the Chief Justice, the Law Association and the criminal bar, for their comments and recommendations as part of stakeholder consultation. But, Mr. Speaker, the Prison Rules have, in fact, been completed and they are ready. We are working on the substantive amendment to the law to facilitate its implementation. Mr. Speaker, I think it was the Member for Point Fortin who said that you must deal with the peripheral issues.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant spoke about the Forensic Science Centre. Mr. Speaker, I do not think people understand in this country the extent of decay in the institutional infrastructure that the People's Partnership inherited. When the Member for Port of Spain South—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Gopeesingh: Speak again.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—so glibly referred—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Gopeesingh: Speak again.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—to the fact that no new prison facility was constructed since 1962, and without batting an eyelid, completely unaware of the political irony in the inherent admission, that the PNM ruled for 50 years during that time, almost half a century.

Mr. Speaker, the Forensic Science Centre has been an abomination and a blot on the administration of justice in this country for far too long. I am pleased to announce that—my colleague, the distinguished Minister of Justice, who is not a Member of this House—the refurbishment of the infrastructure of the Forensic Science Centre is well underway; the increase in staff complement, already done in some cases; and the investment in new technologies with capacity to process greater number of samples to facilitate a more expeditious trial in court, well underway.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

Saturday, January 11, 2014

We have recruited an additional pathologist to ensure that the annual number of autopsies conducted by pathologists is within international accepted standards. We have created eight new contract positions namely:

- one evidence technician;
- one health and safety officer;
- two forensic biologists;
- two scientific examiners; and
- two forensic exhibit clerks.

The professional staff has been increased with the creation of positions of firearms and toolmark examiners, and with the commencement of training of two nationals in the discipline of firearms and toolmark examination.

Mr. Speaker, apart from the upgrade in the existing centre, there has been reconfiguration to relocate sections to allow for increased space for work and equipment. The pathology section has been refurbished at the cost of \$4 million.

Two separately equipped rooms will be available for simultaneous postmortems. Investigating officers as well as relatives will not have to wait as long as they are currently. The shooting range has been refurbished, because they must test the firearms to say they are firearms.

The human resource and directorate secretariat and lobby areas have been refurbished at a cost of \$300,000. The Ministry is purchasing equipment to reduce the turnaround time and enhance the capability of scientific analysis. A brand new genetic analyzer has recently been acquired at a cost of \$1.6 million. All of this in the short space of time of three years, to boost the Forensic Science Centre that has been neglected over the past number of years.

Mr. Speaker, other major pieces of equipment to be purchased include:

- an ultraviolet visible spectrophotometre;
- a DNA extraction system;
- a drug detection system;
- a laboratory information management system.

The laboratory information management system alone costs \$6 million. So, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the peripheral matters.

Mr. Speaker, of course, the electronic monitoring with the ankle bracelets, we are now at the stage where we are preparing the RFP to go out and purchase the equipment. When that comes on stream, there is likely to be less people in the remand facility.

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, to turn now from that contribution from the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, to go now to the contribution made by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, he sought to remind us that these people are not guilty. Why are you interfering with their right to bail? He said there is no philosophical basis for the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind this honourable House that this is the same Member who had no difficulty in supporting the amendment to the Bail Act brought by the People's National Movement, to totally deprive people of bail. He had no difficulty supporting the Anti-Gang Act to deprive people of bail for the same 120-day period. They had no difficulty—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: “Ah was not supporting—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—in restricting that right to bail, and back then they did not seek to scream “well, yuh presumed innocent until proven guilty”.

Mr. Imbert: I was not supporting “yuh”.

Hon. Member: “It good for yuh.”

Mr. Imbert: Next time “yuh bring something, ah would not support it.”

Hon. Member: “Too dotish.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: But I will deal with that. “Ah would not support it.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—permit me to outline and remind the hon. Member of the grounds for this legislation. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: “Anything dey bring”—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: The Members for Diego Martin Central and Diego Martin North/East, would you allow the Attorney General to speak in silence. Continue, Attorney General.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Behave yuh self.”

Hon. Member: Put him out.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker, I want the Member for Diego Martin North/East to—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: “Ah want to go home.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—pay attention to what I am saying, because—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: “Ah want to go home.

Hon. Member: “Yuh not welcome here, boss.”

Mr. Imbert: “Ah doh want to be here.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker, I want the Member for Diego Martin North/East to pay attention to what I am saying—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—because this Bill requires a special majority—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: “Ah voting against it.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—and it is a three-fifths—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: “Ah voting against it.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—and that three-fifths work up to 24.6. So I need 24 people from this side and the Member for Diego Martin North/East to make it up. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh need 26. Doh try dat. Yuh cyar even count properly.”

Hon. Member: “Nuttin right.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker, the first ground for this, is the lack of consistency in the grant of bail. When they piloted that restriction on the right to bail, they themselves and the then Attorney General, my predecessor, Mr. John Jeremie, openly said on the *Hansard*, nobody deemed it an attack on the Judiciary. Nobody said, “yuh saying”—the Member for Diego Martin North/East did not get up and say to his Attorney General, but “yuh attacking de Judiciary”. “Yuh saying dey not competent.” No, no, no, none of that. None of that took place then. They all silently stood there, and allowed what needed to be said, to be said and they did not, in fact, say it was an attack on the Judiciary.

You see, permit me, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: This is.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Yeah, this is.

Mr. Imbert: This is.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: It is not an attack when you do it, but on the same principle, when another Government does it, it is an attack. When the PNM was in power, everything they did was right. When anybody else in power, everything they do is wrong. You see, they are still caught in the old school of thinking, that the Opposition must oppose, but never propose.

Mr. Imbert: “Ah not supporting yuh in anything.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: So the first point is the lack of consistency in the grant of bail.

Mr. Imbert: “How ah could support ah wrong?”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: The second point is the proven high rate of recidivism.

Mr. Imbert: “Ah not supporting yuh.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker, there is an extremely high rate of repeat offenders.

Mr. Imbert: “If dat is de most remotely thing, ah not supporting that also.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: The third—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Yeah, come on now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Come, come, Colm, behave yourself, Colm.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: So the second point is the high rate of recidivism. [*Interruption*] The third—Mr. Speaker, really. You know, I cannot continue with him carrying on like that, really.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Diego Martin Central, I am appealing to you for the second time.

Hon. Member: One more strike and “yuh out”. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, I am appealing to Members for the second time, to allow the Attorney General to speak in silence. You are disturbing the proceedings and also the Hansard reporters. The two chief offenders are the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Member: “Is ah Diego Martin ting.”

Mr. Speaker: This is my second warning. Continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

12.15 a.m.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: I am grateful, Mr. Speaker. As I seek to outline the philosophical basis for this legislation, I want to firstly start by pointing out the lack of consistency in the exercise of judicial discretion as alluded to by my predecessor when he presented the first bail amendment legislation which sought to impose the two-strike and three-strike rule.

The second point is the extremely high rate of recidivism. Mr. Speaker, I listened when the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was speaking and was quoting the larceny of motor vehicle statistics. He said, well you know, you have 141 or how much it is, but what about all these other reports? There has been no detection. You “ain” hold nobody.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think people understand. The fact that you might have 100 crimes does not mean that you have 100 criminals. You may have 20 criminals committing 100 crimes. So you could have 100 cars being stolen, but that does not mean you have 100 car “thief”.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: You could have two.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: And that is the fundamental flaw in their thinking and that is why this law is needed because we understand the high rate of recidivism and the kind of crimes that repeat offenders are committing because they are done on an escalating scale.

The third point is that you need to have some kind of cooling-off period to allow the prosecution to prepare and develop its case without the possibility of witnesses being intimidated and harassed. Mr. Speaker, you know how many times the police go after a crime is committed, they take statements from the witnesses, the DPP’s office sit down with people and they prepare their cases and when the time comes to go to court in three months’ time, the people, somebody gets to them and they say “nah”, they are no longer interested in testifying. They say, “You cannot put me in the box, otherwise I will say something different”.

Your whole case falls flat. Why? Because a man is out on bail and intimidating and harassing the witness. Even if the case comes up, you have the possibility of inference with the jury—jury manipulation, jury tampering. So that this 120-day period, it gives the prosecution a “lil” opportunity to prepare its case and start its case without that happening in appropriate cases.

If the DPP feels that a “fella” may not be so inclined—because remember they know him; they have a conviction against him already—if they feel they could take a chance, well they may prioritize and do another man’s case within the 120 days, but leave this guy to make his application for bail.

Back to the Member for Diego Martin North/East, permit me to remind the Member what he said in the House of Representatives on March 16, 2007, in support of a similar measure. I quote:

“...we are passing this Bill today on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure the safety and security of the good people of this country. Whether we are on this side or that side, the serious, decent, committed Members of Parliament will be passing this Bill today, so that persons who have been convicted twice of a heinous crime and are charged for”—a—“third time, will be denied bail”—and—“incarcerated and prevented from wreaking havoc on the innocent people of this country.”

Hon. Member: “Who say that?”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: The Member for Diego Martin North/East. He pounces on the fact that it is twice—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: Not pounce.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—Mr. Speaker, whether it is twice, three times or once, it is the same concept of strikes. Why did you not feel that you were dictating to the Judiciary then, telling them they were incompetent then, and you were depriving a man of his right to bail?

Permit me to quote from the Bail (Amdt.) Bill debate in 1994 on August 29, the then Member of Parliament, Hedwige Bureaux, he gives a different reason for it.

Mr. Roberts: “They ain lock he up yet?”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: He says:

“...we also have a situation because judges and magistrates are not immune to terror. Terror is common to all. Also, fear. There comes a time when one gets

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

too stupid to be afraid, but, in most cases,”—well you stupid and afraid—
“terror is common to all. In several instances I believe some judicial officers,
because of fear of reprisals from...criminals, exercise discretion in”—their—
“favour.”

So they were trying to predicate their bail amendment on the fact that the judges and magistrates, when they are granting bail, they are doing it because they are terrorized and they are living in terror.

Hon. Member: What Jeremie had said?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. John Jeremie, the then Attorney General, this is what he had to say and this is on the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2007:

“The increasing levels of other violent offences cannot be ignored. This Government...remains fully cognizant of its duty to take whatever steps are necessary...”

He continued:

“There are persons...”—magistrates and judges—“in this country who would allow individuals out on bail in respect of very, very serious offences.”

Hon. Member: Read the next paragraph too!

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: He goes on. You could imagine if we said that what will happen? And they are accusing us of attacking the Judiciary, you know. This is what he said. He goes further and he trains his guns on the hon. Chief Justice and this is what he says.

“They talk to their troops”—they are Chief Justices—“about the need for granting bail”—troops there mean judges and magistrates, eh—“about the need for granting bail in a uniformed fashion, but this does not happen because these are individuals. That is why there is a need, in this time of crisis, for us to legislate”—to guide them.

So they are the ones who were saying that the Judiciary is incompetent.

Mr. Roberts: St. Joseph.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: They are the ones who are saying that the Chief Justice cannot marshal his troops and then they seek now to put those words in our mouths when, at no point in time, has any Member on this side posited this Bail Bill on that basis. But you see because that is their modus operandi and their manner of thinking, they seek to ascribe it to others—intellectual hypocrisy of the worst kind.

Hon. Member: Only intellectual?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: You see, Mr. Speaker, when they were debating that, this is what they were saying back then. They said:

The PNM viewed this amendment as a deterrent to dangerous crimes.

So when they pour scorn on us and say, but “allyuh” think this is a crime-fighting measure, we say, yes, but what is so wrong with that? It is a crime-fighting measure. You also said the same thing. Then they go forward:

The right of the individual must always take second place to society’s right as a whole.

So when they are in power, society must be protected and the right of the individual must give way and so on, but now that we seek to stand on the same principle, they try and forget all that they said and try and throw this back as though it is some big hullabaloo.

Listen to another one—Fitzgerald Hinds—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Oh God!

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—on Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2007, House of Representatives. Well one strike and he gone. They kick him out.

Mr. Roberts: Oh God!

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:

“The criminal justice system must also deal firmly with repeat offenders. One strike and you are charged again. You are convicted, you serve your time and you are charged again; you are a repeat offender. The Bill seeks to send a strong message to potential offenders and potential repeat offenders as to the posture of this Parliament and the country we represent in respect of their antisocial and criminal behaviour.”

Mr. Partap: They are singing a different tune now.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: So, Mr. Speaker, today they sing a different tune because their job is to oppose and never propose.

Mr. Partap: Semps and Picoplats.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: I come now to the contribution made by the Member for Diego Martin West—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Partap: He gone home.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC:—who is unfortunately not here with us—

Hon. Member: Very weak.

Hon. Member: “Yeah, he weak today.”

Dr. Gopeesingh: All the time.

Mr. Roberts: The real leader of—

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: He came after the distinguished and hon. Member made that rather erudite and intellectually illuminating contribution, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, and started off by saying that the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara was saying that poverty was an excuse for crime.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to state on the record that I listened to the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara from beginning to end and at no point in time did he say anything, with the longest stretch of the imagination, that could ever, to any rational mind, be interpreted as saying that. There is no way. It is virtually impossible—at no point in time. In fact, if anything, the people who use that as an excuse by saying, well, you know, they want sustainable jobs, they “ain have nutten”, let me tell you something, the people who say that and where that echo comes from is not on this side. The people who seek to invoke poverty as a justification and a social right to commit crime, they do not sit on this side. So when you make that statement, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, he needs to look at the mirror. He needs to look at the mirror.

Hon. Member: That is an ugly face, “eh”.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: But I could well understand why he cannot withstand that. He says, and I quote:

“I grow up in Mason Hall in Tobago to go to school barefoot, come home and not find anything to eat and have to wait until they light fire and cook something to eat eight o’clock in the night and we had the lowest level of crime in the country. “

I want to say the hon. Prime Minister, Member for Siparia, plant rice in the “cola”, grew up with a mother who sold in the market, and we too came from poverty, grinding poverty and we are proud Members of Parliament today and we join with you on that principled statement and we say to you, tell the nation that poverty is not what can motive you to pick up a gun and shoot a man in cold blood.

Let us say that to the national community. Stop speaking with forked tongues and sending mixed signals to the communities. Stop trying to make social justifications and social and political excuse by telling the young men that it is okay for you to commit crime because you are poor. Do not send that kind of mixed signal at a time more so when the Government and people of this country are doing everything humanly and politically possible to take care of all communities throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago.

The next material misstatement and misrepresentation by the Member for Diego Martin West, directed at the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, he says, and I quote:

In his confused state of mind—he is not referring to himself I pause to add—he said the PNM was discriminating and that is what has led to the existing affirmative action policy of the Government. The policy of affirmative action because the PNM was only giving its own and that followed an argument that said, under the PNM, crime was not high.

Mr. Speaker, at no time did the Member say that. The hon. Minister of Sport was at pains to point out that, you know, under this Government, we are actually sharing resources in an equitable, fair and transparent manner, [*Desk thumping*] and anywhere you go in Trinidad and Tobago today you see the evidence of the work that is taking place—anywhere you go.

In Valencia, the overpass; Diego Martin highway, the Point Fortin highway, the San Fernando Chancery Lane teaching hospital, the Point Fortin hospital, the Penal hospital, the oncology centre, the Arima hospital, eight police stations built, aquatic centre, recreation grounds all over the country, well lit.

Hon. Member: Port of Spain?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: You see, Mr. Speaker, when they seek to stand in a huff and puff to accuse the Government and the hon. Minister of Sport of saying that there is affirmative action, they do so because they practised that kind of discrimination and affirmative action all their political life. That is why in today's newspaper or yesterday's there is a big headline, "PNM does not hate Indians". That is the headline: "PNM does not hate Indians". That is why, from the honourable Leader of the Opposition—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Who said they hated them?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: One of their own members apparently went on the media and said, as an Indo-Trinidadian, he felt discriminated against in the

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

PNM and he felt he was being treated as a second-class and a third-class citizen. Two strikes for him and he out.

Mr. Roberts: Deyalsingh?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: No, no, no, no, no. Somebody much more significant. [*Laughter*] And, Mr. Speaker, they come out and the headline is “PNM does not hate Indians”, but from 1956—1986, for 30 years in this country, there was not a single Hindu Minister in the PNM Cabinet and even now in the Lower House, it does not reflect the kind of diversity we know in Trinidad and Tobago and the kind of diversity we are proud of on this side. That is why they attacked the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara.

There is not a single member from the Islamic faith on the Opposition Bench, not one; not one Hindu, but they want to call themselves a credible alternative to Government and they pounce on this thing about affirmative action, Mr. Speaker.

12.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the *Newsday* of Wednesday, November 05, 2003. [*Crosstalk*] The *Newsday* article is entitled—the editorial is entitled “COSTAATT document gaffe creature of Government”.

Mr. Roberts: “As a dougla ah feeling it fuh yuh.”

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: And it says—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “Ah feeling it fuh yuh as a dougla.”

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: It says:

“The decision to incorporate the thinking:”—as a matter of policy—
 ““Establish targetted recruitment programmes for male Trinidadians aged 17 to 24, especially Afro-Trinidadian males’...In turn, it was regrettable”—says the *Newsday* editorial—“that Minister of Science...Senator Danny Montano, and later Planning Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley...sought to defend its inclusion. Meanwhile”—while they were defending its inclusion, the hon.—
 “Prime Minister Patrick Manning has argued, albeit belatedly, that the offending sentence in the document did not represent Government policy...”

So while the then Minister of Planning, Dr. Keith Rowley and the Minister of Science, Danny Montano—whilst they come out and say, well yes it is Government policy and they start defending it—“Dem don running hell mell down de road.” The Prime Minister, their political leader, come and say, “Well, hold up. Whoo! This doh represent government policy.” Total conflict!

Mr. Roberts: Was that 2003?

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: This was—yes, November 05, 2003.

Mr. Roberts: Before he give Rahael the—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: And the *Newsday* says:

“It was bad enough, indeed clumsy and certainly inexcusable, that Montano and Rowley had thought it necessary to defend it in Parliament, but the question arises: Why had it taken Manning so long to make a statement denying it was Government policy?”

So when you talk about affirmative action, we understand why you want to pounce on us to talk that kind of nonsense but, in reality, that was the political modus operandi when you were in Government, but the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara was very careful. He said when he drove to Tabaquite, he drive through some roads and some areas that made him think that he was driving in Haiti.

Mr. Roberts: In 2007.

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: And for those of us who come from those areas, we understand and we welcome his empathy because, Mr. Speaker, for all those years that the PNM was in power, those areas were allowed to deteriorate—totally neglected, totally discriminated against—and, Mr. Speaker, today, instead of letting the pendulum swing from left to right and having reverse discrimination, today the Prime Minister of this country mandates that resources be distributed across the length and breadth of this country [*Desk thumping*] and you can see it everywhere you go. [*Desk thumping*] No one has been left out; no one will be left out because it is Government for one and Government for all.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, then he remembered that I had made the point that they were the ones who interfered with the right to bail by introducing this concept of two strikes and three strikes and you are out. And this is what he says about that, trying to hastily defend and retreat. He says:

“Mr. Speaker, at an earlier time because of certain developments which we thought required a deeper involvement, this Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, using the requisite majority decided that for some crimes we will allow this guarantee...”—this guarantee of the right to bail—“as a right to be abridged, so that for some crimes which we discussed and agreed upon, we will not have bail granted.”

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

So the Leader of the Opposition is conceding on the record that in the past—he does not want to say when crime skyrocketed. Yes, we are concerned about the murder rate, but in the PNM time, crimes crossed—the murders were crossing 500 a year—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Five fifty-eight.

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: Five fifty-eight; 500 a year—and he says tactfully and diplomatically—“first time ah hear him sound tactful and diplomatic to be honest”, somebody probably wrote it. He says:

“...at an earlier time because of certain developments which we thought required a deeper involvement, this Parliament...using the requisite majority decided that for some crimes we will allow...”—the right to bail—“to be abridged, so that for some crimes which we discussed and agreed upon, we will not have bail granted.”

From Dr. Keith Rowley, Leader of the Opposition, Member for Diego Martin West.

And today I ask the question: well, how is it that you could have deprived people of their right to bail? We are seeking to improve upon that position by saying from outright denial 120 days—one strike and you are out—and you all are complaining and raising all sorts of spurious, hypocritical arguments about it! Mr. Speaker, no, they must be exposed. Mr. Speaker, he then goes on.

Hon. Member: Undress them!

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: He says:

“Now, that argument was raised at the time when we made the first amendment that persons on bail were committing certain offences...”

I want to repeat that. This is the Member for Diego Martin West in his contribution here today. He says:

“...that argument was raised at the time when we made the first amendment”—to the Bail Act—“that persons on bail were committing certain offences, and we should not grant bail for those offences.”

So he is conceding now, the political philosophy that motivated the restrictions imposed by the Legislature on the right to bail. And what was it? That certain offences were being committed whilst persons were out on bail. But what are those offences? It is the same offences that we have put in the schedule here, same offences, Mr. Speaker. You see, and then he says—he seeks to raise alarm bells.

He says:

“You have come back now...possession of imitation firearm in pursuance of any criminal offence:”

He says, “Yuh really want a young man in possession with an imitation firearm for whatever reason to find himself in jail.” Now, that is very specious. It is not a young man with an imitation firearm for whatever reason. No! The offence is that it is in possession of an imitation firearm in pursuance of a criminal offence, but he omits that part. You see, Mr. Speaker, then he tries to alarm the population. He says:

“Receiving stolen goods: so if somebody passes”—and you—“receives a bag of cabbage from somebody in the market from praedial larceny...Is that what we really want to do...”

Hon. Member: Dishonest fellow.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker, what he does not tell us in all the examples he cites throughout his contribution is that the Bill does not operate like that. “If somebody give yuh ah bag—yuh know, if somebody give yuh—like yuh go to have some private meeting by somebody house in de middle ah de night and they geh yuh ah bag ah cabbage” and it turns out to be stolen goods and you get convicted—well, firstly, you must know it is stolen goods. It cannot be just like that. There is a mental element involved. But, even so, you have to be convicted for that offence, and it has to be on a second time that the police have reasonable grounds to suspect that you are committing it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: “You have a second bag ah cabbage.”

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: “Yeah, you ha to have ah second bag ah cabbage again, yuh ha to geh back—yuh ha to be so blight, so unlucky that you geh ah next bag ah stolen cabbage like yuh cyar plant yuh own [*Laughter*] and then now yuh get denied bail.” [*Crosstalk*] But, you see, he does not talk about the one strike. He casts and couches his entire contribution—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is what he does.

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC:—as if it is we are denying bail to people on the first time. That is not what we are doing.

Mr. Roberts: Just like the email.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Just like the email.

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: It is just like emailgate. It is a fabrication. [Crosstalk]

Now, you see, Mr. Speaker, he then comes and he says, you know, well the Anti-Gang Act dealt with the anti-gang offences and bail and he wants to know well why we will deal with it here and so on, and then he goes on now—incidentally. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, having said that the Anti-Gang Act deals with these offences—which I will come to—he goes through the offences and he said—“harbouring”—and I am quoting from the *Hansard* (Unrevised Version):

“‘Harbouring or concealing gang members

As broad as that—you do that and you go to jail, automatic jail with no bail. Does that apply to the parent, the grandparent, the friend, the innocent who does not know the person is a gang member and house them, and fete them”—I suppose feed them—“and secure them in a building, and then you suddenly finds...police turns up and...you going down because you are harbouring ‘big nose’ or ‘big foot’ as a gang member...Is that what it means?

So when we pass this”—thing—“everybody who knows anybody, or who does not know anybody, you have to ask them first, ‘Are you a gang member?’ Because”—when police come—“they are not trying you...the police will figure, this gang member is here and you are here and...”—you are harbouring...”—go down.

“Like now, grandson has marijuana or cocaine...”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan: Yes, sorry

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Attorney General has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Minister’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [Crosstalk] And he then says—so he goes on to castigate this offence. And, you know, I wondered to myself, I said, but the hon. Leader of the Opposition is, you

know, criticizing this offence when this offence is already contained in the Anti-Gang Act as he just conceded, and they supported the Anti-Gang Act. So how could you have voted for the Anti-Gang Act which created this offence, and now you are coming to criticize it? I mean, it makes no sense.

Mr. Roberts: He is confused.

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: He is confused. So I really wanted him to be here so that I could express my sympathy.

Mr. Roberts: Manning has him confused.

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: You see, that is calabash argument; that kind of calabash argument from callaloo thinking. [*Laughter*] They are not clear in what they are saying.

Mr. Imbert: I think you should call another election. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: You see, Mr. Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] he then turns and trains his guns on the hon. Prime Minister, and he talks about a meeting he had and how cordial and so on it went, and says that we are not taking on their crime proposals. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, permit me to set the record straight. I led the Government's delegation that held the joint—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to listen to the hon. Attorney General, and there is constant noise coming from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: He might as well put me out. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I am appealing to the Member for Diego Martin North/East again to allow the Member—[*Crosstalk*]—no, I hearing you myself, so I am asking you and so on, please cooperate. [*Crosstalk*] No, listen. While I am speaking, you remain silent, please. [*Crosstalk*] Member, Member, Member, I am on my legs.

Dr. Moonilal: He wants to go home.

Mr. Speaker: I am on my legs.

Mr. Roberts: He is trying to home.

Mr. Speaker:—I know you are trying to provoke me to get you out. [*Laughter*] I know you want to go and sleep [*Laughter*] but you are going to stay here throughout the debate, okay? [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Hon. Attorney General, continue, please. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Lock the door. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: He is swinging wildly and missing, so there is no strike.

Mr. Imbert: “Hurry up nah man.”

Sen. The Hon A. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Speaker, so the hon. Leader of the Opposition then comes to the anti-crime proposals. He trains his guns on the hon. Prime Minister and says they had a meeting and certain things were discussed that we had not accepted. After that meeting—permit me to set the record straight—two teams were formed, two delegations, and we were meant to meet and report back to our respective leaders, and we had three meetings. I led the delegation from the Government side.

On the issue he raised about the appointment of the Commissioner of Police, in principle, there was agreement and consensus that yes there is need to reform the present system that is convoluted and complicated, but there were three sticking points, and when we last met we resolved to go back, think about it, and come back, and the Member for Port of Spain South would bear me out on this.

The three sticking points were as follows: one, we were all of the view that you should not, perhaps, open up the post of Commission of Police to a foreigner; a foreign citizen of a different country. But the question arose: well should we not allow nationals of Trinidad and Tobago who live overseas to apply for the job? At that point, I pointed out that the case of Gypsy and Chaitan was with us, and if you have a national of Trinidad and Tobago who lives overseas as being eligible to apply for this job, what if he is a citizen of that state because he would have sworn allegiance to a foreign state, and can we have the Commissioner of Police, for this country, swearing allegiance to a foreign state, given the sensitivity of that position? When I brought up that, they said they had to think about it because it was a valid point.

The second point was the issue of the parliamentary oversight. The thinking was that maybe we should remove the parliamentary oversight and I said, “Well, look, if you are going to remove that, are you going to reinstate the constitutional prime ministerial veto that was there before because it must be either/or?” They said they needed to think about that.

And, thirdly, the question of the human resource expertise—whether you needed to have Penn State University which is costly, very expensive and has taken a very long time or whether we had the resident human resource expertise

here in Trinidad and Tobago and we could rely on it here—and they said they needed to think about it. Those were the three points that they resolved to get back to us on.

I also presented three draft Bills: one, to abolish jury trials for certain specified offences; two, a capital offences amendment Bill to facilitate the implementation of the death penalty and three, the Bail (Amdt.) Bill. Since I have presented those—and I have the letters to prove they were hand delivered; I have the emails we sent to prove that we sent them and I also walked with copies, and that is since last year. Months have elapsed and we have had no word, no word.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope I set the record straight in that regard.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*] come back to that.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan, SC: I hope I set the record straight.

Mr. Imbert: You did not.

12.45 a.m.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan SC: Now, the Member for Diego Martin West then turns to the death penalty, and he said:

“It has been challenged”—by—“the Privy Council”—they have—“ruled, if you are going to hang, you must hang”—within—“five”—years...Instead of putting administrative arrangements in place to ensure that when a person is convicted that that five-year period does not expire, the Government ‘all over the country like drunken sailors, bawling, the Opposition blocking hanging’.”

Mr. Speaker, he said:

“It is the Government’s role, and the Judiciary, to ensure that they meet the guideline of five years.”

Mr. Speaker, this issue of the implementation of the death penalty, it is totally incorrect to say that *Pratt and Morgan* with the five-year rule is the only hurdle. Mr. Speaker, since *Pratt and Morgan* there has been so many developments to that area of constitutional jurisprudence that they have erected even many more hurdles. You now have procedural rights when you apply to the Mercy Committee, as a result of a Jamaican case. The international bodies that you petition, the Judiciary and the Government have no control over that. It is the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and when you send your petition there they keep it and they take very long, and it puts you outside the five-year mark. They know that.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

If hanging was so easy as the Member for Diego Martin West said—if hanging was so easy as he makes it out to be, and say, “Well, it is a simple thing. Put the administrative arrangements in place and hang people”. If it was so easy, may I ask the Member for Diego Martin West; when you were in power for the past eight years, why did you not hang a single person? When murder rates skyrocketed beyond 550, why did you not hang someone if it was that easy and simple? But such is the disingenuity of the argument. Such is the extent of the political hypocrisy that they will come and say these things, knowing full well that there is not an iota of truth, and the very substratum of it has no intellectual foundation, none whatsoever. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: That is the story of his life.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan, SC: Mr. Speaker, there were two points made, really, by the Member for Chaguanas West that merit a response. The first is, he queried whether this Bill needed a two-thirds or a three-fifths majority. Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that this Bill requires a three-fifths majority. In fact, the Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2005 was passed with a three-fifths majority; the Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2006 was passed with a three-fifths majority; the Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2007 was passed with a three-fifths majority; the Bail (Amdt.) Act, (No. 2) of 2007, a three-fifths majority, and the list goes on. Seven amendments all passed with a three-fifths majority. There is no question about that.

The second issue raised that I must deal with is, the Member for Chaguanas West said and I quote:

It is an attempt, Mr. Speaker, to interfere with the Judiciary, the last bastion of democracy in this country.

But, Mr. Speaker, that is not only illogical and irrational, but it is perverse. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this Bill that one can say is an attempt to interfere with the Judiciary. The Member for Chaguanas West voted in 2011 to institute—together with the Member for Diego Martin North/East—a “one strike and you are out”.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011, we already had one strike in our laws. People forget, but we already have for offences relating to guns, when a gun is used in the commission of an offence. In those circumstances, Mr. Speaker, one strike and you are out. We are seeking to expand it. When that law came the Member for Chaguanas West did not say, “That was interference with the Judiciary”. No. He was quite happy to support it. When Anti-Gang Bill came back from the Joint Select Committee that I chaired, every single Member of Parliament in this House

voted for it, and we instituted 120 days no bail. Nobody said that was an attack on the Judiciary. Mr. Speaker, I had to correct it because we cannot leave these things on the record.

Mr. Speaker, the Judiciary under the People's Partnership and the Administration of Justice, the Prime Minister, as a lawyer, drawing on her legal experience in the courts has mandated that the Judiciary gets proper treatment for the first time. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the budget for the Judiciary in 2007 was \$296 million; in 2009 it was \$274 million; in 2010, when we came into power the last budget for the Judiciary was \$274 million. When we came into power in 2010, that budget for the Judiciary went up to \$339.6 million. In 2011 it went up to \$364.1 million, and in 2012 it went up to \$366.7 million.

Mr. Speaker, the Judiciary has received the highest level of funding under the People's Partnership in the history of this country. [*Desk thumping*] So to say that we have brought a Bill here that is an interference or an attack on the Judiciary, it is outlandish, it is outrageous and it is preposterous. Mr. Speaker, those were the only two points that merited any response.

I turn next, Mr. Speaker, to the contribution made by the Member for St. Joseph, he said and I quote:

“What the Attorney General did not say when he got the analysis from the Crime Prevention Unit...”

because I cited examples of persons who have 10 and 12 charges, five and six convictions and they are getting bail. He said:

The proper thing to do—“The root of the matter is to ensure proper tracing of the antecedents of the person before the judge or magistrate.”

Mr. Speaker: You have 10 more minutes.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan, SC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if the Member for St. Joseph is perhaps not aware because he is not yet a qualified lawyer, but the fact of the matter is your antecedents and the tracing is an established part of the procedure in the criminal justice system, [*Crosstalk*] the Magistrate must have your antecedents. So that is already done. But let me show what the problem is, Mr. Speaker, since we last met to now—let me read the *Newsday*, January 07:

“Two young men were yesterday gunned down in broad daylight next to Nelson Street Girls' RC...in Port-of-Spain on the first day of the new school term...”

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

...gunshots rang out as Derrick “Warlord” Joseph...of St Barb’s and Ishmael Bain, 19, of Snake Valley, Laventille, were cut down in a hail of bullets while they were standing near the Nelson Street entrance to Apartments 43-45...

Both men were well known to the police as they had several matters pending before the courts. In fact, police said, Joseph was last seen alive yesterday morning leaving the Port-of-Spain Magistrates’ Court”—attending to one of his—“matters...”

So that is both men. So imagine two men have several matters pending before the court, but they outside on bail and, “Boi! Doi! Doi!” two of them got shot. So that illustrates the problem, that notwithstanding the antecedents these are fellas who have matters pending and you still get bail. Then they go on:

“...bullet-riddled body...Fort George, St James.

The man followed the trail up some communal stairs and was horrified when he found the body of Triston ‘Spirit’ McLean...

Police said McLean was known to them as he had previous matters pending before the courts.”

So these fellas have matters pending before the court, they are out on bail, involved in a life of crime and this is the result.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Committing another crime.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan, SC: Then I go to January 09, 2014. That was on the 07, two days later, Santa Cruz man gunned down. Dead is 27 year-old Jezereel Roberts of Spring Valley. They go into the facts and then they said Roberts was said to have been well known to the police as he had several matters before the courts. He was killed while standing along Carmen Road off Gasparillo Trace.

So I ask the question: How come these “fellas them” who are getting murdered have so much of matters pending before the courts but they are outside on bail and they are involved in a life of crime? And then you have the unmitigated gall and temerity to come here to ask, “Well where is the reason for this one strike and you are out?” Where is the reason? The reasoning is very obvious and clear. We need to have some strong measure in place to deal with these criminals. [*Desk thumping*] It is clear, as broad as daylight.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant then asked the question, “What is being done about the abolition of preliminary enquiries?”. Mr.

Speaker, I want to tell you that matter is being addressed. In fact, Criminal Justice Consultant, Former President of the Law Association, Ms. Dana Seetahal has been working with the Chief Parliamentary Council to draft that Bill—which has already been drafted. We have sent it to the Judiciary, the Criminal Bar Association and the DPP, and we are waiting their feedback. We have already received some, and that new Bill will come. That new Bill will come, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, permit me to treat with one point raised by the Member for Diego Martin West. One point he did make, he said the Anti-Gang Act already dealt with some of these offences so there is no need to repeat them here. It may be superfluous, and it is a point made. I take it on board in the spirit of compromise. We will circulate an amendment to delete those provisions in light of the fact that the Anti-Gang Act already caters for 120 days no bail. That is fine. I do not have a problem with that.

Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is it one strike?

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan, SC: Yes, it would be. Yeah. Mr. Speaker, they then went into the argument that the law might be unconstitutional, and they said that whether the aims are legitimate and proportionate to the objectives and so on, and I say, Mr. Speaker, it is. Mr. Speaker, the aim here is quite clear. It is to take the bandits off the street, put them behind bars, give the prosecution and the State an opportunity to prepare and develop its case, and in appropriate cases proceed with due dispatch and expedition to prosecute these men, and women as the case may be.

That is the aim. The aim is to prevent witness tampering, jury manipulation and jury tampering. Mr. Speaker, a lot of heavy weather was made about the case of Koyratty from Mauritius. Mr. Speaker, I have looked at that case. It is a well-known case, and in that case, when one reads it, they required not just a constitutional majority, that constitution is different. They required a referendum, and the referendum had to be passed with 75 per cent, and if you got the 75 per cent referendum, then you had to go to take the Bill to Parliament and you would require the support of every single Member of Parliament, and then you could pass that law.

They sought to circumvent that by not going the route of referendum because they did not have all the support in the House, and that is why it was struck down. And with respect to the separation of powers argument, Mr. Speaker, we in this

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. A. RAMLOGAN SC]

country, in Trinidad and Tobago our Constitution is different. There are inbuilt specified majorities to pass legislation that is inconsistent with the fundamental rights provisions, and we have already had, as I indicated, in this country, restrictions on the grant of bail through the three strike and two strike, and also the one strike and you are out principle.

So, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan, SC: Sorry.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan, SC: Yes. Mr. Speaker, it is ironic, I am reminded by the hon. Prime Minister, that they would take this position. They are so concerned about people's right to bail; they are concerned about the bandits right to bail; we are concerned about the decent, law-abiding citizens who are being gunned down every single day. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, when they passed the Anti-Terrorism Act, you know that authorized a man to be detained without charge for up to 14 days. It is called pre-charge detention. "He eh even geh charge for nothing", and up to 14 days he could be detained by police, and they invoked that law to arrest some broadcasted fella. They arrested him on the ground that he is a terrorist, and kept him under that Act. I had to go in the Port of Spain CID for them to release him, and make noise about it. Fourteen days—they were not concerned about bail and thing then, you see.

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, in the year 2008 in this country, prior to us assuming office, there were 550 murders. In the year 2009 there were 509 murders. So prior to us assuming office, when we came the astronomical figure and the astronomical proportion of the murder rate is that it had crossed 500 and was heading towards 600—550 and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, the murder rate we know and we accept is not satisfactory, one murder is too many. But we are saying, Mr. Speaker, unlike them, we will not bury our heads in the sand and we will not sit idly by and make excuses. We are prepared to bring tough legislation to this Parliament so we can arrest his problem [*Desk thumping*] and deal with it. We will not rest until we get the crime problem under control, Mr. Speaker. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I say here today, every decent citizen and Member of Parliament who is concerned about the lives and welfare, and safety of their constituents, they will have an interest, an abiding

interest, in supporting this legislation in the public interest, and I urge them therefore to vote in the interest of their constituents, because they will have to return to them in a year and a half to ask them to vote for them, and we will remind them how you voted, whether you voted to protect them or to protect the bandits today. I say thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

1.00 a.m.

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 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

Question proposed: That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 4 be amended as follows:

“A. Delete the words ‘Section 5 of the Act is amended by repealing subsections (2) to (10) and substituting the following subsections:’ and substitute the following:

‘Section 5 of the Act is amended by –

- (a) repealing subsections (2), (3), (4), (5), (9) and (10); and
- (b) inserting after subsection (1), the following subsections:’.

B. In the new subsection (2), delete the words ‘subsections (3) and (4)’ and substitute the words ‘subsection (3)’.

C. In the new subsections (2), delete paragraphs (a) and (b) and substitute the following paragraphs:

- ‘(a) was convicted for an offence listed in Part II of the First Schedule; and
- (b) is charged with an offence listed in Part II of the First Schedule within ten years after the completion of the sentence imposed in respect of the conviction referred to in paragraph (a),’.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. K. PERSAD-BISSESSAR SC]

Saturday, January 11, 2014

- D. In the new subsection (3), delete the words ‘Subject to subsection (4), where’ and substitute the word ‘Where’.
- E. Delete the new subsection (4).”

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5.

Question proposed: That clause 5 stand part of the Bill.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 5 be amended as follows:

“In the list of Specified Offences –

- A. delete paragraphs (f) to (l), and (bb) to (cc);
- B. renumber paragraphs (m) to (aa) as paragraphs (f) to (t) respectively;
- C. insert after renumbered paragraph (t) the following new paragraph:
Chap. 46:01 ‘(u) any offence under the Children Act or any Act repealing and replacing it;’; and
- D. renumber paragraphs (dd) and (ee) as paragraphs (v) and (w) respectively.”

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: AG, if you do not mind, could you just enlighten me and give me a rationale behind the inclusion of 5(m)?

Mr. Ramlogan SC: “Possession of a firearm...without licence, certificate or permit”?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, no. This is “intent to extort”.

Mr. Ramlogan SC: Oh yes:

“threatening to publish with intent to extort;”

As you are aware, with the advent of Facebook, the internet and so on, there have been a number of complaints made to the police service about people who are trying to use fake emails by fabricating emails and trying to place blame on people, by posting things from fake accounts and so on, and stirring up trouble. So you have people who are going around creating a fraudulent thread and trail of

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

emails, saying you want to murder people, you know, all kinds of foolishness, that they want to murder a journalist, they want to bug some high official, like a DPP office or a judge office, and all kinds of outrageous, scandalous, fraudulent types of allegations. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: “Like Rowley.”

Mr. Ramlogan SC: Then they want to extort money for it, they try to blackmail people. Sometimes it might be an ex-girlfriend with nude photos, all kinds of craziness happening. With that kind of thing taking place, in that kind of environment, we felt it of sufficient importance to put it here. So that when that individual is found out, they must pay the ultimate price for perpetrating that kind of damage, that kind of character assassination and for peddling that kind of untruth in the population’s mind.

Miss Mc Donald: That is for the Opposition?

Mr. Roberts: “Dat is for Rowley!”

Mr. Ramlogan SC: I did not say that it was for the Opposition, Member for Port of South, but if you think that it falls—if the cap fits, then let the hon. Member wear it.

Hon. Member: Unless there are any photos.

Mr. Ramlogan SC: Yes—I do not know if anybody has your photo. [*Laughter*]

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble approved.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill, as amended, be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported with amendment.

Question put: That the Bill be now read the third time.

The House divided: Ayes 27 Noes 10

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013
[HON. K. PERSAD-BISSESSAR SC]

Saturday, January 11, 2014

AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.
Persad-Bissessar, Hon. K.
Mc Leod, Hon. E.
Dookeran, Hon. W.
Sharma, Hon. C.
Ramadhar, Hon. P.
Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.
Peters, Hon. W.
Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.
Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.
Seemungal, Hon. J.
Khan, Mrs. N.
Roberts, Hon. A.
Cadiz, Hon. S.
Baksh, Hon. N.
Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.
Baker, Hon. Dr. D.
Ramadharsingh, Hon. Dr. G.
De Couteau, Hon. C.
Khan, Hon. Dr. F.
Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.
Samuel, Hon. R.
Indarsingh, Hon. R.
Roopnarine, Hon. S.
Ramdial, Hon. R.
Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.
Partap, Mr. C.

Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013

Saturday, January 11, 2014

NOES

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Hypolite, N.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Deyalsingh, T.

Thomas, Mrs. J.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

McIntosh, Mrs. P.

Browne, Dr. A.

Mr. J. Warner abstained.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development: (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, January 17, at 1.30 p.m., and to serve notice that it is the intention of the Government to debate Bill No. 2 on our Order Paper, “an Act to amend the Libel and Defamation Act”, to also debate a Bill entitled “an Act to amend the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) Act” and to debate Motion No. 1 under Government Business dealing with the Customs Act.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question on the Motion for the Adjournment, there is a matter that has been approved. It is a matter filed by the hon. Member for Chaguanas West. I now call on the Member for Chaguanas West.

High Homicide Rate (Corrective Measures for)

Mr. Jack Warner (Chaguanas West): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are 10, almost 11 days into 2014, and according to the various media houses, the homicide rate so far—for the last 10 days at least—22 persons have been killed.

High Homicide Rate
[MR. WARNER]

Saturday, January 11, 2014

On Monday evening while I sat to write this Motion, the homicide rate reported then was 13 in five days. On Tuesday morning when I got up, it had reached to 16. What was even more painful is the fact that murder number 16 took place a few houses from where I live. The guy was ironing his son's school clothes, and the killers came to his home. He told his son to run, and the son, a 10-year-old boy, ran up by my home and he ran in the back. The killers, or killer at least, pumped eight bullets into him.

1.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, every single day for this past 10 days the nation has been waking up to the news that more and more persons are killed in some kind of violence, some kind of violent action. And I did not come here this morning in any way at all to criticize the Minister of National Security. There will always be the belief that, of course, whenever you talk there is need for people to defend themselves to pounce and say how bad you were or how good you were. I have not come here for that at all. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record that when the present Minister of National Security became Minister, I congratulated him and I offered him whatever assistance he needed to succeed. More importantly, Mr. Speaker—Oh my God—I just saw a headline, one more is dead, number 23.

Hon. Member: No.

Hon. Member: Twenty-two.

Mr. J. Warner: Twenty-three killed, Mr. Speaker, Newsday headline.

Mr. Imbert: Twenty-four.

Mr. J. Warner: Thank you Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Miss Mc Donald: I thought the news said it was 24.

Mr. J. Warner: Yes, it is 23. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, and the first thing I did, I sent him the 100-plus measures which I had put forward to the National Security Council and in some part to the Cabinet for his perusal and he can do what he wishes with them, because at the end of the day, crime is everybody's business. [*Interruption*] Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I was at pains to make the point that crime cannot be the responsibility of the Minister of National Security only. In fact, for him to succeed he needs the collaborative efforts of several other Ministries. In particular, the Ministry of Sport, the Ministry of Community Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, to name a few. I make the point over and over that it cannot be a one-man job.

Mr. Speaker, I was also mindful of the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean have 8.5 per cent of the world's population yet this region account for 27 per cent of the world's murders. I am also mindful of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the level of confidence in the police is at an all-time low. A survey showed that only 4.6 per cent of the population believes in the police, and therefore people are no longer reporting crimes as they should, because of this lack of confidence. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, because people are not reporting crimes as they should, the statistics which are being used to say serious crimes have been reduced and so on, are somewhat flawed, because the fact is—and this is an argument which even the UNC made when the PNM was in power, and nothing has changed the argument for what it was then to what it is now, that the crimes are not being reported as they should.

So the point, Mr. Speaker, is that today murders have become everyday occurrences; communities have become desensitized—so to speak—it does not worry them anymore. In fact, some of the gunshots at night now come as music to the ears of some residents in some communities. I want to say that I am here tonight—this morning, raising this Motion because the fact is we just simply cannot go on this way, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution for crime either. It would seem to me that if the present Minister of National Security were to dispassionately and objectively review some of the measures which I gave him, it may help. There is no way that this reservoir of knowledge could only reside in one particular quarter, one particular side or person. Therefore, I said before, I say again, Mr. Speaker, it has to be a collective effort, a collaborative effort, on the part of all.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Minister said that the measures which were given, each one would cost about \$20 million, and dismissively, of course, said also too that the last Minister, meaning me, at least, was only concerned about family day and basketball day. I did not take it seriously because I am not prepared to politicize crime. I am again saying, Mr. Speaker, that there are measures which we can take and should take. We should help to arrest crime. And the fact is I would like to say a few which I gave and I want to put here in *Hansard* so as to arrest the situation.

Mr. Speaker, in the measures I gave the National Security Council, which they did not accept, and which I gave the Minister, which he has not accepted as yet, I asked for a gun court to be established to treat gun related offences separate and apart from normal court process. I asked for a drug treatment court to be established; I asked for night courts to be reintroduced. I said put courts in the

High Homicide Rate
[MR. WARNER]

Saturday, January 11, 2014

Remand Yard of the Maximum Security Prison and, in fact, not only will you remove this heavy travelling cost to take prisoners to the courts, but the cases will be tried more expeditiously in the Remand Yard. When I was Minister I started to build eight police stations. I saw one was opened in Arima and it was closed afterwards. It just opened to close, again cosmetic value.

But, Mr. Speaker, 20 police stations are to be built, eight were started a year ago. I ask myself when will the other 12 be started, especially the one in St. Joseph. Mr. Speaker, I asked for the transit police on the Priority Bus Route to remove them from there and let them assist the police in fighting crime and put traffic wardens on the bus route. I am asking again to establish 32 community police units. One was built in Gonzales in Belmont; it cost \$1 million with five containers, and there were plans to put 32 across the country. If even we build six of those, or 8, or 10, that will help. Five containers—go to Gonzales in Belmont and see for yourself what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, I asked for police patrols to be increased; mobile, foot, mounted, even bicycles in the city; Port of Spain, San Fernando, Chaguanas, Arima. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that on August 09, 2012, Cabinet—I was Minister then—approved some of these initiatives at an estimated cost of \$289.6 million. What the Cabinet agreed to in August 2012? They agreed to increase the full-time establishment of special reserve police officers by 5,000 in varying ranks to be determined in consultation with the Commissioner of Police. Five thousand SRPs, and I said the SRPs must not be trained “chirrup, chirrup, chirrup”, but you would train them when you have three months holidays at the University of the West Indies. Put 5,000 people there, residential, and you train them all at once, and therefore you would pick up the slack as per these officers.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet Note had said that you would create police community support branch, and these, of course, police community support branch, you would take 3,000 of those 5,000 SRPs and they will receive specialized training to work in non-confrontational policing with the aim of addressing and tackling anti-social behaviour and disorder.

Mr. Speaker, we also talked about buying 300 motor cars to deal with some of the measures which should have been done August 09, 2012. I do not know how many SRPs have been trained since then. What I do know, 5,000 have not been trained. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the measures put forward, I had asked that we create a virtual cyber command centre as a new approach to policing the Internet. I asked that we improve the call centre, the 999 call centre, so when you call 999, you would not hear four and five voices and music, but you would, of course,

have a professional unit responding to your call. I remember Harris Communication System had begun to work. I would like to know how far advanced that is as the case may be?

Mr. Speaker, we had said that you would decentralize the medical treatment for the police officers. The police officers have one medical doctor in St. James who they go to. I had said they put one in every division and, therefore the police officers would not now have to come to Port of Spain but they can stay in their own division and go to their DMO—their doctor, if there is one. In fact, there are nine police divisions. I had made the point, instead of nine divisions, make it 14. Let these 14 divisions represent the regional corporations, and in these corporations, Mr. Speaker, if you have 14 divisions, you have less area to, of course, police, but then you would beef up the security in these corporations.

Mr. Speaker, in Chaguanas Borough Corporation they still have six officers; three on leave most of the time and three in court, so you have none. The list goes on and on. At the end of the day these are not meant to be a criticism. This is meant to assist the Government and the Minister in bringing crime down. We said police and army units in five different areas. We had said that that north coast, Cedros, Galeota, Moruga, east coast—at the end of the day, what is even worse—and I want to make this point before I conclude—is the fact that the few crime fighters we have, have complained to me that they have not been given books since December to study for exam in January, and January and December are the busiest times of the year. They asked for some UAVs, some unmanned aircraft, that was dismissed. unmanned aircraft that could go and detect where the crime is taking place; ShotSpotters. In Curacao, yesterday Curacao asked the Dutch Government for unmanned aircraft, and they are going there on a three-month trial run. And the list goes on and on.

We cannot do things the same way, and Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, I would like to say and ask, that as far as the police are concerned we have to re-strategize; we have to re-structure and we have to re-deploy, otherwise the bloodbath that is taking place now, will only intensify as the weeks and months go by.

I thank you.

1.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the reports to date of 22 homicides—

Hon. Member: Twenty-three.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—23 homicides, is gravely capturing the Government's attention and the National Security Council, at that. In fact, within this year alone, within the last 10 days, the National Security Council, we have met on at least three occasions and it is because of the concern by the National Security Council chaired by the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened to what the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West had to say and it is very informative, and I do appreciate what he has offered. It is important that when we try to come up with measures to reduce crime in a country, it must not just be based on crime plans. I have never gone down that road of what we continue to call crime plans, which might be just one-day wonders, which might be just a hit-and-hope method, which might be just ideas. It has to be based on some type of data, some type of empirical testing upon which you can then utilize your limited national security resources in an effective and efficient manner because each and every person may have different crime plans and that is based on ideas.

So what we are doing is actually ensuring that whatever we implement, it is going to be effective. The Member for Chaguanas West, a few of the things that he did speak about, we already have them in place. The UAVs, in fact, that was discussed in 2010 and that was to replace the blimp, and the effectiveness of the UAV, it cannot be over-emphasized. The UAV, obviously, well, it has that aerial surveillance capability that is critical in law enforcement. The shot spotter, as well, when Mr. Bill Bratton was here, he actually liaised with me—who is now being reappointed as the Commissioner of Police in New York City—and we are looking into that.

There are other bits and pieces in that 100-plus plan from the Member for Chaguanas West and I think the one aspect that would be of value that he did not mention—which I am surprised, and I think that was probably one of the more important ones—had to do with looking at the financial status of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service—the officers. It has to do with the importance of making sure that those people who are there to protect and serve, with pride, they do not become rogue elements and they utilize their positions for financial gain at the expense of the law-abiding citizens.

This has to do with actually looking at the assets of individuals such as these and making sure that if it is that you have this wealth of assets based on your present financial status in being a police officer, or any law enforcement officer,

the simple question will then be asked: “Well, how did you acquire these funds? How did you acquire these assets?” And if you cannot actually state how you got it, one can reasonably assume that you got it from improper means, and that has to do, basically, with the concept of civil asset forfeiture.

The other things that the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West spoke about: yes, dealing with the situations of family days and so forth, dealing with secondary crime prevention, these are all important aspects to deal with reduction of crime and it should not be something that we could just discard.

As well as speaking about the situation with the shortage of the police officers, Mr. Speaker, when we continue to have batches of just 150, it is just a regurgitation because you are bringing a batch of 150 and within a six-month period you lose 150 police officers based on resettlement, retirement and so forth. So what we are doing from next month, we will be looking to bring in a batch of 500 in a “grap”—500 by 500 in the space of two six-month periods—so by the end of this year we will have at least 1,000 police officers, and with that attrition rate of 200/300 officers, it will then be the first time in years we will actually have that required strength.

Mr. Speaker, I could actually go on to pinpoint statistics, but I do not think we need to play with numbers. We can look back to 2008 when the murder rate was 547, and people speak a lot about the detection rate but the detection rate then, when SAUTT was at its highest, was 15.9 per cent. Five years later it is still around that same amount. So it is not so much of pointing fingers and the blame game, I think we need to do exactly what the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West spoke about, which is for us to all realize that if it is that we have to do this, we have to do it and do it right, and it is for us to put our heads together and make sure we come up with the right initiatives to reduce crime.

The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, earlier today he actually spoke about the concept of, if it is that we know who these criminals are we should arrest them. But if we could recall just a few years earlier, his then Prime Minister said he knew who the biggest criminal was in “Mr. Big”, and I think the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central needs to understand, there is a big difference between information, intelligence and evidence.

We can even refer to cities—well, to countries in North America and Europe, where there are hundreds of persons on a terrorist watch list and they are blacklisted but they cannot be arrested. But it does not mean because persons cannot be arrested you are not monitored, which goes to the point of the

High Homicide Rate
[SEN. THE HON. G. GRIFFITH]

Saturday, January 11, 2014

importance of us looking at statistics when looking at the biggest problem we have with gang warfare. I spoke previously of the concern, again looking at crime statistics—and this is not to play with numbers, but you need to look at statistics to analyze and ascertain exactly where the problem lies. And if we have a situation of 197 persons who were killed based on gang warfare last year—47 based on drugs—we are looking at 244 persons out of 405 that were involved in some type of criminal activity.

This cannot mean, in any way, that I am trying to play numbers and actually saying that there is no concern. What I am trying to say—and it is very important—is, firstly, we need this type of statistics so that the law enforcement agencies can utilize their resources in that manner, which is that if you have 250 persons being killed based on criminal activities, that is where the emphasis needs to be placed.

Secondly, when you have persons who are involved in gang-related activity, it means that there is a greater likelihood now, based on the statistics, that if you are a criminal, there is a greater chance that you can become a victim, and this is when I asked parents—I asked those same individuals who are being used by these gang leaders, that you are just being used and you can very well become a victim and another homicide figure.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as we speak on the situation with gang warfare, it makes it very difficult for the law enforcement agencies to help these gang members where, sometimes, they are targeted by fellow gang members; they are targeted by persons within their own gang, and they cannot even come to the law enforcement agencies for support, for help to protect themselves because they of themselves are committing a crime. So it makes it very difficult.

Mr. Speaker, I can look at all the different measures that we have in place and we continue to put, but what we cannot do, and we should not do, as I said, it is not to just put the focus on SOPs, (Standard Operation Procedures), more vehicles, more patrols, more roadblocks—those are the basics, and it is important—but what I intend to do is not just to come up with crime plans. What we have to do is to set up proper foundation, proper national security platforms, policies, so that when Ministers leave—we continue to see that too often, Mr. Speaker. Any time a Minister of National Security changes, or administrations change, we start back at step one.

We need to have a platform that everyone is in agreement with; we all understand it. So whether it is you call it SAUTT or NOC; whether you call it an

OPV or a long-range patrol vessel; whether you have a blimp and you change it to a UAV, we have a system and a structure that we keep moving forward, because when we do not do that, the criminals alone are the ones that benefit.

Mr. Speaker, just before I wrap up, I can speak of the many initiatives that we have been pushing forward in the last few months: the introduction of the rapid response unit, which has been very—it is going to be very instrumental to act as that deterrent, to give the citizens that comfort to know—I think someone mentioned earlier the concerns we have always had when someone picks up a phone, call 999 and the police will say they do not have vehicles. Through the rapid response, that will no longer take place. The concept, again, of UAVs, of proper helicopters, of a proper maritime operational wall, the situation of a National Security Training Academy to ensure that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service can now be properly trained and be considered Trinidad and Tobago's finest, a proper system of intelligence gathering, and other initiatives.

But, again, rather than play with numbers, what I do wish to say is that if it is we have to do this, we have to do it right; we have to work together and it makes no sense to point fingers and to play the blame game as to who has caused us to be in the situation we are in. It is a situation where we have to look after the fundamental rights of the Trinidad and Tobago people, and that is to provide them with that right of safety and security.

I do embrace anyone, all Members of Parliament who are willing because you have constituents that you have to report to and, obviously, you are obligated. I am more than willing to speak and to work with them and for us to come up with the correct strategies—not crime plans, but national operational policies—to provide the Trinidad and Tobago citizens with that right of safety and security.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question for the adjournment, let me just correct the records. The final vote on this measure, that is the Bail (Amdt.) 2013, I did say 27 in favour, eight against, one abstention. The proper results and the correct result is 27 in favour, 10 against and one abstention—for the record. I just wanted to put that on the record.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 1.38 a.m.