



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

4th Session - 10th Parliament (Rep.) - Volume 22 - Number 17

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Friday 31st January, 2014

CLERK OF THE HOUSE: JACQUI SAMPSON-MEIGUEL

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*Leave of Absence**Friday, January 31, 2014***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, January 31, 2014*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received the following communication: The hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, MP, Prime Minister and Member for Siparia is out of the country and has requested leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The hon. Winston Dookeran, Member of Parliament for Tunapuna, is out of the country and has asked to be excused from the sitting of the House during the period January 26 to February 1st, 2014. The hon. Anil Roberts, Member of Parliament for D'Abadie/O'Meara, is also out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The hon. Amery Browne, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, has also requested leave of absence from today's sitting of the House.

The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Eastern Regional Health Authority for the year ended September 30, 2011. [*The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Eastern Regional Health Authority for the year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Heritage and Stabilization Fund for the year ended September 30, 2013. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
Papers 1 to 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee
4. Audited Financial Statements of the National Helicopters Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 2012 [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
5. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the National Infrastructure Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

Papers 4 and 5 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee

6. Audited Annual Financial Statements of Community Improvement Services Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2011. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 7. Audited Annual Financial Statements of Community Improvement Services Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 8. Audited Financial Statements for the Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre Management Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 9. Report of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago on Insurance and Pensions for the year ended December 31, 2008. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 10. Report of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago on Insurance and Pensions for the year ended December 31, 2009. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 11. Report of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago on Insurance and Pensions for the year ended December 31, 2010. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 12. Report of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago on Insurance and Pensions for the year ended December 31, 2011. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
- Papers 10 to 12 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee*
13. Annual Report of the Public Service Commission for the year ended December 31, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 14. Annual Administrative Report for the Seafood Industry Development Company Limited for the period 2011/2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 15. Annual Administrative Report for the Livestock and Livestock Products Board for the period October, 2010 to September, 2011. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
 16. Annual Administrative Report for the Livestock and Livestock Products Board for the period October 2011 to September 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT
(Presentation)**

Insurance (No. 2) Bill, 2013

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Chaguanas East.

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

The interim report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Insurance (No. 2) Bill, 2013.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**River at Barcaday Junction, Arouca
(Desilting of)**

34. Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney) asked the hon. Minister of the Environment and Water Resources:

Could the Minister state when would the river at Barcaday Junction, Arouca, that runs parallel to the Nicholas Bon Air Gardens Housing Development be desilted?

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. The question asked: Could the Minister state when would the river at Barcaday Junction, Arouca, that runs parallel to the Nicholas Bon Air Gardens Housing Development, be desilted?

The river mentioned is the Arouca River. Regular maintenance: a regular maintenance is programmed for this river on an annual basis. Major works were done from just upstream of the Golden Grove Prison to the outfall on the Caroni River where gabion baskets were placed to mitigate against erosion. A detention pond was constructed to mitigate against flooding and major widening and desilting from the CR Highway to the outfall on the Caroni River was done to increase the capacity of the river. Also, the bridge on the CR Highway is presently under reconstruction where the carrying capacity of the channel will be greatly increased.

The soil in the Bon Air Gardens area is very susceptible to erosion. In the past two years, erosion protection works were undertaken where reinforced concrete retaining walls were constructed to protect residences. The Drainage Division of the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources proposes to undertake clearing and desilting works, under our maintenance programme, in the Barcaday area in February 2014. All failed banks' sites were identified and will be reinstated. The estimated duration for these works is two months.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**URP Social
(Details of)**

36. Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney) asked the hon. Minister of the People and Social Development:

Could the Minister:

- a) List all the projects implemented under the URP Social since June 2012 to date?
- b) Provide a breakdown of the cost for implementing each project

The Minister of the People and Social Development (Hon. Dr. Glenn Ramadharsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Unemployment Relief Programme was designed to empower people throughout the country and to provide employment and skills development opportunities. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago decided to make the URP programme more relevant and productive to the society, and free from the stigma of teams that could not have been accounted for, low productivity, corruption and violence.

The Prime Minister took a decision to restructure the URP into URP Agriculture, URP Social and URP Infrastructure. The Ministry of the People and Social Development was then responsible for the URP Social. Since August, 2011, the Ministry has been consulting, with the vulnerable in the society, to determine the best ways to serve them through this innovative opportunity called the URP Social.

A Strategic Plan was developed by the Ministry, to be used for the period 2012 to 2014. Both the Vision Statement and the Mission Statement express the purpose of URP Social, to be innovative, productive, people-oriented and to enhance the lives of the vulnerable. The target group of the URP Social would be senior citizens, unemployed single parents, single parents of large families, persons with disabilities, persons below the poverty line, especially the indigent.

A number of projects have been designed and started since the launch of URP Social in August, 2011. Initially eight social programmes were designed, developed and implemented. The first is the Ray of Hope. This programme seeks to bring relief to the vulnerable whose homes and surroundings are in poor conditions; unemployed persons from the recipient communities undertake these repairs.

The Positive Transformation, catering for persons between the ages of 16 and 35, who were once involved in deviant behaviour and have decided to transform their lives. Of particular note is a team from Diego Martin that was very active in the recent floods and were able to save and assist a lot of the elderly in that part of the country.

The Disability Support Programme: this project seeks to train persons from vulnerable families. The persons are trained in caring for the disabled persons, and after their training is completed they are employed to take care of disabled persons in their own communities.

The Project Runway 100 Programme, which seeks to build and install 100 ramps for disabled persons and in public buildings, per year. The Make a Smile Shine programme which is really a signal programme where those who are affected by fires and floods can come to the Ministry of the People and Social Development and get clothes that are some of the highest standard of clothes available, from some of the top and premium shops in Port of Spain, who donate and are benevolent citizens as well. And that programme we are particularly proud of and ready to roll out to central and south Trinidad.

The Direct Construct Programme, which seeks to provide low-cost housing to the Ministry's clients, who are indigent, differently abled, shut-in or elderly, without help, and the buildings are beyond repair. Small contractors from these communities are awarded contracts to construct these homes. There are at least six other programmes that are receiving developmental work to be rolled out to the community.

During this period, 44 ramps were constructed between August, 2011 and 2012. Fifty persons gained homes through the Direct Construct programme. One hundred and three persons were employed to provide care and service to persons with disabilities. Fifteen roads were paved to assist low-income communities. Three jogging tracks were built. Forty families benefited from support in the emergency response unit during disaster relief efforts and clean-up efforts. We constructed the pathway to Nelson Island, but I will come to these in particular because these are for the time period that was asked specifically.

The core values of this programme: compassion and empathy for the vulnerable; responsiveness in times of need; open communication between stakeholders; vibrancy in delivery of projects; giving opportunity to the young; integrity; transparency; and service orientation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the projects that were done in the period that is under question, which would be from June 12 to date, in terms of development projects, would be: one, the Nelson Island Project. This included the completion of the pathway from the jetty and installation of the nylon rope for the handrails. The work on Nelson Island was done based on a request, an urgent request, from the then Minister of National Diversity and Social Integration, the MP for Moruga/Tableland.

Nelson Island, Madam Deputy Speaker, is one of the Five Islands off Trinidad and Tobago, which lie west of Port of Spain. The island is of great historical importance and, for many ethnic groups that now populate the twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago, it is a unique place of remembrance. It was the place used by the Amerindians—the Warao tribe—as a trading post before it was discovered by Columbus; and then by the Spaniards and British to build fortifications.

Barracks were built in 1802, by African slaves, that were concrete in nature. During the Second World War, all persons with Austrian or German passports, who were mainly Jews—refugees—were interred on Nelson and Caledonia Islands.

1.45 p.m.

From 1866—1917, Nelson Island was used as a quarantine station for Chinese and Indian indentured immigrants. After having spent 103 long, torturous days on an unsteady ship, Indians finally set foot on solid ground and called it Dharti Mata, Mother Earth.

In his book, *Western Isles of Trinidad and Tobago*, Anthony De Verteuil, wrote that after a thorough medical examination was conducted and the unfit was separated from the others, those with contagious diseases were transferred to Lenagan Island.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the point being is that this island of great significance was never given the kind of notice and prominence under previous administrations and it was this new Ministry that had the first national re-enactment of the arrival of the Indian immigrants on Nelson Island between the 25th and 27th. This was celebrated by the entire nation on radio and television and the guest list, there was no end of dignitaries who enjoyed the event there on that day, and therefore, we are very proud to have assisted that project at the cost of \$470,986. [*Desk thumping*]

The next development project that was done was the CSDP and the St. Vincent de Paul. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure you know of the work of the St.

Vincent de Paul Society all over the world, but uniquely in Trinidad and Tobago, they tend and care for the homeless and this has been reviewed by this Government, because they did it with stringent resources and almost with a shoestring budget and we applaud their charitable work but we have told them that we will work with them. The time has come to treat people with dignity and to put the resources there at the CSDP so that the dignity of the street dwellers will not be compromised. [*Desk thumping*] And this Government is determined so to do.

The CSDP is a society that works with the widest range of the vulnerable. They are involved in stopping the spread of tropical diseases, low accessibility to health care, malnutrition, rapid urbanization, high unemployment rate, lack of housing, homelessness and drug addiction. They work with persons with HIV and AIDS. This society was founded in 1854, to fight poverty and social injustice. Particularly in the last 37 years, they have worked with a full-time executive and continued their charitable work.

We have been working with the CSDP and the St. Vincent de Paul to clean the surrounding areas so that each floor would be clean and appropriate for human beings to walk through and to live in and, therefore, this upgrade was just an intervention. There is a major shift in paradigm that will occur with the development of this facility to become almost a hostel where we want to accommodate 400 persons with gyms, lockers, medical facilities, psychological facilities, [*Desk thumping*] dental facilities, so that they would be able to really live to their fullest potential in the area of rehabilitation. And we were very proud, in all the floors of the CSDP, to do remedial repair and maintenance work to the tune of \$1.632 million in this period. [*Desk thumping*] The Centre for the Socially Displaced, opposite Riverside Plaza, that is where we have the street dwellers and more works are being planned to ensure that that facility is a proper place for people to inhabit.

The next project was done with Vision on Mission and I think we are very aware of the work of this phenomenal NGO unit that has stepped up to the crease and performed in the area of the rehabilitation of prisoners and the prevention of crime in the society at large. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, Vision on Mission was founded in 1995, under the previous UNC administration, by Mr. Wayne Chance. At his time of incarceration, Mr. Chance recognized the increasing population of young men within the prison system. Mr. Chance was incarcerated at the tender age of 19. Mr. Chance drew upon his strong spiritual beliefs and that, coupled with his deep introspection,

Oral Answers to Questions
[THE HON. G. RAMADHARSINGH]

Friday, January 31, 2014

acted as a catalyst for his overall transformation. The transformation emerged in an organization that would assist ex-inmates on their release to re-enter society. [Interruption] As a former junior minister in national security, you would know about the great work that had been done.

It is an organization dedicated to rehabilitating and the reintegration of ex-inmates, deportees, which is a major crisis facing the Caribbean at this time, in particular Haiti, Jamaica and increasingly becoming a problem to Trinidad and Tobago. It is one that this Government is determined to confront and deal with in a proactive manner, rather than a reactive manner.

In 2012, Vision on Mission, the ex-prisoners rehabilitation organization copped the prestigious JB Fernandes Award at Hyatt Regency Hotel, where the T&T NGO Professionals Conference was held. We pay tribute to its chairman, the late William Lutchman, who passed away in 2013, and worked to the very day that he died. The Vision on Mission—we have done renovation work to accommodate more street dwellers and that facility is now ready to the tune of \$499,569 in that period.

We then come to works done with the Transformed Life Ministry. Transformed Life Ministry was established by Pastor Glen Awong, an ex-prisoner. While in prison, he received Jesus Christ as his personal saviour and his life was transformed. Following his discharge from prison, Mr. Awong became a Minister of Gospel of Jesus Christ and embarked upon a mission to aid the poor and the destitute, to transform lives of people. Today 57 street dwellers that were picked up last Christmas are residing at the Transformed Life Ministry. The good work that is being done there, Madam Deputy Speaker, has never been touched by any government in the 50-year history of Trinidad and Tobago. This is the first time that street dwellers have been picked up, are cared for and are being rehabilitated back into society.

We have, in fact, three persons who are working in the capital city, 12 persons who are renting and have jobs in and around Trinidad and Tobago and we have five families that have been reunited. We have intervened to give homes to the homeless, for 120 persons in Trinidad and Tobago, who were living in squalor in the streets. And, therefore, we were very proud to pave the yards and construct drains around the Transformed Life Ministry to the tune of \$487,255.

But, perhaps, what is most striking about the URP Social is not the developmental projects but the cerebral palsy mothers who never had an income before under any other government and are able now to be part of the cerebral

palsy caregivers programme where the mother is employed to care and take care of her own child who needs 24/7 care and protection. [*Desk thumping*] This has allowed mothers to become trainers and others to become trainers of trainers and supervisors of trainers and has allowed them to increase the amount of income that they earn. Some have been able to go back to their jobs before they had that child and had to leave their job so that they could tend to their child on a full-time basis without income.

Today, when I told the President of the Cerebral Palsy Association, Christine Hosein and the other President of the Cerebral Palsy Association, they gave me documents upon documents. Suffice it to say they are pleased, they are happy and they are overjoyed that they now have unemployment relief, a programme, hope, that they can have a better life for themselves, their child and their family.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. William Bratton
(Details of Services Rendered)

47. Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

With respect to the recent visit of Mr. William Bratton, Crime Consultant, to this country, could the Minister 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?

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to question No. 47, the recent visit of Mr. William Bratton, Crime Consultant, to this country, I wish to inform you that in an effort

to address the issue of crime reduction in a holistic and coordinated manner, the Ministry of National Security engaged the services of Mr. William Bratton and the Bratton Group. Mr. Bratton is well respected for his knowledge and success in the field of criminology and crime prevention and has a proven track record in reducing crime.

Prior to the visit of Mr. Bratton and his team to Trinidad and Tobago in November 2013, it was agreed that the Bratton Group would research and prepare material for the Trinidad and Tobago Crime Reduction Seminar; also to attend a pre-seminar meeting with designated Government officials and leaders of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to discuss the team's presentation as well as to learn more about the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service operations.

They were also earmarked to deliver a crime reduction seminar in Trinidad and Tobago. The first session was expected to include a presentation to a large group of designated members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and Government agencies. The presentation was expected to cover CompStat (computerized statistics) and other successful crime reduction strategies in the Boston, New York and Los Angeles Police Departments.

The second session was expected to include two smaller breakout sessions with their police service command staff and detectives. These sessions were to focus on crime reduction, organizational and operational topics specified to those two groups. After the one-day seminar, the group would then return to New York City to write a proposal for a longer term policing assessment project in Trinidad and Tobago if we approved.

The total cost incurred by the State, with respect to the visit by Mr. Bratton and his team was US \$27,500. The professional fees for Mr. Bratton included—and the fees involved preparing an agenda and presentation material for Trinidad and Tobago Crime Reduction Seminar; attend pre-seminar teleconferences in New York City and dinner meetings in Trinidad and Tobago; deliver a crime reduction seminar in Trinidad and Tobago; and gather initial TTPS organizational and operational information and data to develop and deliver a longer-term assessment and plan of action engagement.

There was a request for the breakdown in expenses: the airfare, US \$4,500; hotel, US \$1,500; meals, US \$675; and transportation, US \$825, amounting to US \$27,500, because this was for three persons, Mr. Bill Bratton and two of his senior executives. The cost overall of hosting the Bill Bratton Seminar - A Country to Defend, on November 12, 2013, at the Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain, was

\$1,462,796.04. The expenditure presented the cost of rental of the Hyatt premises, production of seminar material, decor, media advertising, catering services.

There has been no contract or agreement signed with Mr. Bratton or his firm. So, in light of the response to part (d) above, part (e) is not applicable.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish also to note recently there was the reappointment of Mr. William Bratton as Commissioner of Police in New York City on December 05, 2013. The Mayor of New York announced him to return to the post of Police Commissioner. His reappointment came into effect on January 01, 2014.

Mr. Bratton who also holds the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire has been the Commissioner of Police in Boston Police Department, New York City Police Department on two occasions now and the Los Angeles Police Department.

He was also approached by the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, to become the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner in July 2011. Mr. Bratton's policy style was instrumental in reducing major criminal activities in New York City to become one of the safest cities in New York. He established the concept of CompStat, the Broken Window Theory and several others. Based on him being reappointed as the Commissioner of Police in New York City, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to say that based on his achievements, it shows that we made the right choice in selecting somebody who has proven to be one of the most successful in reducing crime worldwide. [*Desk thumping*]

2.00 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Laventille West.

**Land for the Landless Programme
(Details of)**

50. Mr. NiLeung Hypolite (*Laventille/West*) asked the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development:

Could the Minister:

- a) Identify all those areas in Trinidad and Tobago where State lands have been assigned and handed over to citizens under the Land for the Landless programme?
- b) Provide details as to the total number of persons, their names and the size of plots handed over?

- c) Identify the selection criteria used in determining the recipients for the programme identified in part (a)?
- d) List the criteria used by the Commissioner for State Lands in selecting State lands for distribution?
- e) State whether any infrastructural upgrades are proposed/have been undertaken by the State to the lands distributed under the programme?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Land and Marine Resources.

The Minister of Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Jairam Seemungal): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This question now falls under the purview of the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources. The question is:

- a) Identify all those areas in Trinidad and Tobago where State lands have been assigned and handed over to citizens under the Land for the Landless programme?
- b) Provide details as to the total number of persons, their names and the size of plots handed over?
- c) Identify—[*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, in the constraint of time, I want to ask you not to read the question, but please go to the answers.

Hon. J. Seemungal: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, because it was addressed not to me, but the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, I thought I might want to bring it up.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in 2010, the Government charted a new course towards sustainable development for Trinidad and Tobago termed Prosperity for All, anchored on seven interconnecting pillars for development. In 2011, these pillars were refined into five priority areas in the Medium-Term Policy Framework Innovation For Lasting Prosperity. This framework is expected to cover the period 2011—2014, and is being monitored by the National Performance Framework 2012—2015.

The National Performance Framework, Madam Deputy Speaker, of 2012—2015, indicated that out of the priority area 5, Poverty Reduction and Human Capital Development, the key result area was a society free from poverty. The first outcome identified in this key area is access to adequate and affordable housing. One of the outputs of these pillars is squatter regularization and

settlement upgrade.

The provision of state-funded housing units has not adequately satisfied the overwhelming and increasing demand for housing. To complement this Government's policy of provision of housing at affordable cost, this Government introduced the Land for the Landless residential lots programme, to supplement its existing housing solution. The residential lots programme offers citizens and residents of Trinidad and Tobago, who are landless and who satisfy specific criteria, serviced lots at subsidized rates.

The Land for the Landless policy is designed to achieve the following goals:

- to produce residential lots at affordable prices;
- to ensure that lands are allocated for residential use in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Division requirements;
- to encourage the construction of proper homes in safe environment;
- to encourage suitable development through microenterprises initiatives;

The Land Settlement Agency is administering this programme. Within the Land Settlement Agency, there is a housing support centre which will lend support to persons who are constructing houses. These services include:

- technical advice and oversight during housing construction;
- the programme will utilize in-house expertise of building inspectors in assisting residents to build their own home;
- standard home plans at no cost to its tenants;
- guidance through the various approval stages during construction, through the regional corporation and the Town and Country Planning Division requirements;
- quality control for infrastructure works;
- technical advice on environmentally friendly and a green solution;
- research into emergency-type housing;
- forming partnership on the best practices for housing and non-traditional housing technologies with other countries; and
- research into solid waste disposal for its housing settlement areas.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to part (a) of the question, no distribution of lands has been made under the Land for the Landless programme to date.

With respect to part (b), since no one received land to date under the

programme, part (b) does not apply.

With respect to part (c), the lots are to be allocated to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who do not own any property in Trinidad and Tobago, and the allocation process is divided into three categories.

- (1) random selection process;
- (2) the special case emergency and the relocation based on law and policy.
- (3) public servants, protective services, teachers and other employees of the State.

The random selection process is based on a scoring system which considers: household size and the composition; total monthly income of applicant and co-applicant; and if any of the householders has permanent disabilities.

With respect to (d), the procedures used by the Commissioner of State Lands to select lands under the Land for the Landless programme, is that the vacant, unallocated state lands are identified by the Commissioner, following which a request is then forwarded to the Town and Country Planning Division to determine whether the land is suitable for residential purposes.

With respect to (e), Madam Deputy Speaker, while this appears to be one question, it is, in fact, a two-part question. I will deal firstly with the initial portion of same. The question is: State whether any infrastructural upgrades are proposed:

The answer is yes, infrastructural upgrades are proposed.

The second portion of the question asked: Whether any infrastructural upgrades have been undertaken by the State on lands distributed under the programme?

The answer to this question is that no lands have been distributed under the programme.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Warner: Supplemental.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Or, go right ahead then.

Mr. Warner: Minister, am I to understand that that big PR campaign that was at the Hyatt, where 500 persons had to select land, and put their hands in a big pot and a bowl and so on, a lot of whoop, that nothing has happened to date to

those people?

Hon. J. Seemungal: Madam Deputy Speaker, if he would want to file a question in relation to that, I will be very happy to answer. [*Interruption*] I have answered the question based on the application filed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**VMCOTT's Agreement with the Saladin Group
(Details of)**

52. Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*) asked the hon. Minister of Transport:

With respect to the decision by the Vehicle Maintenance Company of Trinidad and Tobago (VMCOTT) to enter into an agreement with the Saladin Group - reputed distributor of the Zavoli line of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) conversion kits and range of vehicles, could the Minister please state:

- a) the date on which the VMCOTT Board took the decision to enter into the agreement with the Saladin Group;
- b) the names of the Directors of VMCOTT who were present for the taking of the decision;
- c) the method by which the Saladin Group was selected for this agreement;
- d) whether the Saladin Group was selected as a result of any Request for Proposals (RFP);
- e) if the answer to part (d) is in the affirmative:
 - i. where and when was the RFP published;
 - ii. the names and addresses of all companies that submitted proposals and the details of their proposals; and.
 - iii. the method of evaluation and the basis for the selection of the successful proposal.

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Madam Deputy Speaker, in answering question 52(a): The agreement was, in fact, an industrial distributor agreement, whereby the Saladin Group appointed VMCOTT as its sole distributor of Saladin products, and it was presumed that there was not the need for board

approval, therefore, no decision was reached by the board.

Madam Deputy Speaker, no taxpayers' moneys were committed. No taxpayers' moneys were expended. No taxpayers' moneys were at risk.

In light of the answer for (a), all other questions (b), (c), (d) and (e) would not be applicable.

Mr. Warner: Madam Deputy Speaker, in the minutes of the Board of Directors of Tuesday, March 20, 2012, there is a paragraph that refers to: a meeting has been scheduled with NP on Monday, March 19 to finalize the lot for the station. We anticipate that the costing of this project be completed by March 27.

I am saying, this refers to an agreement, and I am simply asking, what was the agreement? And there are subsequent minutes here which also confirm the agreement, Madam Deputy Speaker. All I am asking is, what was the agreement? And I am asking that because I know—I have a—in fact, I will not say anything else. I will not say anything else.

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): I believe I answered the question already.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: All right, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**VMCOTT's Agreement with the Saladin Group
(Details of CNG Conversion Kits)**

53. Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*) asked the hon. Minister of Transport:

With respect to the agreement signed between the Vehicle Maintenance Company of Trinidad and Tobago (VMCOTT) and the Saladin Group - reputed distributor of the Zavoli line of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) conversion kits and range of vehicles, could the Minister please state:

- a) the date on which the agreement was signed;
- b) the signatories to the agreement;
- c) the deliverables;
- d) the breakdown of the costs associated with said deliverables; and.

- e) the cost and projected quantity of each type of CNG conversion kit to be supplied under the agreement.

Mr. Warner: And give me the same answer.

The Minister of Transport: (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Madam Deputy Speaker, in answer to question 53(a), the date on which the agreement was signed, was September 28, 2011;

- b) signatories to the agreement were: Mr. Michael Robert Charbonne, Chairman of VMCOTT; Mr. Joel Brown, Chief Executive Officer of VMCOTT and Mr. Michael Tidwell, President of the Saladin Group;
- c) the agreement provides for VMCOTT being appointed as the sole distributor for the Saladin products, and such does not make reference to any deliverables by VMCOTT, save and except VMCOTT's obligation to engage in sales of the products;
- d) the agreement does not reflect the breakdown of any cost associated with the deliverables;
- e) the agreement does not reflect any cost nor any projected quantity of any type of conversion kit to be supplied under the agreement.

Mr. Warner: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to know if the agreement is alive or dead.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Madam Deputy Speaker, the agreement is dead.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Red Hill/D'Abadie Recreation Ground (Details of)

37. Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney) asked the hon. Minister of Sport:

Could the Minister state:

- a) Whether land has been identified for the development of a Recreation Ground for the Red Hill, D'Abadie community?
- b) If the answer to part (a) is in the affirmative, can the Minister state the exact location and date of commencement for the development of the Recreation Ground?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask that this question be

deferred for one week. The Minister of Sport is also out of the jurisdiction.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Construction of Community Centres
(Details of)**

38. Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development:

Could the Minister state whether Community Centers will be built at Bon Air Gardens, Arouca and Trincity and if so, when?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Winston Peters): Thank you very much. Madam Deputy Speaker, in reply to question 38, centres will be built in Bon Air Gardens and Trincity, a centre already exists at Arouca. With respect to time frames, I wish to advise as follows:

- (a) construction of the Bon Air Gardens Community Centre will be scheduled in accordance with the allocation provided to the Ministry under the Development Programme;
- (b) the community centre located at Victoria Street, Arouca was refurbished in 2004, and is currently being assessed to determine whether it is to be refurbished or reconstructed.

Part (c) of the question with regard to the construction of a community centre in Trincity area, the Ministry of Community Development is in the process of identifying a suitable site for the location of the proposed centre.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, Member.

Miss Hospedales: Supplemental, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will like to ask the Minister whether or not the land allocated for the construction of the community centre in Bon Air, whether that was given over to a particular calypsonian for the rearing of goats. Did he receive the approval from the Ministry?

Hon. W. Peters: As far as I know, no land was allocated to any calypsonian to rear goats anywhere. [*Laughter*]

Miss Hospedales: Supplemental, Madam Deputy Speaker. As far as I am aware, the Minister is aware of whom the individual is, and I would hope that he would be transparent in providing the answer.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Continue, MP.

Hon. W. Peters: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am as transparent as I can be, and as far as I know, to the best of my knowledge, no land has been transferred to any calypsonian that I know to rear any goats.

Mr. Manning: And no goats? You know nothing about goats.

Hon. W. Peters: And the Member for San Fernando East, I do not know anything about any goat. [*Laughter*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Barcaday Junction Traffic Light

(Details of Installation)

39. Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

Could the Minister indicate when will a traffic light be installed at Barcaday Junction, Arouca, on the Priority Bus Route?

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. In answering this question I just want to make a note in passing. On the questions to be answered today, there were nine questions. Only one question has not been answered simply because the Minister of Sport—this is a tremendous track record of this Government [*Desk thumping*] in terms of answering questions and our commitment to transparency and open Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to tell the worthy Member for Arouca/Maloney, that the traffic light she has asked about has been installed, and we are simply awaiting T&TEC to connect the electricity and they have promised that that will be done next week. [*Desk thumping*]

2.15 p.m.

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER

(LEAVE)

Beetham Landfill Fires

(Government's Failure to Address)

Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh (St. Joseph): Thank you, Madam Deputy 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 and its state agencies, to responsibly address the very serious health and economic effects of the Beetham Landfill fires that have been

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raging and plaguing the capital city of Port of Spain and environs causing disruption to all aspects of city life.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the matter is definite, insofar as a series of 14 fires have, in fact, occurred, affecting schools, businesses, the Judiciary and city life with the attendant deleterious effect on persons' health, loss of business and general societal disruption. The matter is also definite, as since Sunday, January 26, when its effects were first known, the said fires have not been adequately contained four days later.

The matter is urgent because of the immediate and consequential health hazards, especially to the young, the elderly, and those suffering from respiratory illnesses, example, asthma and bronchitis who live in the capital, but as well as thousands who commute to and from Port of Spain for work, business or pleasure. The matter is also urgent, Madam Deputy Speaker, because of the loss of school days for approximately 16 schools within the Port of Spain area, and the attendant anxiety to students, teachers and parents. Finally, the matter is urgent as untold millions of dollars of business and government revenue are being lost to early closure of the courts, private businesses and government offices.

The matter is of public importance because this is the second major environmental disaster to trouble the nation, following closely on the heels of the oil spill in the south-western peninsula. The fires and their adverse consequences have affected not only Port of Spain, but areas extending to Mucurapo, St. Clair and any population centre where the prevailing winds take the smoke and noxious fumes. Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is of public importance due to the inadequate response by the Government on Sunday, January 26 and the loss of public confidence in state agencies to manage with openness, a second environmental disaster.

I so move, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, after careful consideration of this submission, I suggest that the hon. Member for St. Joseph should pursue the matter under Standing Order 11, as it does not qualify under Standing Order 12.

Hon. Member: What! [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: "Come file ah Motion nah man." [*Crosstalk*]

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STATEMENT BY MINISTER

**Oil Spills
(Cover up by Petrotrin)**

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, on January 29, 2014, the Leader of the Opposition was reported in the media to have said that there was a cover-up by Petrotrin, its board and the Cabinet, regarding events surrounding a series of oil spills that took place from December 17, 2013 to the end of December 2013. He focused on the spill related to the operations of the Pointe-a-Pierre jetty on the early morning of Tuesday, December 17, 2013. The Leader of the Opposition was also reported to have said that the population was being misled and misinformed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the statement by the Leader of the Opposition, and the conclusions he jumped to were based on information he received from Ancel Roget. There was a picture of both of them posing in the *Express* newspaper holding a report captioned “Oil Spill Cover-up”. We have not seen that information that was presented to the Leader of the Opposition. We have not been sent a copy. We have no idea what the contents are, and we have no idea who the author is or who compiled that report or who collated that report.

Hon. Member: That is an email.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: In any event, the Leader of the Opposition and Ancel Roget have told us nothing new. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is a constitutional office holder.

Hon. Member: Like the emailgate.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: He is a Member of the House of Representatives. He could have, therefore, used the instruments of Parliament to seek Petrotrin’s views on the information presented to him and explained to him by Ancel Roget. He did not do this. Instead, he formed his conclusion based on what was presented and explained to him by the OWTU President General.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Petrotrin is a state enterprise owned by the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Some weeks ago, Moody’s, the international rating agency, conducted their annual assessment of Petrotrin and reaffirmed the company’s credit rating at Baa3 which is investment grade.

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Only yesterday, Madam Deputy Speaker, the management of the company met with Standard and Poor's to conduct a similar exercise. Madam Deputy Speaker, we are therefore left to wonder whether the injudicious statements by the Leader of the Opposition were deliberately designed to damage the company and negatively impact the national economy at this sensitive time.

Mr. Sharma: Exactly.

Mr. Indarsingh: Reckless!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: The issue here, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a continuation of a trend where the Leader of the Opposition receives information without seeking other views, without pausing, and he then runs with that information recklessly, heedless to the consequences for the country.

Dr. Griffith: Just like emailgate.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: It is similar to what happened with emailgate, where he read into the *Hansard* record of Parliament emails that alleged a conspiracy by the Prime Minister and other Ministers to murder a journalist.

Dr. Griffith: Reckless.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: It is also what happened—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, 36(5) please, imputing improper motives.

Hon. Member: Nonsense!

Miss Mc Donald: How you mean he runs with this and he runs with that? [*Crosstalk*] Spiderman, you hush! [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Port of Spain South, the Minister is making a statement on policy, and I am not going to open up a debate on it. You may continue, Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is also what happened with his accusation about the Attorney General making racial statements in New York, when the Attorney General had not visited New York in many years. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Continue, continue.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the

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Opposition is a former Cabinet Minister and, in particular, would have served—*[Interruption]*—Madam Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: I am not hearing.

Dr. Rowley: Let him talk, that is the Government's policy.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, I know you are making a statement at this point in time, but I want you to be very careful of some of the things that you are quoting. You may continue. *[Crosstalk]*

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much again, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is a former Cabinet Minister and, in particular, would have served in the Manning Cabinet—and may I recognize the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East—from 2002—2009. *[Crosstalk]* In those years, as a Member of Cabinet, he would have been fully aware of the gross mismanagement of Petrotrin under the direction of the PNM. During that period at Petrotrin, there was the now infamous gas-to-liquids project which cost Trinidad and Tobago—cost Petrotrin TT \$3 billion. It is a legacy of the PNM, and it is a stain on the reputation of Petrotrin.

Dr. Griffith: Patrick fired him!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: There was the Gasoline Optimization Programme where a cost escalated from US \$350 million to US \$1.5 billion.

Hon. Member: What!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: This was due to a disastrous procurement strategy that included cost reimbursable contracts being awarded to several companies. *[Crosstalk]* That essentially meant, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a blank cheque was issued by Petrotrin to these companies. That was under the watch of our friends opposite.

Mr. Indarsingh: Read over this entire thing. *[Interruption]*

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: There was the failed headquarters project, Madam Deputy Speaker, under the watch of the PNM. The skeleton of that building is still on the highway. This shell cost approximately TT \$170 million. *[Crosstalk]* There was a deliberate rundown of Trinmar under the watch of the PNM, where no investment was taking place while money passed through the GTL and GOP projects like a dose of salts.

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, there was a debt situation at Petrotrin. In 2002, the debt at Petrotrin was TT \$3.3 billion—that was in 2002—by the time

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our friends opposite left office, it had escalated to \$12.4 billion. That is almost a four-fold increase in debt in eight years under the People's National Movement. That debt is related mainly to the Gasoline Optimization Programme.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me take this opportunity to advise Parliament that all plants associated with the Gasoline Optimization Programme are now commercially on production, and Petrotrin is now focused on maximizing economic returns to service the extraordinarily high debt of the company, that is a creature and function of the PNM period of management. [*Desk thumping*] That, Madam Deputy Speaker, was the state the PNM left Petrotrin in 2010. The Leader of the Opposition, therefore, lacks the moral authority to pontificate on matters related to Petrotrin.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are about moving forward. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am advised that the beaches in La Brea are substantially cleaned. To date, Petrotrin has spent close to \$20 million in clean up and compensation. [*Desk thumping*] Of this, some \$3.4 million has been paid in compensation to date.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it should be noted that matters related to the oil spill or oil spills are the subject of two police reports. There is an ongoing investigation by Petrotrin police. Twelve employees have been suspended in relation to the investigation into the release of fuel oil at the Pointe-a-Pierre jetty. These suspended employees include two supervisors, two shift team leaders, one port coordinator and one engineer.

There is also work being done, Madam Deputy Speaker, by the EMA and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, and there is a task force that has been appointed by Cabinet, and one of the remits of that task force is to investigate the source and the causes of the oil spill or oil spills.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while others have been working very hard to undermine and discredit the national energy sector, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs guided by the Cabinet that is led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, has been busy revitalizing our exploration and production capability. As a consequence, Madam Deputy Speaker, there has been a dramatic increase in exploration and production activity which is a direct consequence of Government policy and strategy. [*Desk thumping*]

As a consequence of that Government policy as it relates to fiscal policy and taxation policy, at present, there are eight rigs working in our waters. [*Desk thumping*] That compares, Madam Deputy Speaker, to one rig working in our

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waters in mid-2010. [*Crosstalk*] In addition, between 2012 and 2013, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs signed seven deep-water production sharing contracts [*Desk thumping*] with a collective work programme valued at US \$1.9 billion. That, again, is a direct consequence of a policy intervention by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, foreign direct investment has grown from US \$549 million in 2010 to US \$2.5 billion in 2012. [*Desk thumping*] That, again, is a direct consequence of Government's energy policy and fiscal policy.

Hon. Member: Well done.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: The increase in investment has led, Madam Deputy Speaker, to four new discoveries of oil and natural gas, [*Desk thumping*] including a discovery of one trillion cubic feet of natural gas by BP in late 2012. [*Desk thumping*] That natural gas, Madam Deputy Speaker, is now being produced through the new Savonette wells.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, I would like to implore the Leader of the Opposition and, indeed, all Members of the Opposition Bench, to be more judicious—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: “Why yuh doh ketch yourself?”

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—and less reckless in their comments [*Desk thumping*] especially as it relates to matters that directly impact on the economic well-being of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: On a point of order; on a point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: What is your point of order Ma'am?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: 36(5). [*Crosstalk*] You cannot say that we were reckless. You cannot say that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, overruled. You may continue and conclude your document, please. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You cannot say we are reckless.

2.30 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Furthermore, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should by now realize that his reputation for peddling misinformation without checking the authenticity of the sources of information, or seeking to understand all sides of a story—

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Dr. Rowley: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 85, and I ask for your protection under the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives. I seek your protection under the Standing Orders of this House. If we are going to have a debate, then we can have one, but I seek your protection from a visitor to this House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you have my protection. Hon. Member, you are making a statement and we are not opening up a debate, so you may continue with your statement. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing I would say that our energy sector is our most important economic sector. It is therefore very important to understand that what we say here in Trinidad and Tobago has the potential to be propagated internationally, and to directly impact the reputation of this very important sector.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would therefore caution all persons in Trinidad and Tobago to be very careful about—especially those who speak—to caution all persons in Trinidad and Tobago to be very circumspect with regard to their statements about the economy, and especially about our energy sector. On Monday, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a major international conference at the Hyatt where foreign investors would be gathering, and that conference is well attended—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: We would come and talk.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—and sold out. You are not on the agenda. You are not on the agenda. In that regard, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would close again by cautioning that people be circumspect in what they have to say about the sector.

We are at a very delicate point where we are now attracting foreign direct investment at record levels that were not attracted in the periods before we were in Government. That is a result of deliberate Government policy and Government strategy, as enunciated and guided and directed by the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

Insurance (No. 2) Bill, 2013

(Extension of time)

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Madam Deputy Speaker, having regard to the interim report of the

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Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Insurance (No. 2) Bill, 2013, I move that the committee be allowed an extension of two months in order to complete its work, and submit a final report by March 31, 2014.

Question put and agreed to.

UNACCEPTABLE CRIME LEVEL

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 30(1), I beg to move the following Motionstanding in the name of the Member for Port of Spain South, for whom I very happily deputize this afternoon. We are a team, you see.

Whereas there have been continuing and unacceptable levels of violent crimes in Trinidad and Tobago; and

Whereas the mishandling of the security systems and apparatus of the State have contributed to the spiralling crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago; and

Whereas the Government has been unable to effectively reduce the level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago:

Be it resolved that this House call on the Government to take immediate steps to deal with the unacceptable crime level facing the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the documents that I will refer to in due course is an article that pointed out that if boasting, grand charge and “gun talk” would deal with our crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago then this Government would have solved our crime problem long ago. We seem to be saddled, Madam Deputy Speaker, with the advent of the People’s Partnership with a series of Ministers who believe that making idle threats and empty boasts will solve the crime problem in Trinidad and Tobago.

But more importantly, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the problems with our current situation, the current unacceptable crime situation, is that the Government, the hon. Members opposite are handicapped by a number of problems that are unique to this administration, not the least being hypocrisy. I go back in time, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I will read from an article dated October 24, 2005, to give you some idea of the depth of the hypocrisy of this Government. The article is entitled: We are not going anywhere. It is in the *Newsday*, and it reads as follows:

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“Chairman of the Keith Noel 136 Committee, Stephen Cadiz, said yesterday”

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would draw attention of hon. Members to the fact, this article is from October 2005. That is how many years ago? Eight. So Mr. Cadiz, as he was then:

“...said...that his committee”—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: So who is he today?

Mr. C. Imbert: Today he is a hypocrite. [*Laughter*] Political hypocrite. A political hypocrite. I can use the word “political hypocrite”, Madam Deputy Speaker. And the article goes on to quote Mr. Cadiz as saying:

“We are not going away until the crime problem is solved, we are going absolutely nowhere, we will not disappear,’...said”—Cadiz—“in a telephone interview.”

We “have to solve the problem. Something...has to be done.”

He goes on to say:

“I don’t think the Government knows...what...to do,”

He made this brilliant statement, Madam Deputy Speaker:

“While family values and education were relevant, Cadiz said he felt that dealing with these were long-term plans.

‘TT needs an immediate solution to the killings. You have to deal with the murders...now.

The Government fails to realize that is the main issue,...’

...drugs and guns were the areas in need of immediate attention.”

He goes on to talk about the population:

“were hesitant”—to—“trust the police.”—and

“The police”—must—“show the public...they are working in a professional manner.”

So this is Mr. Cadiz, 2005. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are some muttering going on from the Member for Tabaquite and he is disturbing me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, could you allow the Member to speak in silence please. You may continue.

Mr. C. Imbert: I know your admonition will have no effect on them, but let us hope it will keep them quiet, temporarily. So let us go to the *Guardian*, October 25, 2012. This is under the reign of the People's Partnership.

“Cadiz: Death March was not about politics”. So this is seven years after the death march, and it goes like this:

“Seven years ago, thousands of people flooded the streets of Port-of-Spain for what was known as the Death March.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, this incessant chatter from the Member for Tabaquite; it is irritating. I beg your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I want to ask you to allow the Member to speak in silence, and, Member, I want to ask you to address the Chair, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope you can keep them quiet. [*Crosstalk*] What happen? Stick break in your ears? Hush.

“Seven years ago, thousands of people flooded the streets of Port-of-Spain for what was known as the Death March. Tuesday marked the seventh anniversary of the march. The march had its genesis in the death of Keith Noel, who was chopped to”—his—“death...on May 26, 2005.”

Listen to this, Madam Deputy Speaker, you see the truth offends:

“At the time the murder figure stood at 136. For that year, the country recorded 386 murders.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, now the subject of this article is grumbling; could you stop him, Madam Deputy Speaker? [*Laughter*] Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very serious.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members! Members!

Mr. C. Imbert: I am very serious.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am very serious in this Chair as well. I am hearing grumbings on both ends. Hon. Member, I want to ask you to address the Chair and continue.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. I asked for your protection, you will stop everybody from talking. [*Crosstalk*] You have no behavior.

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“At the time the murder figure stood at 136. For that year, the country recorded 386 murders.”

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, let us pause. There were 407 murders in 2013, but in 2005, when the murder total reached 386, it prompted persons such as the hon. Member for Chaguanas East to drag a coffin through the streets of Port of Spain and protest.

Now let us hear what this hon. Gentleman [*Laughter*] has to say, because this is the essence of the hypocrisy:

“Cadiz...dismissed claims that the march was a platform for him to be catapulted into the political arena. ‘It was never anything about politics.’”

He goes on to say:

“...although it had been in office just two and a half years, the People’s Partnership...had already made many inroads in the fight against crime, highlighted by the community meetings chaired by National Security Minister Jack Warner,”

Poor Jack Warner; he no longer there.

Now listen to this:

“Admitting that citizens would like to witness an immediate reduction in crime...Cadiz said fighting crime was an old problem.

‘I know the population would like to see an immediate fix to the crime problem...’”

Let us go back and see what he said, Madam Deputy Speaker, when he marched in 2005. He said:

“...Family values and”—community—“education”—are—“relevant”—but the population wants solutions now.

He demanded a swift, affirmative, proactive, prompt action to deal with crime in 2005. Now that he is in Government he says, “Hold on, wait”:

“‘I know the population would like to see an immediate fix to the crime problem...’”

Then he goes on to say:

“...he remained saddened by Noel death and the fact that like many it had

remained unsolved.”

And when they polled other people who were involved in the march:

“One of the thousands who participated in the march was Kirk Waithe, chairman of...Fixin’ T&T.”

They vex with Kirk Waithe now:

“Asked if he felt safer today than seven years ago Waithe said, ‘Absolutely not. I do not think our crime situation has improved.’

Popular groups and artists also voiced their dissatisfaction during the march seven years ago, including Wendell Manwarren of 3 Canal.

Contacted on Tuesday”—

This is in 2012:

“Manwarren said the crime situation had changed, but for the worse. ‘It has intensified.’”

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the problem with this Government is, quite apart from the fact that it is incompetent, it also has no moral authority to deal with this problem, no moral authority whatsoever, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Let us take a look at what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago. I do not know if anybody was—any unfortunate person was killed today, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not know, and I would sincerely hope that no one is killed today. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, as of yesterday, 45 people had been killed for the month of January 2014—45 people in 30 days.

Hon. Member: And where Cadiz?

Mr. C. Imbert: He is not marching. He say “yuh ha” to wait now, it is a long term. You know, the population has to wait. That is what he is saying now. Then it was, “We want solutions now, PNM must go”. Now that he is in power, “Allyuh have to wait. It is a long-term problem”. But let us deal with the substantive issue: 45 murders in 30 days. If you translate that and extrapolate it into 365 days, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will have a grand total in 2014 of 547, at the rate we are going.

2.45 p.m.

“Is a lucky ting it slow down lil’ bit,” because if we had done the calculations based on the first two weeks of 2014, we would have crossed about 700 for the year, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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Trinidad and Tobago features among world statistics in terms of the deadliest countries in the world. You see, one of the problems with this administration is that they like to run from reality. I just heard a Minister talking about Petrotrin and so on, and it is symptomatic of the denial of this Government. That is a Minister who has presided over a 20 per cent decline in oil production in this country, but comes in this Parliament to boast about the good work that he has done. The net effect of his stewardship is a 20 per cent decline in oil production since the People's Partnership has come in, but they are doing a good job. And in the same way, Trinidad and Tobago features among the deadliest countries of the world.

I had a look at an article a little while ago, a 2010 article actually, that was written after the December 2010 statistics were published for murders all over the world. The country that came in at number 20 was Ethiopia with 25 murders per 100,000 head of population; then Puerto Rico at 26.2; then the Central African Republic at 29.3; The Congo at 30.8; Colombia at 33, and Trinidad and Tobago is right there with Colombia at No. 13. But if you take the murder pattern for January 2014, we will end up with a murder per capita of over 40 per 100,000 for this year 2014, and it will place us among the deadliest countries in the world. Put us right there with Guatemala and those other countries where life is extremely cheap.

What is the Government doing about it? What is the Government doing about it except boasting and talking? "Dey will mash de criminals like cockroaches." [Laughter] That is the first boast we got out of the new National Security Minister. Then: No contracts for gang members. [Laughter] Then: "We will ketch de big fish". As I said, if boasting, "gran charge" and "gun talk" could deal with crime, then this Government would be the most successful government in the world, because they have the most amount of boasting, the most amount of "gran charge" and the most amount of "gun talk" of any government that I have ever seen in terms—and the least results—fluff and puff, fluff and puff. [Crosstalk]

Let us look at what has happened in Trinidad and Tobago from June 2010 to now. What has the Government of Trinidad and Tobago done to address— [Interruption]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know it is people on my side, I know it is people on that side, but I beg your protection. The person sitting in the Member for Oropouche East's seat is constantly throwing remarks on this side. I "dun" with you for the time being. Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek your protection. I will come back to you, "bu' I dun with you for now".

Let us look and see what this Government has done in the last four years. The first thing the administration did was to cancel the contract for the offshore patrol vessels. That was the first affirmative decision of this Government to deal with crime. That was their crime-fighting plan: number one: cancel the offshore patrol vessels—a brilliant plan according to them.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: They are fighting crime on land!

Mr. C. Imbert: The second thing they did was to dismantle the Special Anti-Crime Unit—another brilliant move on their part. That is how they fight crime—they dismantled the Special Anti-Crime Unit. The third thing they did was to dismantle the Security Intelligence Agency and the ability to eavesdrop on criminals.

Hon. Griffith: And politicians.

Mr. C. Imbert: The next thing they did, Madam Deputy Speaker, was to remove Trinidad and Tobago’s capability for aerial surveillance. “Dey sell de airship”; that was another brilliant move on their part. So we have come now to 2014. What has happened? The ability to patrol our borders—none; the ability to have specialized units dealing with crime and gangs and drugs—none; the ability to engage in surveillance—none; the ability to have a focused and comprehensive approach to dealing with crime—zero. That has been the approach of this administration to crime.

Now let us start with the first one, which is the cancellation of the offshore patrol vessels contract. Let us go to the statements made by the Hon. Prime Minister when this contract was cancelled, way back in 2010. Let us see what the official statement was from the Prime Minister.

This is an article dated September 29, 2010:

“Kamla: Govt doesn’t owe one cent for OPVs”

And speaks about the Government’s decision, or reported decision, to cancel the offshore patrol vessels. It refers to a statement made by British Aerospace Engineering where they indicated they had:

“...received written notice from the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago...that it wishes to cancel the programme under which BAE Systems is providing three offshore patrol vessels and support to the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard.”

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The article says:

“A few months ago, an interministerial committee, which included National Security Minister, Brigadier John Sandy and Attorney General Anand Ramlogan, was set up to review the purchase of the OPVs.

Sandy subsequently said he hoped to convince the committee to purchase the vessels since he believed they would be needed in the current fight against crime.”

So that is the statement of the then UNC Minister of National Security, that he hoped to convince the committee to purchase the vessels since he believed they would be needed in the current fight against crime—a statement coming from the Minister of National Security of the Partnership.

Look at what the Prime Minister had to say:

“Do we need three OPVs? The country is not at war out in the seas; the country is at war on the ground, in our streets and in the towns within Trinidad and Tobago...Our country cannot sustain that at this time...

We feel that we could better spend that money right here on the ground to fight crime,...

There is the view that these huge OPVs will not assist in the fight against crime...”—[*Laughter*]

That is the Prime Minister talking. The same day the Minister of National Security is saying that he hoped to convince the committee to purchase the vessels, since he believed they would be needed in the current fight against crime.

So a career soldier, a decorated soldier, a man with years of military experience says he believes the offshore patrol vessels were needed to fight crime, and the Prime Minister, with no military experience, no background in national security, no training in national security whatsoever, says:

“...these huge OPVs will not assist in the fight against crime because first, they are slow and are visible from way off. You could see them from far off, so these narco...traffickers who may be coming and illegal gun-runners (who) may be coming, what may be more useful is the smaller, faster cutters.”

So they cancelled the OPV contract.

What happened after they cancelled the OPV contract? Well, we have had various utterances from various Ministers of National Security. From time to time we have seen utterances from various Ministers of National Security. For

example, in November 2012, when blood was more than water, things were bad:

“Govt seeks to buy 6 naval vessels from Colombia”

Story in the *Express*:

“Government is seeking to purchase six naval vessels from the Colombian government...”

Warner said that the President of Colombia and Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar “have been in constant dialogue, for the purchase of three vessels in the first instance, but ultimately six, for use by the T&T Coast Guard.” So that was in 2012.

What did the current Minister of National Security have to say, the one who was the national security advisor and the one who advised the Prime Minister, and we have to assume the one who advised the Prime Minister to cancel the offshore patrol contract, Madam Deputy Speaker? The current Minister—I will find it, but if I do not, I know what it said—the current Minister tells us when he comes in that he is seeking to buy drones, unmanned surveillance aircraft. He wants to buy four of those and he is going to buy offshore patrol vessels. So what has happened?

Three offshore patrol vessels were being constructed for Trinidad and Tobago—I am going to come to that—three vessels, purpose built, specifically designed to work in Trinidad and Tobago waters and in the wider Caribbean. These vessels could stay 35 days out at sea. They could carry 70 men in bunks, another 50 in times of emergency. They had a 25 millimetre gun, a 50 millimetre gun; they had a helipad, designed specifically to take the helicopters, which were subsequently received by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what the plan was in 2010.

The vessels were due for delivery later that year and the following year. That was what was happening in 2010. They cancelled the contract. Since then, for the last three and a half years, Minister after Minister tells us they are going to buy offshore patrol vessels. So four years have elapsed and we have no offshore patrol capability, because according to the Prime Minister: the war is not at sea, the war is on land. So we do not need boats, and they are slow anyway.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sometimes ashamed at some of the utterances made by Members of this Government. For the Prime Minister to be—and she would have had to be advised—and again, who is the national security advisor? The current Minister of National Security. Who would have advised the Prime Minister to make such a statement that was illogical? The offshore patrol vessels

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are slow and the drug traffickers will see them and they are using fast boats, so these boats are useless.

On those offshore patrol vessels, on each one, would have been an armed helicopter capable of intercepting the fastest go-fast boat as they are called, used by drug smugglers in the world today; three interceptors per vessel, capable of travelling at 50 knots. So that when the surveillance equipment, when the radar and the other surveillance monitoring equipment on the vessel, picks up a go-fast boat or they get a message from another navy in the area—either from the French, from the British, from the Americans that they are using their monitoring equipment, they have spotted a vessel that looks like it is a drug boat, the helicopter would take off and intercept the boat or the interceptors from the offshore patrol vessel would take off and intercept the boat. So the speed of the offshore patrol vessel is irrelevant. It is merely a launching platform, like an aircraft carrier. It is merely a platform that carries these other military assets that are fast, that will intercept the vessels, Madam Deputy Speaker.

3.00 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know the joke of the whole thing? They cancelled the boats and they keep the helicopters. Same Government, you know; same Cabinet cancelled the boats, keep the helicopters. The helicopters were designed to be used on the boats, not on land. *[Interruption]* And I heard a little mutter—*[Interruption]*—from the hon. Minister of National Security, not true. Not true! Madam Deputy Speaker, I was a Member of the Cabinet committee, the committee appointed by the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Griffith: I hope when I start to talk you could explain.

Mr. C. Imbert: You could talk all you want. You could boast you are mashing cockroach, it is true. *[Crosstalk]*

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was a member of the Ministerial committee—*[Interruption]*—for the purchase of military assets for use by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, Coast Guard and Air Guard, and I am intimately familiar with the fact that the offshore patrol vessels were designed specifically to be a launching platform for the armed helicopters that we have acquired from Augusta Westland. So the Minister of National Security could mutter, and boast, and shout, and scream; it does not change the facts. These helicopters, like every other coast guard or navy in the world, this is how you interdict drugs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me educate hon. Members opposite on how other countries deal with drug running. *[Interruption]* Yes, you could say what you

want that would not change the fact that there have been 45 murders for January and that you are a political hypocrite. That would not change those facts. But let us deal with reality, the first thing that we need to look at, here is an article in the Huffington Post. [*Interruption*] Madam Deputy Speaker, it is so hard to ignore that screaming.

Madam Deputy Speaker: You do your thing.

Mr. C. Imbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, let us read from the Huffington Post, “Caribbean Drug Trafficking On The Rise”. This is an article dated 11/4/2013 and it was written by the associated press and it speaks about Jamaica:

“Seizures of South American cocaine in Jamaica have doubled since last year...Activity is picking up...Long a smuggler’s paradise, the Caribbean was eclipsed by Mexico as the prime drug route to the U.S. in the 1990s...cartels retreated amid stronger enforcement off Florida”—activities picking up, however—“possibly as a result of the violent drug war in Mexico and Central America. The frequency and size of...seizures in the Caribbean, particularly off the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, have been steadily climbing. In the first half of”—2013—“seizures accounted for 14 per cent of U.S.-bound cocaine, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration...”

‘I don’t think it’s just a one- or two-year blip’ said Vito Cuarino, special agent in charge of DEA’s Caribbean division.

DEA officials and others say the Caribbean surge is partly a result of efforts such as the U.S.-led Central American...Initiative, launched in January 2012, which increased enforcement in Central America”—as well as—“a crackdown along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Whenever those two get squeezed, the movement is toward the Caribbean” in Puerto Rico police say:

“...about 75 percent of homicides—which hit a record of 1,135 in 2011—are tied to drug trafficking...”

I doubt, Madam Deputy Speaker, the situation is any different in Trinidad and Tobago. If 75 per cent of murders in Puerto Rico are tied to drug trafficking, I am certain we have a similar situation in Trinidad and Tobago, that at least 75 per cent of the homicides, the murders, the violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago is linked to drug trafficking. What did this administration do? They cancelled our ability to patrol our nautical territory, they cancelled our ability to have

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interception and interdiction of fast speed boats coming out of Central and South America carrying cocaine destined for North America. That is the first thing that they did. At the time they said the boats were useless, they were defective, they were lemons, they were no good; we did not need them, a whole variety of different things. Now, we hear they want to buy six OPVs, four drones, three OPVs; different Ministers over the last three years have been announcing the same vessels that we never needed, they are going to buy them.

But let us see what happened to the vessels that were condemned by Trinidad and Tobago's Government as being defective and lemons. I am reading from an article dated January 2012, "Brazil Buys Ocean Patrol Vessels", and the article states:

"The three 90 metre vessels, originally constructed for the Government of Trinidad & Tobago, will provide the Brazilian Navy with enhanced maritime capability in the near term..."

And what did the Brazilian Navy have to say about that:

"The Ocean Patrol Vessels are capable of speeds in excess of 25 knots and weigh 2,200 tonnes fully loaded. With a 30mm cannon and two 25mm"—cannons—"as well as a helicopter flight deck"—designed for our helicopters—"a rigid inflatable boat, the ships are ideal for performing maritime security roles in Brazil's territorial waters.

The ships were originally built by BAE Systems for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago under a contract signed in 2007."

So, the same boats which the Brazilian Navy has bought and has said that the vessels are ideal for performing maritime security roles in Brazil's territorial waters, and they paid the same price too. They paid the same price that the boats were being sold to Trinidad and Tobago. The same boats that the Brazilian Navy which is the largest and the oldest navy in South America, those same boats built for Trinidad and Tobago, bought by the Brazilians, which they say are ideal for dealing with maritime security in their territorial waters. But this brilliant Government decided we do not need any offshore patrol capability, they cancelled the contract. So, that was the first crime-fighting strategy of Trinidad and Tobago; first crime-fighting strategy of this Government.

Now, let us look at the whole question of how you deal with interception and interdiction of drug smugglers in the Caribbean. I have here an article of July 20, 2013 entitled "Deter, disrupt, interdict", written by the US Coast Guard, it is published in their magazine called *Coast Guard Compass*:

“On the evening of Jul. 15, 2013, a Coast Guard...Sentry airplane...detected a go-fast in the waters south of Mona Pass. Assisted by infrared capabilities, the sharp aircrew detected suspicious, square-shaped packages onboard and notified the command center at...Puerto Rico.

Along with Coast Guard Cutter...and a helicopter from the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron”—another coast guard vessel—“were diverted to assist in pursuit of the suspected smugglers. Once on scene, the helicopter crew asked the suspicious vessel to halt. When it failed to do so, warning shots were fired.

As the go-fast continued to flee...the helicopter fired disabling shots. The street value of the”—cocaine—“seized was estimated at”—US—“\$35 million”.

So that is how they deal with speed boats coming out of South America in the rest of the Caribbean. They have their naval assets out there in the Caribbean; they have their offshore patrol vessels, coast guard vessels with helicopter support, with fast interceptors. When the go-fast boat is detected, you launch your interceptor or you launch your helicopter and you intercept the vessel. That is how it is done, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But in Trinidad and Tobago we have a different solution. We do not fight on sea; we fight on land, because there is no problem out there. There is no war out in the sea, to quote the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. “The drug war is on land, it is not out on sea”, and as a result they cancelled the offshore patrol contract. [*Interruption*]

Let me read another article, January 23, 2014, “Agents seize 1,250K cocaine near Dominican Republic’s southeast” coast:

“A shipment of 1,250 kilos...was seized Wednesday evening on a speedboat in international waters heading to Saona Island in Dominican Republic’s south easternmost point, with three Colombians and one Dominican arrested.”

Again, use the same approach. You have a naval vessel with an armed helicopter, with interceptors patrolling; they noticed the go-fast vessel using infrared technology, using satellite, whatever radar technology they had, they saw this go-fast vessel, they launched the helicopter, it disabled the boat, they captured the drug men and they seized a ton of cocaine. That happened on January 23, 2014. What is today? Today is January 31. That happened eight days ago. That is what they are doing in the rest of the Caribbean, but in Trinidad and Tobago there is no drug war at sea. We have problems on land so we do not need vessels, we do not

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need offshore patrol capability and we do not need to intercept cocaine en route on go-fast vessels from South and Central America.

Here is another article, “\$527 million”—hear the amount—“in cocaine intercepted en route to U.S.”, and listen:

“A law enforcement helicopter...tracked down the boat and fired shots to disable it. Three suspects were arrested”—and they discovered that the boat is carrying—“\$82 million dollars”—in—“cocaine.

The next evening, a Customs and Border Protection crew...saw a three-engine speedboat moving rapidly near the Panamanian-Colombian border”.

Again, they launched their helicopters from their naval assets, their offshore patrol vessels, intercept the boat, they found cocaine valued at \$445 million.

So that is what they are doing in Panama, that is what they are doing in Colombia, that is what they are doing in Puerto Rico. They have their ships outside there with their helicopter pads, with their fast interceptors, their radar, their infrared technology; they identify the speedboat, they send the helicopter, they disable the vessel, they catch the drug runners and they seize the cocaine. That is what they do in the rest of the Caribbean. What happens in Trinidad and Tobago? What happens here?

Miss Mc Donald: We are fighting on land.

Mr. C. Imbert: No, we are fighting on land, because the problem is on land. However, Trinidad and Tobago does not produce cocaine. The three countries in this part of the world that produce cocaine: Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, because cocaine needs to be grown at a particular altitude with a particular humidity and particular environmental conditions. We do not have the environmental conditions in Trinidad and Tobago to grow the coca plant, so we do not produce cocaine here. This is merely a pass through, where boats come from Venezuela, they come from Colombia and other South American and Central American countries.

They come here, the cocaine comes in on go-fast speedboats, comes in along our borders, whether it is along the north coast, or whether it is along the south coast, or whether it is along the east coast; the cocaine comes from Colombia and Venezuela on go-fast speedboats, which they then offload the cocaine along one of our many areas along our north coast, our east coast, our south coast, which are totally unprotected, because we have no offshore patrol capability, and then this cocaine is then put into cans of juice. You have to wonder where the cocaine came from. It did not come in any container. It came in a boat, and it came in bundles of cocaine in a boat straight out of South America, landed on some coast

somewhere along the north coast, somewhere along the south coast, somewhere along the east coast, then transported, put into cans of juice and shipped to Norfolk in Virginia.

But for some reason our brilliant Government does not know what the rest of the world knows, that they produce cocaine in Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. That it is shipped to Europe and North America. That it is taken out of these countries, Peru, Colombia and Bolivia by speedboats; that it is taken in bundles; that it is taken into countries where the cocaine is repackaged and then transshipped in ordinary general cargo bound for the United States and Europe. The whole world knows this, but our Government is of the view that our drug war is on land; it is not at sea.

3.15 p.m.

So all these boats could just come out of Venezuela and Colombia, willy-nilly, up and down, because there is no drug war out at sea, according to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let us look, again, at—if you go through, let us look at what is happening here. *The Independent*:

“Navy support ship aids £1m drug bust after Caribbean chase

A navy support ship helped seize marijuana worth around £1 million from a boat in the Caribbean in the latest drugs bust involving British personnel.”

January 08, 2014—this article, Madam Deputy Speaker—just three weeks ago, this is what is happening.

“Royal Fleet Auxiliary...naval...ship...chased the suspect vessel...allowing US Coast Guard law enforcement officers to board it and find quarter of a tonne of marijuana hidden...”—on the vessel.

£1 million—TT \$10 million. So that is what is happening in the Caribbean:

“Massive Cocaine Cargo Seized From Panamanian Ship”

This cargo was actually worth £136 million—TT \$1.5 billion. Then you have an article here on the coast guard again:

“Coast Guard Cutter Returning From Successful Drug Interdiction Patrol”

Again, using the same approach. They have a vessel that can launch a helicopter. It has fast interceptors; you identify the drug smuggler using various surveillance technology and you send your helicopter and your fast boat and you

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intercept the drug smugglers.

But we do not do that in Trinidad and Tobago. What we do in Trinidad and Tobago, leave our borders open, shut down the radar; no boats; do not maintain the vessels that were purchased—the fast patrol boats. Do not maintain them; park them up; mash up all the naval assets that we have in Trinidad and Tobago; leave everything open; let the boats come in and then play dumb when people are using our ports, using our Companies Registry, using defunct companies to put cocaine into orange juice and put a label on it and send it off to USA. That is what this Government does in Trinidad and Tobago. Leave the borders totally open; leave us defenceless with absolutely no patrol capability, and then play dumb when all of this cocaine goes to North America and is found in North America.

While I am on that, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me deal with some issues here. You know, when the recent cocaine seizure took place in Virginia, our very talkative Minister of National Security, what did he say? What did our very talkative Minister of National Security have to say? When the Commissioner of Police was contacted—this is based on an article from the *Newsday*, January 18, 2014—Acting Commissioner Stephen Williams said he was not aware of the drug bust. So he “ain” talking. But what did National Security Minister Gary Griffith have to say?

“National Security Minister Gary Griffith confirmed being aware of the drug bust and said he is awaiting an official report...”

So the police “doh know, buh he know”. He went on to say:

“Based on joint operations and intelligence between our foreign allies we are now seeing these dividends being reaped...”

Dr. Rowley: What?

Mr. C. Imbert: That is what he said.

“Griffith said it showed that sharing of information and joint operations with international allies, ‘is ten times more beneficial than acquiring 100 off-shore patrol vessels’.”

This is Minister Griffith talking in January 2014. He said:

“...sharing of information...joint operations...‘is ten times more beneficial than acquiring 100 off-shore patrol vessels’.”

Hon. Griffith: That is called intelligence.

Mr. C. Imbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the same individual who, immediately upon assuming office, said he was going to buy four drones and

three OPVs. This is just a couple months ago. The same Minister of National Security, Gary Griffith, said he is going to buy four drones and three OPVs because they are needed to fight crime. And then when the US finds the cocaine in the orange juice, he says: “sharing of information is ten times more beneficial than acquiring 100 offshore patrol vessels.”

Same fella. “Yuh cyar make up yuh mind”, and this is why this Government is so incompetent. Almost four years have elapsed, 45 murders for the month of January, 407 murders for the year 2013, no end in sight to the gruesome brutality and blood crimes that we are seeing in Trinidad and Tobago, and they cannot make up their mind.

First, they are buying used boats from Colombia, then they are buying boats from some other place, then they “gone” somewhere looking at boats, now they want to buy drones. In the meantime, nothing is happening. Four years, eh? Talk, talk, talk, talk, talk! As I said, if boasting and “gun talk” could solve crime, then this Government would be the most successful crime-fighting Government in the world.

But let us go now—our Minister of National Security would have us believe—and I notice that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago repeated this—that this drug bust in Virginia was as a result of sharing of information and intelligence. So if they are so intelligent and they have so much information, how come they “eh” hold the drug traffickers here?

If they know that they had all this cocaine on the ship; if they know that the drug traffickers had brought cocaine to Trinidad and Tobago—because I want to repeat, we do not make cocaine here. But if this Government knows everything and they share information and they knew that some faceless person had put cocaine into orange juice and put it in a container ready for shipment, why did they not hold the people here? But no, what happens in Trinidad and Tobago; containers open up, marijuana “does” fall out, but nobody is responsible.

Containers of chicken come in, look inside the chicken—marijuana. Nobody is responsible. They find hundreds of millions of dollars in drugs down in Monos, nobody is responsible. They could only find the drugs. They “cyar” find the drug traffickers, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But let us move on. Let us see what the people in Virginia had to say. This is the *Hampton Roads* magazine in Virginia, Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption]* Hampton—Hampton. “If yuh doh” know where the Hamptons are—*[Interruption]* You know where the Hamptons are:

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“Feds seize 732 pounds of cocaine at Port of Norfolk”

Listen to the first line:

“They didn’t know for sure it was there.

No one called U.S. Customs and Border Protection last month to tell them...”

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And they were assisting them.

Mr. C. Imbert: “Yuh” want to hear it again?

Hon. Members: Yes!

Mr. C. Imbert: “No one called U.S. Customs and Border Protection last month to tell them to be on the lookout for the 20-foot...”—container and there was nothing inside—“to alert agents that anything was amiss.

‘This was a cold hit. There was no specific intelligence’,...”

And they go on to talk about the fact that they detected it using X-ray technology, Madam Deputy Speaker. They became suspicious. There were several shipments of orange juice coming out of Trinidad and Tobago and they became suspicious at the quantity of juice and where it was going, and they decided to use X-ray equipment, and that is how they detected the cocaine in the orange juice. Nothing to do with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; nothing to do with Minister Gary Griffith or anybody else, or sharing of information intelligence. It was a cold hit.

So US \$100 million of cocaine finds its way into Trinidad and Tobago, is packaged in cans of juice in Trinidad and Tobago, is labelled with the Trinidad Orange Juice label in Trinidad and Tobago, is put into a container in Trinidad and Tobago, and finds its way off to North America, and our authorities know absolutely nothing about it.

Dr. Rowley: And they claim the credit.

Mr. C. Imbert: That is a nonsense. The claiming of the credit is just a nonsense. The fact of the matter is, they do not know what is going on. And the reason they do not know, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the reason we have a crime problem in Trinidad and Tobago, and the reason we have so many murders, is that this Government has not been able to come to grips with the international drug trade, which is the number one cause of murders and homicides in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Those are the facts. You could talk until “yuh blue in the face; yuh could talk about mashing cockroach and ketchin big fish.” Talk is cheap! Talk is cheap, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am ashamed as a Trinidad and Tobago citizen that I have to read an article like this: *Trinidad Express*, January 18, 2014:

“The United States’ Drug Enforcement Administration...is in this country investigating the \$.6 billion cocaine bust in Norfolk, Virginia...which originated from Trinidad and Tobago...”

So the DEA “ha tuh come here tuh find out wha going on”. If they had all this intelligence gathering and information sharing, you could email them the information. What the DEA had to come here for? It is a shameful thing—*[Interruption]*—It is a shameful thing for Trinidad and Tobago that foreign drug enforcement agents have to come here to solve the puzzle of how all of this cocaine was put into cans of juice, labelled and packaged on a container in Trinidad and Tobago under the nose of the National Security Minister and the nose of the local law enforcement agencies. It is a shameful thing! It is a shameful thing!

But you see, this Government is just talk, as my honourable colleague for Port of Spain South, on whose behalf I am piloting this Motion, said, “fluff and puff; just talk fluff and puff”.

So we no longer have any offshore patrol capabilities, and the little offshore patrol capability we had with the fast patrol craft, they run them into the ground; they missed all the scheduled maintenance intervals; they “mash up” all the boats. So even the six fast patrol craft that came here in 2010, they “mash” those up. No offshore patrol; no inshore patrol, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Rowley: No maintenance.

Mr. C. Imbert: No maintenance. These are facts.

Hon. Griffith: You buy six—lemons and—

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, lemons. Everything is a lemon. That is what they say. The three offshore patrol vessels, they said they were lemons. They have been purchased by the Brazilian navy.

Dr. Moonilal: And then they break down in Brazil.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, sure.

Dr. Moonilal: *Su* was a lemon.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, sure. “All ah dat” is to deal with crime.

Now, let us move on. What is the next thing that they did? They sold the airship which is commonly known as the blimp. They sold it. They say, what a brilliant thing, we cancel the boats, so now we cannot patrol our waters. That was a wonderful thing to do. Well, now we move our eyes in the sky. So we have an airship that could use radio monitoring, that could use infrared technology, that could use camera, remote sensing technology, that would be able to detect conversations between drug traffickers, that would be able to detect from a very high altitude these fast boats coming out of South America.

We have an asset. They say, “leh we sell that”. So after they got rid of our marine surveillance capability, they decide to deal with our aerial surveillance capability. They say the blimp is a waste “ah” time; sell it; sell it for scrap.

Now, what is the rest of the world doing, Madam Deputy Speaker? I have an article here from Homeland Security, published November 20, 2013 and what are they talking about? Their aerostat systems are helping the US border patrol. And what is it? It is a blimp. So Homeland Security is using an airship, and this is what it is described as:

“...an aerodynamic helium-filled balloon which typically carries radar, video and communications...”—equipment—“to altitudes ranging from 1,000 ft”—up to—“5,000 ft.”

This is what the Homeland Security in the United States is doing to patrol the US/Mexico border where a large quantity of drugs comes through. They are using airships equipped with radar, video and communications technology—Homeland Security, 2013.

US Navy:

“Navy blimp returns to Maryland, Virginia, and D.C. Skies today.”

And they speak about:

“The US Navy’s...manned airship, a modified American Blimp Corporation A-170 series commercial blimp, will return to the skies of Maryland...”—today—“to conduct week-long testing of experimental avionics systems.

Results of this research may...protect forward deployed U.S. Army and U.S.

Marine Corps...around the globe.”

So that is what the navy is doing. The Homeland Security is using airships to patrol the US/Mexico border; the navy is using airships to do aerial surveillance, Madam Deputy Speaker.

3.30 p.m.

I have an article here from a magazine called *Transportation Nation* and it speaks about the US Navy using blimps to track drug submarines coming out of South America. So, that is what the US Coast Guard is doing. Then here we have, Madam Deputy Speaker:

“Privacy fears mount as Pentagon prepares to launch”—an—“all seeing’ surveillance blimps over Maryland to guard against...”—foreign attacks.

And this was published on January 24th, 2014—six days ago.

Six days ago, the US Government, the Pentagon, launched a:

“...\$2.7 billion program...slated to...run for three years”

The blimps will use—“Powerful radar”—to allow—“them to spot objects 340 miles away.

Built by defence firm Raytheon, the blimps will fly in pairs at 10,000 feet.”

Offering—“360 degree 24/7 surveillance for 30 days at a time’...”

This is what the Pentagon is doing in 2014, spending \$2.7 billion to have airships provide 24/7 360 degree surveillance capability for the US Military, six days ago. But this brilliant Government decides we do not need any aerial surveillance capability.

The whole world—the US Navy, the US Coast Guard, the Homeland Security, the Pentagon investing in airship technology. They used it in Iraq war, they are using it in Afghanistan to assist with deployment of troops, airships. The same kind of airships we had in Trinidad and Tobago because it has radar capability, it has audio monitoring capability, it has video monitoring capability. The beauty of an airship, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that you can have all this equipment on top of there, it can stay up there for a long period of time, it can hover over a particular point for a long period of time and you can collect surveillance data, collect surveillance and security information, using this particular type of technology.

The whole of the United States is using it, but Trinidad and Tobago decided they do not want aerial surveillance capability because the PNM purchased it. The PNM buy the airship, the UNC must sell it. The PNM ordered the offshore patrol

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vessels to deal with drug traffickers, the UNC must sell it. So, this airship which was singularly responsible for reducing kidnapping from over 150 per year down to zero because of its sophisticated audio and video and radar technology, that airship which was listening in to criminals, which could spot an object 300 miles away, they decide they do not want aerial, video, audio and radar capability to spot drug traffickers in Trinidad and Tobago, so they sell the blimp. So that is the second brilliant move on the part of this—

Madam Deputy Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Hon. Members: None!

Mr. C. Imbert: Pardon?

Madam Deputy Speaker: You have until 3.49.

Mr. C. Imbert: Three, forty-nine. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Warner: I will give you 30 minutes more.

Mr. C. Imbert: You will give me more?

Mr. Warner: I will give you 30 minutes more.

Mr. C. Imbert: No, problem. I wish. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going straight through? There is no extension, unfortunately. Unfortunately! So, they cancelled the offshore patrol capability, they cancelled the aerial surveillance capability—this fantastic administration. This fantastic administration.

So, what did they do on land? Because they destroyed our security apparatus on sea, they destroyed our security apparatus in the air. They had some crackpot scheme so they used a toy plane. That did not last very long and the perpetrators of that scheme did not last very long either. They left. So, they destroyed our marine surveillance capability, they destroyed our aerial surveillance capability, so we come now to the ground. What happened on the ground?

Well one of the first things they did, Madam Deputy Speaker, somebody told them that the Special Anti-Crime Unit was spying on them. So what did they do? They fired everybody in the Special Anti-Crime Unit. So previously where you had well-trained officers, well-trained staff, you had a focus on dealing with gangs, you had a focus on dealing with organized crime, they decided—because somebody told them that these 300 officers in the Special Anti-Crime Unit were spying on the Member of Parliament for Siparia, among others—they will send

them all home. And what did they do? They send them home.

So, marine interdiction capability, mash up that; aerial surveillance, get rid of that. What is going on on the ground? “Dem is PNM. Dey spying on we. Gey rid ah dem.” So what was the brilliant strategy of this Government to deal with gangs after they got rid of the Special Anti-Crime Unit? What did they decide to do?

If we go again to an article in the *Newsday*, May 2012:

“A team of specially selected officers are being put together to form an elite unit to deal specifically with crimes involving gangs in Trinidad and Tobago.

Newsday understands that the”—Criminal Intelligence Unit—“may even have a name change. The recommendation to form the gang unit came about after the Repeat Offenders’ Programme Unit (ROPE) was disbanded two years ago because of allegations against some members of the unit.

ROPE was the police unit responsible for dealing specifically with gang related crimes and monitoring persons deported from foreign countries after committing crimes there.”

They sell the offshore patrol vessels, they cancel the contract. They ground the blimp, they sell it as scrap. They close down the Special Anti-Crime Unit and then they disband the Repeat Offenders’ Programme Unit which was the police unit responsible for dealing specifically with gang-related crimes and monitoring persons deported from foreign countries after committing crimes there.

So you have all of these specialized units and specialized equipment and technology providing a multifaceted approach to crime. You have the offshore patrol vessel providing you with interdiction capability at sea. Gone! You have the airship providing you with surveillance from the air. Gone! You have the Repeat Offenders’ Programme Unit dealing with gangs and deportees. Disbanded! So, and what have they put in place? You would have heard the PNM Senator from the other place asking the question in the other place: where is the anti-gang unit of Trinidad and Tobago? He asked the question rhetorically because he answered it:

“Members of the anti-gang unit of the Police Service are currently in jail, charged with the murders of three persons in Moruga...

Seven police officers—Khamraj Sahadeo, Antonio Ramdhin, Glen Singh,

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Roger Nicholas, Renald Rivero, Safraz Juman and Nicole Clement—were charged with the murders of Allana Duncan, Abigail Johnson”—et cetera—“in October 2011...

‘When the prosecutors have to get evidence from the witnesses...they have to go to the jail’.”—to get evidence from the members of the anti-gang unit who are in jail on a charge of murder.

So that is the situation with respect to our anti-gang capability. They close down SAUTT, they disband the Repeat Offenders’ Unit, they create a gang unit which now find itself incarcerated, and that is their approach to dealing with crime, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But let us move on to what is happening in the police force because I saw an incredible interview given by the Attorney General, Madam Deputy Speaker. Quite incredible interview given by the Attorney General. Incredible, blaming the Acting Police Commissioner for the spike in murders and gang-related violence. It is not the Government’s fault; police fault. When they are in Opposition, it is the Government’s fault. When they are in Government, is the police fault. That is UNC politics. But let us see what he had to say. He said:

“...he”—is—“‘terribly disappointed’ over the enforcement of the law with respect to gangs,...”

But the gang unit is in jail, Madam Deputy Speaker. What do you expect? If the policeman who is supposed to be dealing with gangs in jail, what do you expect? But this is the incredible statement that he made. If I were the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I would be ashamed to associate myself with these remarks. But you have to because you are a Member of the Government.

“On the issue of appointing a police commissioner, the AG described as a ‘red herring’, insisting someone will be forced to perform to the maximum if left in an acting position, since if that person did not meet the grade, someone else would be placed at the helm. Ramlogan also dismissed the argument that if a substantive police commissioner was appointed that would have a positive effect on...crime.

...‘People keep saying that this has something to do in the fight against crime. ...it is a complete red herring, as a society, for us to be going down that road...’—to—“swallow in a wholesale manner that you have an acting commissioner of police so that is something bad in the fight against crime.’”

This is the same Government, condemned the PNM administration when the

appointment of former Commissioner James Philbert was extended on several occasions by the Police Service Commission.

“I am not...certain the logic in that is...reasonable. I am in fact not an advocate at all of having the commissioner of police appointed on a permanent basis...”

Dr. Rowley: Could you imagine that?

Mr. C. Imbert: This is the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago. Anand Ramlogan, Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, *Trinidad Guardian*—*[Interruption]*

Miss Cox: Today?

Mr. C. Imbert:—January 30, 2014. Today! *[Crosstalk]*

“...‘People keep saying that this has something to do in the fight against crime. ...it is a complete red herring, as a society, for us to be going down that road and accept and swallow in a wholesale manner that you have an acting commissioner of police so that is something bad...I am in fact not an advocate at all of having the commissioner of police appointed on a permanent basis...’”

You think it easy. This is the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, and a distinguished labour leader like the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, you are associating yourself with this? Do you know what this is, Madam Deputy Speaker?

When I did management studies years ago, back in the '80s, they had something called theory x and theory y. These are outmoded antiquated discredited management theories. Theory x ruled by fear. Throw people off balance—you know—keep them on edge, never confirm them in their position. That is theory x. It was an old management practice in the '20s and the '30s, Madam Deputy Speaker, that has since been discredited. But our Attorney General in 2014, 30 years later, is advocating theory x, that keep him off balance, keep him on edge and that is how you would get performance out of him.

I see the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre smiling because he knows about theory x and theory y. The hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has probably led delegations to the ILO to protest against—and the Member for Oropouche East in one of his many writings on labour relations has probably condemned this kind of archaic approach to management. But listen to this:

“‘If’—you—‘appoint someone on a permanent basis and the man’—is not—

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“performing...what yuh go do?’ He said when someone was acting the performance would...be reviewed from time-to-time. ...‘One would expect they would want to give their...best so...they can get the job.

You will then...get the best out of that person because they will want to relieve themselves of the acting status... So...you make the man permanent”’—what will happen?—“‘when he sleeps and gets up, a crime plan does appear underneath he pillow?’”

This is the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago saying that the Commissioner of Police should not be appointed on a permanent basis because he will no longer have any incentive to deal with crime.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I had a conversation with a middle level police officer the other day at a community event. We were just chatting about the police service.

3.45 p.m.

He told me one of the most debilitating factors in the police service right now is the fact that you have an Acting Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*] He made the point—and it is logical—that every man jack in the police thinks they could get the commissioner’s job so the current commissioner is not getting cooperation, he is being undermined, because the people who are just below and in line for promotion, or could be candidates for that job, are seeking to make the current Commissioner of Police look bad.

Hon. Member: How long Philbert had that job for?

Mr. C. Imbert: That is one of the problems with an acting appointment especially at that level. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

In addition, when someone is in an acting position, they have no authority. They cannot—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: How long you know that now?

Mr. C. Imbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, could you quieten the Member for Mayaro, please?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Mayaro, please, allow the Member to speak in silence, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You see, this is the irrationality of this Government. You have the Minister of Transport dragging a coffin through the streets of Port of Spain [*Laughter*] saying “He want action from the Government now” when he was a private citizen. He becomes a Government Minister, zip—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: Keith Noel.

Mr. C. Imbert: He puts a zip on his lip, he gets quiet and he asks for time. Hypocrisy! These are facts.

Mr. Cadiz: I will not waste my time!

Miss Mc Donald: You cannot! [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: When the PNM was in Government, there was a huge outcry, not just from the UNC but from the population at large, that you need—this is untenable and that you need to appoint a commissioner on a permanent basis. In fact, it was one of the reasons advanced when Commissioner Gibbs was appointed to the post, that you had had too many people acting in this position. It was debilitating to the police force, it was causing a loss of morale, a withdrawal of enthusiasm within the police to have the top cop in an unstable and acting position. That is what they said. Now, you come now, 2014, four years later, the Attorney General is saying, “We go keep him acting because dah will have him under pressure and he go perform better and I doh advocate making ah man permanent”. This is the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago.

So that is another weapon in the UNC’s arsenal against crime—get rid of the boats, get rid of the aerial capability—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Do not train staff.

Mr. C. Imbert:—close down the repeat offenders unit, close down the Special Anti-Crime Unit, and now keep the Acting Commissioner of Police off-balance in a state of anxiety. That is their solution to crime. [*Crosstalk*] Do I have two more minutes, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Miss Mc Donald: What have you achieved? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: I would just want to conclude by reading two articles to tell us how serious this matter is—and we have had enough talk from this Government. They are almost into their fifth year. [*Desk thumping*] In two

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months, they will have completed four years—or three months, they will have completed four years in office, and all they have done is talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, and let us—I want to read two more articles into the record: *Trinidad Express*, January 02, 2014:

“SIX MURDERED ON NEW YEAR’S DAY”

Remember that welcome to the New Year? Six gruesome murders on the first day of the year—Wednesday, January 01, 2014. Then, I had to open the papers today and what do I see?

“NURSE STRANGLED

A 32-year-old Barrackpore nurse...has been found dead in the trunk of her car parked in a hospital car park.”

Of all things, look at the brazen criminality we have. “Dey beat up this poor woman, they strangle her to death, put her in a car park and park it in the hospital.” That is what is going on in this country.

So, I would hope that rather than hearing about cockroaches and hearing about fish and hearing about joint information—all of which is just a set “ah huff and puff and twaddle”, I will hear something meaningful from the Minister of National Security in terms of substantial, intelligent, workable and permanent solutions to the scourge of crime that is inflicting this country, that this present Government has proved in four years that they are completely incapable of dealing with. It is just talk and talk and talk, bravado, boasting, “gun talk” and “gran charge”, while, as David Rudder say, “Somebody letting the cocaine pass”. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I beg to move.

Miss Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to second the Motion and I reserve the right to speak.

Question proposed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. In this Motion, we are seeing three “whereas”. The first whereas is totally accurate based on the continuing and unacceptable levels of violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Government of the Republic of

Trinidad and Tobago is, indeed, gravely concerned about this. The other two whereas, I would just deal with briefly because I really want to get into the last statement for it to be resolved that the Government would take immediate steps to deal with the unacceptable level of crime, and immediate steps, we would.

But, as we have the two other whereas:

“...the mishandling of the security systems and apparatus of the state have contributed to the spiralling crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago;”

And that:

“...the Government has been unable to effectively reduce the level of crime...”

I would just like to briefly deal with this before we get into what really matters; what we can do to deal with the problem and where we are going from here.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the word “spiralling”, to say that it is a spiralling crime rate—the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East spoke a lot about statistics. He was heavily influenced with CompStat—computerized statistics. So, if he wants to go into the statistics, well, let us do this because the catalyst for crime reduction is the implementation of policies, and then we can actually look at the barometer—the ultimate barometer to analyze a Government’s success is based on the murder rate, so let us look at statistics.

From 1991 to 1995, the murder rate went up every single year when a certain party was in Government. From 1995 to 2001, it went down every single year when they were not in Government. From 2001 to 2010, it went up every single year when they got back in Government, and then from 2010 to now, it has started to go back down. We have formed the letter “m”, Madam Deputy Speaker, in that x, y axis and that is based on every time it is that they are in Government, the murder rate goes up, when they are out of Government, the murder rate goes down.

Mr. Sharma: Very good.

Mr. Imbert: It going down?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: So if we are looking at statistics—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: “It really going down; is true.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Again, he spoke a lot about boasting and “gran charge” and gun talk, that has to do with confidence, and it is better to do that than to take criminals, put them in Crowne Plaza and call them “community leaders”.

Mr. Sharma: Exactly!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Again, let us deal with statistics. We speak about the spiralling crime rate. SAUTT, at its finest, 2008, the murder rate was 547 that year.

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. Sharma: What ah shame!”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: The murder rate now is 405, a percentage decrease of 25.95 per cent, and this is nothing to boast about because it would go down, we intend to send it down. But the thing about it is, why do you see the splinter in your neighbour’s eye when you do not see the plank in your own?

Mr. Sharma: Correct.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: The murder rate was 547 when SAUTT was at its finest—[*Crosstalk*] We will continue with statistics—2009, when SAUTT was at its finest with the blimps, woundings and shootings, 689, it has now decreased to 527, percentage decrease of 23 per cent.

Mr. Imbert: That will convince everybody it is true.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Rape, incest and other sexual offences when SAUTT was at its finest, 760 that year, now down to 542, a decrease of 28 per cent.

Mr. Sharma: Very good.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Serious indecency, when SAUTT was at its finest, 44; kidnapping, 147, now down to 107, reduction of 27 per cent. When SAUTT was at its finest, burglaries and break-ins, 5,765, now down to 2,887, a reduction of 49 per cent; 2009, when SAUTT was at its finest, robbery, 6,107, they have now decreased again. General larceny, 3,987, now down to 2,535, a reduction of 36 per cent; larceny of motor vehicles when SAUTT was at its finest, because they were high-tech, these fellas were James Bond, it went from 1,706 now down to 1,016; a reduction of 40 per cent. When SIA was cooking because they said it is the hottest thing since slice bread, larceny of the dwelling house, 613, now down to 357; reduction of 41 per cent. Other serious crimes, when the blimp was hovering, as he said, technical and tactical and doing all of these fancy manoeuvres, other serious offences, 1,012, now reduced to 690. Madam Deputy Speaker, 2009, all major serious crimes, 22,162, now reduced to 12,752, a reduction of 42 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] Again, this is not in any way to say

that we are satisfied with this. We inherited a monster based on people affiliating with gang members and calling them “community leaders”, and now we have a job to do. We are not there as yet but we are getting there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it was mentioned about the escalation in the murder rate this year, but what is quite interesting is that we looked at the murder rate—yes, in the first seven days for the year, the murder rate was 19, immediately we put mechanisms in place, proper standard operation procedures, and—you know, what was not mentioned is that on January 22, one murder; January 23, no murders; January 24, no murders; January 25, no murders; January 26, no murders and January 28 and 29, no murders. In the last 10 days, there were six murders.

When we look at that ratio, because he was speaking about statistics and stating that in the first seven days—because he spoke about the first seven days—the murder rate would have been 700, but let us look at the last 10 days with six murders, that is an average of 18 murders per month which we are looking at per annum now, if we keep on that pattern, we are speaking about 216 murders in comparison to SAUTT that was 549, we are speaking of a difference of a murder a day. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, again, we speak about statistics and we speak about comparisons but it is there. You know what is quite interesting, is that people speak about trying to be role models in a society, but here it is that we have youths listening and all an individual could do, full of sound and fury signifying nothing, is to interfere and speak. People are hearing us and they figure that this is what is supposed to happen: interrupt people, lack of manners, it reminds me very much about [*Crosstalk*] again, that Muppets Show with the two miserable old men in the balcony [*Laughter*] just keep yapping, yapping, yapping, no value, nothing of—[*Crosstalk*] It is not time to listen to the two miserable old men in the balcony in the Muppets Show, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is time for us to get the job going.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Stop watching Sesame Street! [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Again, it is very important—because what I would not do is hug up Obama and give him a bear hug because I have a little more protocol and dignity than that, because it takes more in foreign affairs than to give Obama a bear hug. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Mc Donald: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 36(5). Come on. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member, Member, please. [*Crosstalk*] Focus on

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your contribution and debate. You may continue, Member. [*Continuous crosstalk*] Members, Members of this honourable House, please, please. [*Crosstalk*] The Member for Port of Spain South called on a point of order and I have ruled. You may continue, Member. [*Desk thumping*]

4.00 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. So—“doh go doh —come, come”.

Mr. Imbert: I am going to the bathroom.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Madam Deputy Speaker, where is the difference? They speak a lot about crime plans, and as I said before, this Government is not into crime plans. It is very banana republic, Madam Deputy Speaker, speaking about crime plans. You do not deal with reducing crime in a country with crime plans. To start with crime plans, those are plans to commit crime. That is to start with. What we are doing is national security policies and that is the difference. But again it seems that the only crime plan that I keep hearing is this road march: “OPV/SAUTT, SAUTT/OPV, OPV/SAUTT, SAUTT/OPV”, which means, that heaven forbid, if they get back in government, their whole crime plan is to bring back the OPV and SAUTT. That is their whole crime plan because that is all we hear, about OPV and SAUTT.

So let us look at OPV and SAUTT, Madam Deputy Speaker, because we continue to hear about this over and over—SAUTT. Again I just—the statistics are there. The murder rate was at its highest when SAUTT was at its finest. And I am not one, Madam Deputy Speaker, to throw out the baby with the bath water. The concept of SAUTT is something that is important. It just went in the wrong direction. Because you do not have—you do not bring in 50 foreign used Brits, cost the taxpayers over \$100 million per annum; paying some of these individuals \$150,000 per month and then refuse to pass on the information to our local law enforcement agents for them to replace. Madam Deputy Speaker, by that \$100 million per annum, we were able to give each and every law enforcement officer, in the defence force and the protective services, \$1,000 monthly allowance. So over 10,000 persons benefited from 50 foreign used officers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again, with SAUTT, SAUTT continued to take away, it started to be competitive rather than—and become something, not to support the law enforcement agencies, but to compete. And what was very interesting is that the same system of SAUTT, the same government that had a problem with the

defence Bill, they did not want soldiers to be involved in all of this, SAUTT was practically military run. It was led by military people and the majority of SAUTT were military operational persons—defence force persons. So again, “yuh” cannot be half pregnant. So “yuh didn” want a Bill, but “yuh” putting SAUTT there to be the front line operational agency in law enforcement.

Madam Deputy Speaker, and again, if it is that you have an agency that is competitive, an agency that can break morale in all the law enforcement agencies, by giving these individuals \$5,000 a month extra, that was not going to help. And that is the problem with SAUTT. So I have no issue with the concept of SAUTT, it is just that they went in the wrong direction. So when you ask the concept of what it is that we are doing to replace—instead of SAUTT, we have the National Operations Centre. Whereas SAUTT was competitive, SAUTT was seen to take away the assets, hundreds of millions of dollars per annum, what the National Operations Centre is doing, the opposite to that, is to act as a communication platform, to bring the law enforcement agencies together, which was lacking before.

But I just want to continue again of these crime plans about SAUTT and the OPV. Madam Deputy Speaker, the OPV; I continue to hear about this OPV over and over again. So “leh” me just clarify again, Madam Deputy Speaker. The purchase of these vessels was primarily to patrol and protect the pipelines; pipelines that were about to be built from Trinidad to the other Caribbean islands.

Mr. Manning: That is not true. That is not true.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Madam Deputy Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, an OPV—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: That is not true.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—is there to secure our exclusive economic zone. An exclusive economic zone will be from 12 to 200 miles. Because of the—an offshore patrol vessel, all you needed is one. The person who is saying it is not true probably never even went in the water. But I could assure you because I spoke to the commanding officers of the Coast Guard. I spoke to all the heads of the defence force and they said that all that was required to secure our exclusive economic zone, which is from 12 to 200 miles north and east of Trinidad and Tobago, was one OPV.

Mr. Manning: That is old talk. That is not true.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: And Madam Deputy Speaker, I would also like him to say—I am hearing his voice; he is awake. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the problem about it, the BAE, they were faulty in their time delivery. The person who is saying it is not true, I would also like him to admit that right now, if you go online, BAE/fraud, there are dozens of countries that have now said that BAE have been found corrupt for paying kickbacks to government officials.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the United States of America, Austria, Saudi Arabia, central and eastern Europe, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Romania, the Czech Republic, Tanzania, Qatar and Hungary—that is what they wanted us to get, Madam Deputy Speaker. And to confirm this, to confirm this, we have gone—and I listened to the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East. He spoke about the importance of the OPV and we were going to other countries. Yes, we have looked; we have been looking around. We did not just rush in because we saw this and said “I want to be—I want to have this great thing so when dignitaries come here, I will show them what my little armada is”. No.

We have gone to Colombia; they have gone to Korea, to China, to Israel, to Holland and all of these countries have similar type vessels—long-range patrol vessel, offshore patrol vessel, “tomayto/tomahto”, and the cost is \$400 million. But we were going to buy the BAE’s OPV at \$800 million—\$800 million. So we were actually going to pay \$400 million more for each of the three OPVs, and the question—the person who is speaking there, she should say why.

In addition, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have to look at manpower strength. When it is you are moving with national security assets, it has to go hand in hand with manpower strength. An offshore patrol vessel requires 80-odd sailors. When you have to do the rotations, 80 plus 80; and then you need 50 per cent complement for persons who are going on resettlement training, courses, resignations. So you are speaking about roughly 200 qualified sailors required to man one OPV. The simple math: three by 200, we needed 600 sailors. Madam Deputy Speaker, we did not have enough to do one. So what that would have meant, because we rushed in to purchase three OPVs at the time, it meant that two of those OPVs would have been moored here and would not have been able to be used because we did not have the manpower strength. That is management for “yuh”, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I am not hearing the voice again.

And I will continue, Madam Deputy Speaker. After five years, if we wanted to maintain those vessels, we were going to pay over \$100 million a year to maintain each vessel. Madam Deputy Speaker, I will continue. In an arbitration, when you

win an arbitration it is because it is that the item was defective. Madam Deputy Speaker, we were going to buy something that was defective. That was the reason why it is the arbitration was successful.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it also—the OPVs—lacked berthing space at Staubles Bay for one such vessel, far less three. This is a fact. Onshore support in terms of power generation was also inadequate. There was no storage or workshop space for spares, to do repairs. There was an acute shortage of seagoing personnel. There was panic recruitment that was taking place. The fire control system was a hodgepodge of systems that did not perform properly. Madam Deputy Speaker, I could spend the rest of the day talking about that OPV. [*Crosstalk*] We bought three—we were going to buy three lemons. And we did the right thing; we saved the taxpayers, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

So when they speak a lot, Madam Deputy Speaker, again I listened [*Crosstalk*] to when Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East, when he spoke about [*Crosstalk*] the importance of all these high tech gadgets. So because Brazil purchased three offshore patrol vessels, is because their area of responsibility in the exclusive economic zone is much more than us. So if he wants to work on the concept that because Brazil's threat assessment and their area of responsibility for their exclusive economic zone is so much, well then the United States has an aircraft carrier, maybe we should buy one because the US bought one. Or maybe Venezuela has F-18 fighter jets, so maybe we should do that. [*Crosstalk*] And that is what they are about, Madam Deputy Speaker, fancy things, gadgets, and nothing that can move to ensure effective management and results. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, so as we go along, we go along, if you look, Madam Deputy Speaker, we speak again about all of these fancy gadgets, but, Madam Deputy Speaker, what was very interesting, are defects: [*Crosstalk*] six Austal vessels were purchased, and you could liaise with the coast guard—lemons. We purchased lemons because they were not the type of vessels for these waters. [*Crosstalk*] So we purchased six Austal vessels, all of them are down—six lemons. [*Crosstalk*] We wanted to purchase three BAE OPVs—lemons. And also at \$400 million more than what it was. [*Crosstalk*] We wanted to—we bought two blimps, Madam Deputy Speaker. He speaks about blimps; “we back” in Fred Flintstone days. They had to have—17 men had to hold the rope and run like little school boys to hold this blimp. [*Laughter*] That is what they want, Madam Deputy Speaker. Welcome to the days of the 21st Century. The days of the 21st

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Century is something called the unmanned aerial vehicles; not blimps. Only a blimp will buy a blimp. [*Laughter*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I could see, but he could sue. [*Laughter*] Madam Deputy Speaker, and again we move to the helicopters, Madam Deputy Speaker. With the concept of the—Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am dealing with this based on the whereas; the whereas say that we dismantled assets. We took away things that were just a waste of time. The helicopters, Madam Deputy Speaker, each helicopter—if you—again, the cost, the unit price for each helicopter is roughly TT \$85 million. The taxpayers—we are paying US \$85 million for each helicopter. So whereas we should have been paying about \$400 million-odd for four helicopters, the taxpayers, and we now have to pay over \$2,000 million. Why? For training, and maintenance, which is the easiest word for kickback.

Madam Deputy Speaker, \$1,400 million to teach people how to fly a helicopter; to teach people how to fly a helicopter. That is the contract we have. So we have to spend five years for a person to look to fly a helicopter. In addition to which, Madam Deputy Speaker—Madam Deputy Speaker, as we continue, we speak about the helicopters. This is a military helicopter but some person, with the bright notion, decided to give the helicopters civil registration; which meant that during the blackout, we could not use the helicopters, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have situations where we cannot use the helicopter as effectively as we could because somebody with the bright idea decided to give it a civilian status. So that the helicopters now cannot be as effective as they can. So which—because—the reason, Madam Deputy Speaker, because somebody locked us into a contract that put us in this situation, that we now have to spend over \$1,400 million dollars to fly a helicopter.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not a United Arab Emirates 777-800. This is “ah” helicopter. This is not an F-18 Fighter Jet. An F-18 Fighter Jet, in fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, that can take out every military installation from Trinidad go all the way up to Bahamas, cost US \$60 million; but we are paying US \$85 million for helicopters that we cannot use as much as we should.

Miss Mc Donald: Talk about your policy “nah”. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, again, again, again, Madam Deputy Speaker, it has to go immediately, immediately, Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] immediately with—listen to the question Madam—the Motion—the mishandling of security systems. We did not mishandle.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Have your seat. Members, I have been tolerating you for a while. And the time has come that I have to ask Members, on both sides, to please allow the hon. Minister of National Security to speak in silence, because I want to hear him if you do not want to hear him. Minister of National Security, you may continue.

Mr. Imbert: But you did not want to hear me. But she did not want to hear me.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam, it is—thank you very much. “Way yuh going?”

Mr. Imbert: She did not want to hear me. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Madam Deputy Speaker, and again, the reason I am bringing this forward, it is for too long, every time they speak about OPV, I will educate the country and let them know—do not be fooled—because again it goes right back to cost benefit analysis. Of course, three OPVs could have been beneficial. Well then let us buy a battleship; let us buy an aircraft carrier. Why three OPVs?

Let anybody here explain to me, based on area of responsibility and threat assessment and your exclusive economic zone, why three and not five? Why a 90-metre vessel and not a 120 or “ah” 80. Let anybody here try to challenge me on that. I will debate you on this twice a day and three times on Sundays, because you have no knowledge. But we went in with it and we were told three OPVs, and people [*Crosstalk*] are just buying into this, three OPVs. Well, tell us, why three OPVs? Why not five? Why not one? Why 90 metres? Why not 120? Why not 60? Why not more coastal patrol vessels? “You know why?” Because somebody said “aye, I want to be like this, when Obama pulls up I want to show three ah these vessels out in de waters”.

The Prime Minister will not—the Prime Minister is—this Prime Minister is not going to be wasting money. What she is going to do is to ensure that we have proper management; we have leadership, management, accountability and measure performance. And anything that is purchased in national security, we will make sure, based on cost benefit analysis, we will get the right thing for our dollar. [*Desk thumping*]

So now, now that I have shown that we did not mishandle assets, what happened is that the items were not effective. And again, if it is that these things were so great, so effective, why it is that the murder rate was 548 at that time?

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Why it is that we had 22,162 serious crimes in that period, if it was so great? So what we need to do, so they are asking us about what are we doing. So let us tell “yuh”. I will tell you now, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I have shown that the Austal vessels—lemons. We purchased helicopters \$1,400 million more than we should. We purchased OPVs—we wanted to purchase OPVs when it is we have now found out that we could get the same things at \$400 million less by three.

We wanted to purchase—purchased interceptors, Madam Deputy Speaker, interceptors, 16 of them. They are all down. Speak to anyone in the coast guard. They bought the wrong type of interceptors. They bought the wrong type of coastal patrol vessels. They bought a blimp. They bought four helicopters at \$1,400 million more than the regular price and they have the—and that—at the end of the day, they are looking at what we are doing and saying that if “we get in government, we going to bring back the SAUTT and bring back the OPV and bring back the blimp”. So that is your crime plan? To bring back items that were not effective, but defective?

4.15 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so what do we intend to do? Let us look at the Special Anti-Crime Unit. The Special Anti-Crime Unit, as I said, instead of that, what we need is a national operation centre, which is something that is used worldwide, bringing agencies together, not forming an agency to compete with the police service, not trying to undermine them and destroy their morale and to take intelligence assets and not work with the Commissioner of Police. The Commissioner of Police saw the blimp for the first time when it came over Trinidad and Tobago. He was not involved.

What we are doing, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that each and every asset that we acquire for national security, we get the stakeholders involved. So whereas people will just sit down in an air-conditioned room in whatever ministry and purchase OPVs and purchase blimps and not speak to the law enforcement agencies, what we are doing, we are getting the people involved. So any longshore patrol vessel we buy, the coast guard will have involvement. Any interceptor that we purchase, it will be the defence force and the coast guard. Any helicopter, the air guard will be involved. If it is we are purchasing UAVs, “we listening tuh ah blimp?”

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the 21st Century. An unmanned aerial vehicle is more effective, it has more real time video footage that can be passed on to the ground for immediate operational results. The blimp did not have that! The blimp

was just there. It was cosmetic and I am not into cosmetics, nor is this Government. What we are doing is effective national security policies and not crime plans.

So the national operations centre, before the establishment of this, Trinidad and Tobago possessed a fair amount of technological assets, all operating in silos. So one hand did not know what the other was doing and because of that there was nothing effective. There was no effective integration, which led to different arms not cooperating or sharing information effectively. For example, we would have a situation where the helicopters will have a video footage of something and before it is too late, the police service would not be able to get the information. The radar will pick up something and the coast guard will not be able to get the information. So what we are having now is real time information.

The reason I could tell you that is now that we have this effective system, it is the first time that we are getting real time video footage in police vehicles and coast guard vessels, on the helicopters, all being fed in real time into a central command unit to ensure that one arm will be able to know what the other is doing in real time and that is national security, not fancy blimps, not an OPV without a link, not defective vessels. What we are doing, Madam Deputy Speaker, is we are dealing with crime, again from a system of measuring performance and putting accountable measures, to ensure that everything we purchase, it will be effective.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so, with the national operations centre we have representatives from each arm of the law enforcement agencies: police, fire, prisons, army, coast guard, the air guard, immigration, customs. So with this now, if at any time intelligence is then brought forward to the national operations centre, information is then given to those agencies, so that they can work together for an immediate operation. That is what was not—SAUTT did not do that, Madam Deputy Speaker. What SAUTT did was to take away the motivation of the law enforcement agencies and because of that, that is what caused the problem with SAUTT.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I move along, I heard a lot about what the Prime Minister said, that we had a hand. Madam Deputy Speaker, let me state here, at no time did the Prime Minister say that. I was next to the Prime Minister when she spoke to the media. At no time did the Prime Minister say that we had a hand in this situation with this \$644 million drug bust. And at no time did I say that we had a hand. Because—I challenge anyone to show me—do not come and tell about what you read on the newspaper. Let us talk fact—the contradiction, this is the same Minister of National Security that I have continued to say that I

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have no intention for us to make any statement about this investigation.

Hon. Member: Correct. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: So how could I say that but then after boast about the fact that we had a hand? Because we are fully aware of what is required. What it is I said, and I will take an extract here, of the importance of intelligence gathering and working with our international intelligence allies, which we never had before.

Certain people had a problem with the United States, with the United Kingdom, with other agencies and what we have done is bridge that gap, bring it together. We had a security cooperation agreement in 2005 and 2008, with Venezuela and Colombia. That went dormant, Madam Deputy Speaker. In the last few months, both countries now and us, we are working hand in hand. We are sharing information and that is the point I made—when I listened to the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East—when I said that this is better than 100 OPVs.

Having a million OVPs sailing aimlessly around the ocean without intelligence, it is irrelevant. Intelligence, when he spoke about all the successful factors of what he saw, it had to do with intelligence. But what he is speaking about is lack of intelligence. He saw the importance of actually going around and just having an OPV sail and they do not know where it is they are going to home into and that is the difference, because, again, I could give examples.

During the early hours of the 10th of October, a French naval vessel intercepted a sailing yacht several hundred nautical miles off the West African coast. The yacht and crew members, they were escorted to the French island of Martinique where a systematic search of the yacht uncovered 210 kilogrammes of cocaine. This was based on joint intelligence between the Trinidad and Tobago intelligence agencies, the UK national security agency and the French Customs.

I can also continue, Madam Deputy Speaker, 800 kilogrammes of cocaine seized on a yacht, again, because of our intelligence agencies working hand in hand with the Spanish authorities. So whereas before there was no link, there was no communication, there was no dialogue, no collaboration, what we are doing is liaising with our international intelligence allies, Colombia, Venezuela, Spain, the United Kingdom and that is what we are speaking about, the importance of us working together, sharing information and that is more important than putting 100 OPVs and just sailing around to make us look good.

Madam Deputy Speaker, and again, let us again look at the difference. We are

now acquiring—there were interceptors that were purchased, 16; 16 more lemons, all down. This had nothing to do with—this had to do with bad purchase again because they did not let the relevant experts get involved. This is what we are now doing. We are now acquiring interceptors that would have adequate protection for personnel on board as well as the navigational, communicational and intelligence equipment installed on board, ability to conduct emergency operations and search and rescue missions, the capability to reach and attain the speeds necessary to intercept vessels.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again, if it is that we are looking at all of these fancy gadgets but they had no results. You are looking at purchasing an OPV, a defective OPV, an OPV that cost over \$400 million more than OPVs all over the world. The question we have to ask is: why? What is the reason for this? Why were you so excited to purchase BAE OPVs at a cost of \$400 million more than five other countries we have gone to? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, as we move again. We speak about the detection rate. We keep hearing this call about the detection rate, the detection rate. But, again, let us look at it, the SAUTT, which is the road march song, “SAUTT/OPV, OPV/SAUTT, SAUTT/OPV”. That is their whole game plan; everything. It is a road march “SAUTT/OPV”. What “yuh” intend to solve crime? “SAUTT/OPV, OPV/SAUTT”. What it is? If the rain is going to fall. Who going to win the World Cup? SAUTT/OPV everything for this Opposition is SAUTT/OPV/OPV/SAUTT.” You have got to sort it out. There is more to life. There is more to dealing with a national security framework policy than “SAUTT/OPV” and a blimp and a helicopter that cost over \$1,400 million more. Madam Deputy Speaker, again, so with the SAUTT and the blimp and the defective SIA, all at their finest, the detection rate was 15 per cent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the reason for the detection rate being so low, it has to do, again, with the fact that there is a lack—we do not have an effective crime scene investigation and because we do not have a proper crime scene investigation they said: “well, when it is you shut down SAUTT we had a great CSI”, which, again, it is the same CSI, the same individuals, they are now coming across to the police service.

What is lacking is that human intelligence, that HUMINT and the reason for it is because we need to find mechanisms to get the citizens to feel comfortable to pass on information and not feel intimidated and through this, what we are doing, Madam Deputy Speaker, is having a virtual police officer project where we are now giving citizens that opportunity to pass information on to the agencies. What

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we are also doing is to have proper customer service relations with the law enforcement agencies, so that when citizens speak to them they can feel comfortable, putting systems to have them accountable and to measure their performance for us to weed out the rogue elements in the police service.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so when they say we do not have a plan, I could go on whole day. I could speak about dozens of national security policies but when we ask the Opposition: what is your crime plan? “OPV/SAUTT, SAUTT/OPV, SAUTT/OPV, OPV/SAUTT.” It is a road march. Their whole crime plan, Madam Deputy Speaker, is SAUTT/OPV. But as I said, we are not here for crime plans. We are here for national security policies and that is it. Because, as I said, a national security policy, people do not come with crime plans. We are not—this is not a banana republic Government.

A national security policy has to do with setting a proper framework, setting a foundation, making sure that when we put something in place it is not based on an idea, a hit and hope, a whim and fancy. So you walk into London and you look: Ah, these OPVs look good. You travel to Australia and say: let us purchase these Austals. You go to a World Cup football game and you see a Goodyear blimp and say: this will look good in Trinidad and Tobago. That is not how you deal with national security policies, Madam Deputy Speaker. What you do is you look, you ascertain the threat assessment and then you utilize your limited national security resources in an effective and efficient manner and that is what a national security framework is. So, whereas their concept is SAUTT/OPV and crime plans, what we are doing is putting a national security framework policy, having foundations to ensure that we can then move forward.

And what is very interesting is that what I am speaking about, this is not new. In 2005, the government then had—they started a national security framework policy, which was important and it fell just as the security cooperation agreement with Venezuela and the security cooperation agreement with Colombia in 2005 and 2008. What happened to that security cooperation agreement in 2005? What happened to that security cooperation agreement in 2008? It fell flat. We have now ignited it. We have brought it back and now we have Venezuela and Colombia working with us.

What happened to this national security framework policy that the Opposition, they know about? In 2005, it fell flat because they lost focus. They said: instead of doing this, which is what matters, putting a security policy, a framework, a foundation, so regardless of which Minister sits in the chair of national security, regardless of who is in the National Security Council, regardless of who is in

government, we have a framework and that is what is important and that is why the Vision 2020 could have never worked because it was not a national Vision 2020. It was a political 2020 based on their own ideas. [*Desk thumping*]

So what we have to do now is to make sure that whatever decision is made—because that Vision 2020 had no input from anyone. So their Vision 2020 of what we intend to do to reduce crime—and that is what we do not do. It will involve dialogue and it is hoped that eventually good sense would prevail and I would continue to operate in that manner that we need to have dialogue because the Opposition spoke to us and they gave us certain recommendations that they feel will be important to reduce crime. But again, we cannot work on ideas. You cannot just tell the Government put 100 municipal police officers in each one. No! Why 100? Why not 200? Why not 50? Why not more in some than others? And that is the point. We cannot work on ideas but the only way we could work on this is by communication.

So when the Opposition says I am taking my marbles and I am going home and I refuse to communicate with you and work with you, who is going to suffer? It is not us. It is not you. It is the people who put us here and we do not care about it because all we see about is: listen, if we do this we want to make sure we get as many political Brownie points as possible and that shows that is childish, Madam Deputy Speaker because we are not here to stay in Government you know. We are here to serve people and once we do that we would stay in Government. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is the difference. If people end up in government and—[*Interruption*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, I would like your undivided attention. [*Crosstalk*] I would like your undivided attention.

Hon. Members, with your leave, I would like to revert to an item of announcement. I have received communication from the Hon. Vernella Alleyne-Toppin, Member of Parliament for Tobago East, who has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Planning (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to February 07, 2014, at 1.30 p.m., and to serve notice it is the intention of the Government to debate two Bills; Bill No. 3 on the Order Paper: An Act to

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amend the Dog Control Act, 2013 and Bill No. 4: An Act to amend the Nurses and Midwives Registration Act, Chap. 29:53. Also, it is the intention of the Government to consider the amendments to the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013 to consider those amendments coming from the other place.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, before I put the question on the Motion for the Adjournment, I wish to inform Members that there are two matters filed by the Member for Diego Martin North/East that qualify to be raised on the Adjournment when this House resumes sitting.

At this time it is a fine time to have some tea. The sitting is now suspended to 5.00 p.m.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, before I ask the Minister of National Security to continue—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: No, no.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East. Any one. Any one, bring any one.

**Commissioner of Police
(Legislative Arrangements)**

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Member: Do the two in one.

Mr. Sharma: Yeah, best you take both. Just take both.

Mr. C. Imbert: Madam Deputy—how would I take both? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “Oh gawd”, you have experience. You have what it takes.

Hon. Member: Which one are you dealing with?

Mr. C. Imbert: Whichever one you want. I will do the Commissioner of Police, all right. I will do the need to revisit the legislative arrangements for the police service.

Mr. Sharma: And we agree with you.

Mr. C. Imbert: Right. Good. Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Laughter*] in 2006, the Parliament amended the Constitution to make [*Interruption*] Madam, Deputy Speaker, you know, come on. No, no, seriously, you need to tell them stop talking. [*Continuous crosstalk*] Madam Deputy Speaker, I am asking you to tell them stop talking.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Silence. Yes, I did. Allow the Member to speak in silence, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, this matter deals with the need to revisit the legislative arrangements for the police service. In 2006 the Parliament amended the Constitution to make special provision for the selection of a Police Service Commission, and the selection of a Commissioner of Police. Prior to that—and these legislative arrangements were as a result of a bipartisan committee formed by the then Government and the then Opposition, who came up with the legislative proposals, which were concluded with the Police Service Act, 2006, the Constitution (Amdt.) Act, 2006, and the Police Complaints Authority Act, 2006.

One of the more important features of that legislative process was the removal of the Prime Minister's veto over the selection of a Commissioner of Police. Now, prior to that the Prime Minister's veto had been severely criticized, and as a consequence of those legislative arrangements, Legal Supplement Part B—Vol. 48 was published in 2009. And it deals with the selection process for the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Section 3 of that Order states that:

- “(a) the Director of Personnel Administration shall, in accordance with section 20A(1)(c) of the Central Tenders Board Act, contract a firm experienced in conducting assessments of senior police managers to conduct an assessment process and the firm so contracted...shall consult with the Commission upon the completion of each stage of the process;
- (b) the Firm shall advertise each vacancy...; and
- (c) an applicant shall apply on the form specified...and
- (e) the Firm shall select, from the applications received, the most suitable candidates for the assessment process;”

Then after the assessment exercise:

- “(h) the Firm shall submit to the Commission—

- (i) the results of its assessment process...”

And this then ends up in the Parliament in terms of an order of merit list, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So this Order of 2009 was as a result of a bipartisan approach to the reform of the police service entered into by the then PNM Government and the then Opposition, UNC. One of the problems with a bipartisan approach is that you have to compromise, and because the UNC was adamant on certain provisions, we ended up with a system that is not effective, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What has happened? What has happened? In the past, the former Commissioner of Police, Philbert, continuously got six-month acting appointments, yes, for several years, and that is a matter of fact, in 2008, 2009, 2010 and so on. At the time the idea that the Parliament had gone through a process to improve and reform the police service, including the very important job of appointing a Commissioner of Police; in view of that fact, the several acting appointments and extensions given to Mr. Philbert was severely criticized by the then Opposition, UNC. And they were criticized because it was felt that if somebody is acting as Commissioner of Police, he would not command the respect of the men under his supervision, and that that person would not be stable in their employment, because there would be a lot of anxiety in terms of whether they are going to be confirmed or not. The UNC condemned the several acting appointments of Commissioner Philbert.

Now, let us see what has happened when the UNC came into power. The Order of Merit List, the process that I read out for recruitment was finalized in 2010, an Order of Merit List was sent to the Parliament, and Mr. Gibbs was appointed as Commissioner of Police. At the time we had reservations, we felt that he was not the best man for the job, but the UNC Government used its majority and voted for Mr. Gibbs. Mr. Gibbs became the Commissioner of Police.

5.10 p.m.

What happened after that? July 2012, just two and a half years later, both Mr. Gibbs and his deputy, Mr. Ewatski quit, with more than a year to go of their three-year contracts, under very strange circumstances. It was obvious that there was dissatisfaction with the way this pair was managing the police service. And there is a strong belief—and I also believe it to be true—that they were forced to quit because they gave no reasons for their retirement. They had a year to go in their contracts, and they suddenly just dropped out of sight.

What happened then? The Police Service Commission, exercising some rule of law called the doctrine of necessity—because it is not written anywhere—appointed Mr. Stephen Williams as the Acting Commissioner of Police—that is July 2012—and gave him a six-month acting appointment. And what happened in 2013? They gave him another six-month acting appointment, and they did that twice, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So we have a situation from July 2012 to now where Mr. Williams has been given three acting appointments. We have ended up in exactly the same situation that the UNC-Opposition condemned when they were in Opposition, and then we have an Attorney General telling us that it is a good thing that a man should always be acting because he will always be uneasy and worried about his job and, therefore, will perform at his best. All of that is nonsense, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What I find particularly horrendous—and I would like the Minister to tell us what is going on—is an article that I saw, two articles: an article in 2012 after a recruitment process that cost the country \$3 million, the search for a new commissioner goes back to square one. This is 2012 “eh”. So the process of selecting a firm, advertising for suitable applicants, assessing them, interviewing them, recommending them to Parliament, started all over again in July 2012, Madam Deputy Speaker—July 2012, December 2012, July 2013, December 2013.

What have we been told recently, Madam Deputy Speaker? There was a news report, not too long ago, that after 18 months—between July 2012 and January 2014—the Director of Personnel Administration has been unable to select a firm. They have to go all the way back to square one. So 18 months have been wasted between July 2012 and January 2014. The Government is nowhere nearer to selecting or recruiting a Commissioner of Police, and under the present system for the appointment of a Commissioner of Police, it could take another year; it could take another two years; it could take another three years.

This Government has been in power for four years. They saw what happened with the arrangements that were put into law in 2006. They have seen what has happened over the last 18 months. We have had a situation where we have had an Acting Commissioner of Police with all the attendant adverse consequences that go with that for the last 18 months, and we have seen an admission from the Government that the process has failed. They have to start all over again, so it could be another 18 months to two years before we are in a position as a Parliament to deliberate on the person who should be Commissioner of Police.

This is an untenable situation, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would hope to hear something from the Minister today that they are going to be proactive. They have been in power for almost four years; they have seen the failure of the system under their administration between July 2012 and January 2014.

If the police service does not have a fully functional permanent Commissioner of Police at its head, there will be no morale in the police service, and our crime-fighting capability as a country, will be severely adversely affected, and I am sure the Minister will agree with me. “Doh matter what de the AG say”. The Attorney General has a tendency to shoot off his mouth, and to speak about things about which he knows nothing. If he had spoken to the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: 36(5); 36(5).

Mr. C. Imbert:—if he had spoken to the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, he could have got a lecture on the adverse consequences of keeping people in acting positions. I mean trade unions go on strike for this, and have gone on strike in Trinidad and Tobago for many, many years because of people being in acting positions for years, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago cannot continue with this. It is necessary for the Government to come to Parliament, speak to the Opposition, let us sit down and work out new arrangements for the appointment of a Commissioner of Police.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am getting a bad feeling too, that this Government does not want Mr. Williams to be Commissioner of Police, and this is why they are prolonging this process. [*Crosstalk*] And now I am hearing the Leader of Government Business blaming the Service Commission, but the Government has been elected to run the country. [*Crosstalk*] You cannot blame nameless, faceless public servants. Crime is the number one problem in this country. I am calling on the Government to meet with the Opposition; revisit the legislative arrangements for the appointment of a Commissioner of Police; appoint a permanent police commissioner—allow the system to appoint a permanent police commissioner, a fair and transparent process; bring morale back to the police service; allow the person who is at the head to have command and control over the men under his supervision; and allow the police service to get the tools that they need to fight crime.

This is a joint effort, Madam Deputy Speaker. We cannot go on like this. We cannot have another acting appointment for the Commissioner of Police six months from now, while the rumours swirl around that the person who is in the post is looking for a job in the United Nations because he realizes that he does not have the favour of the present administration. That is a rumour swirling around. You cannot have the men subordinate to the present acting commissioner—another rumour going around is that they are undercutting him and undermining him, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of the police service. This has to stop. So I would like to hear what the Minister of National Security intends to do about this flawed recruitment process for a Commissioner of Police. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would not want to waste much time in trying to challenge or question the statement by the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East. [*Crosstalk*] I think this Motion, in fact, was long overdue. I think we can all agree that the present process is flawed, and we need to rectify it. [*Crosstalk*] What I just want to clarify, however, Madam Deputy Speaker, before I go into—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “And remind dem they refused Stephen Williams eh.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Madam Deputy Speaker, the current management structure within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is managed by an executive, led by the Commissioner of Police, who is supported by three Deputy Commissioners and 11 Assistant Commissioners of Police, and these officers are all First Division Officers responsible for policy formation.

The commissioner is also supported by civilian heads: persons in the area of information technology, administration, human resource, finance and accounting and planning. So this gives the Commissioner of Police a lot of responsibility. So for someone to have all of this responsibility, he needs that authority and recognition which makes it important that the person needs to be a substantive Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Imbert: It should be confirmed! At least you have sense.

Mr. Sharma: Oh God, you talk already.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: However, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just would

like to clarify, in the meantime, the role and function or the powers of the Commissioner of Police as stated in the Constitution (Amdt.) Act, 2006. It states that:

“...the Commissioner...shall have the complete power to manage the Police Service and is required to ensure that the human, financial and material resources available to the Service are used in an efficient and effective manner.”

As much as it is true that we need to get this thing right, in the meantime, it is not going to be and should not be an excuse for non-performance because the exact role and function and authority that the substantive Commissioner of Police has, the person who acts in the appointment has the same authority. Now, this is not in any way for me to justify the present situation. This is just to say that the Acting Commissioner of Police has been doing his job, and he has not let this situation affect him, which is a sign of good leadership.

I can look at the importance for persons who hold the positions in law enforcement to be substantive. We can refer to the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. For the last 50 years, there has never been a time where the defence force has been in a situation that we have seen the police service in for the last several years, and this has started, again, when the Opposition was then in government, and they are the ones that led the race, and the Opposition worked with them.

But the fact of the matter is that in the defence force, as soon as the person is about to leave, you automatically hand over that baton the very next day, so at no time the defence force will have a situation like what the police is in. It started with Brig. General Joffre Serrette, and then it moved to Commodore Mervyn Williams, then moved to Brig. General Joseph Theodore, Major General Ralph Brown, Brig. General Carl Alfonso, Commodore Franklin, Brig. General John Sandy, Brig. General Ancil Antoine, followed by Major General Edmund Dillon, Brig. General Roland Maundy and now Major General Kenrick Maharaj. So we are seeing about 10 or 11 times, they have never dropped the baton because they have the structure in place, and I think it is fair for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service—those 8,000 police officers—to have the same situation where they always know who their leader is.

The process for the appointment of the Commissioner of Police, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is eight specific steps. And if I could just clarify, step one starts with the Legal Notice 102 that provides for the Director of Personnel Administration, in accordance with section 20A(1)(c) of the Central Tenders

Board Act, to contract NIPDEC to advertise for an appropriate firm to conduct the recruitment, and the madness starts from here. If this goes according to plan, we then move to step two, where firms both local and foreign, will then apply to NIPDEC and are then screened and one is selected.

Step three then goes to—the selected firm then advertises for applicants for the post of Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Moving on to step 4, if all goes according to plan, the appropriate screening is then conducted by the firm, and a shortlist of not more than five of the highest graded candidates is then sent to the Police Service Commission. So the Police Service Commission they do not kick in until we reach to step five, and the commission then reviews the list and takes into account all the information, and thereafter establishes an Order of Merit.

Then going into step six, with the highest graded candidate, it is then sent to the commission to Parliament through the President. Step seven, the Lower House. So the Lower House here has no involvement until step seven. The reason I want to bring this, Madam Deputy Speaker, it has to do with a statement that was made a week or two ago, right here, when the Government was accused of planning to appoint someone as the Commissioner of Police—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Recklessness again!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—but that appointment, Madam Deputy Speaker, is in contrast to what was just said because the Lower House does not get in until step seven. [*Desk thumping*] So if it is until step seven, how could the Lower House bypass steps one, two, three, four, five, six to then deliberately try to appoint a Commissioner of Police? Because the Commissioner of Police is appointed by the Police Service Commission in accordance with section 123 of the Constitution, stating that the Police Service Commission shall submit to the President a list of names. The point being, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that this amended police service legal framework, it removes—because the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East actually said it. What he said was in contrast to what was said two weeks ago. He actually said that it removed the Prime Minister's veto for appointment of the Commissioner of Police. So by saying that, how two weeks ago we can say that there was a plan by the Government to appoint someone to be the Commissioner of Police? There is a contrast there, and it cannot happen.

So the good of this, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the Government cannot manipulate the appointment—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Ramdharsingh: Educate them! Educate them!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: The bad to it is that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is now being affected because they do not have a substantive Commissioner of Police, and I think we need to get it right.

Dr. Ramdharsingh: “Educate them, yuh going good.”

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Madam Deputy Speaker, however, the recommendations from a multi-sectorial review team stated that the present status is cumbersome and unduly expensive; that is for the appointment of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police. And going back to the steps, Madam Deputy Speaker, because of this situation, they have been unable to find a suitable company to do this.

So after 18 months, we are back at step one, and this is no fault of anyone here, but based on the present situation and because of this now, Madam Deputy Speaker, as the multi-sectorial review team has stated, it being cumbersome and unduly expensive, a recommendation by this multi-sectorial review team has stated that the selection process for the offices of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police should be changed to give the jurisdiction to select and appoint persons in these two offices. It will eliminate the roles played by the DPA and the firm thereby simplifying the procedure.

The PSC will then be the body mandated to advertise and prepare the shortlist and then forward it to the President. Consequently, the committee noted that the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police Order 2009, which deals with the selection process for these posts, would have to be repealed when the Constitution (Amdt.) to sections 123, comes into force.

Madam Deputy Speaker, undoubtedly the police service is not without its challenges. There are legislative challenges, and they continue to perform. However, I think it is important that we get this thing right. It was a bipartisan approach that caused this situation, and I think it will require a bipartisan approach for us to get it right, and it is strongly recommended that we get it right as quickly as possible. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

5.25 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Procurement Legislation
(Progress of)**

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] We shall see. We shall see. Talk is cheap. Madam Deputy Speaker, the next Motion [*Crosstalk*] deals with a similar matter. [*Crosstalk*] What stupidity. Madam Deputy Speaker, the entire Government Bench is shouting. I ask for your protection. I notice that you want to protect them.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, that is an unkind thing—that is a very unkind thing to say, hon. Member. Members, I want to ask you to allow the Member for Diego Martin North/East to speak in silence.

Mr. C. Imbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, as soon as you gave them that warning they start to talk again. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I want to ask you to address the Chair, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is all very well to address the Chair, but could you quieten down the Chamber. I am asking you to quieten down the Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker. Could you quieten down the Chamber, please?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members, I want to ask you, please, to allow the Member for Diego Martin North/East to speak in silence.

Mr. C. Imbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, this Parliament is going downhill if Members feel they could just talk like that.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am reading from a *Guardian* article, dated December 13, 2011, and this article is headlined: “Tewarie Promises draft procurement legislation by 2012”. Madam Deputy Speaker, this Parliament went through a long and elaborate exercise in 2010, 2011 and 2012 with respect to the form that new procurement legislation should take.

The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development came to the Parliament with the report of the Joint Select Committee—it would seem to me that that was over a year ago, Madam Deputy Speaker—and at that time the promise was that we would have new procurement laws enacted in Trinidad and Tobago within a three-month period.

The situation is best summed up by a *Guardian* editorial, dated June 29, 2013, and it reads as follows:

“It is lamentable that more than three years after it was elected, the Government has been unable to bring new legislation on procurement to Parliament. The fact is that the People’s Partnership administration was elected on an anti-corruption platform in which it called, in every corner of this land, for greater accountability and transparency in the conduct of the State’s business.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, I could give so many examples of corruption at the Estate Management Development Company, corruption at National Quarries, corruption in almost every state enterprise under this administration, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the fact of the matter is the way one deals with these issues is enacting proper procurement legislation. The editorial went on to say:

“The parties in power were given an overwhelming mandate by the population partly because it was fed up with the previous administration’s failure to implement procurement reform...For decades now, the issue of procurement has been a burning issue for”—Trinidad and Tobago—

“It is widely acknowledged that the current procurement regime is partly responsible for a system in which friends and financiers of the party in power are given preferential treatment in the award of government contracts: friends and financiers receive contracts even though their bids are not the lowest and their competitors have more experience, greater access to technology and a better track record of completing projects on time...

It is widely acknowledged...that the current procurement regime—which centres on the Central Tenders Board—has outlived its usefulness...

Every opposition party in”—Trinidad and Tobago’s—“post-Independence history has accused the party in power of corruption and has promised to update the legislation and introduce a framework of transparency that would ensure the State gets value for...money...However,”—

And so said, so done, with this Government, just like the coffin man.

“once the opposition party forms the government, issues of procurement reform fall by the wayside, with the resumption of the status quo where government officials feed at the trough as state officials take...advantage of loopholes and lack of proper monitoring.”

This is June 29, Madam Deputy Speaker, six months ago:

“In Parliament yesterday, responding to an Opposition motion expressing disapproval of the Government’s failure to implement procurement reform, Planning Minister Dr Bhoë Tewarie said the legislation was in ‘process’ and he expected to table it ‘soon.’ Having failed to achieve at least two firm promises in the past, Dr Tewarie...has learnt to avoid committing the Government to a date on this issue.

But he must know that the population’s cynicism and disenchantment on this issue is growing every day the country is left without the protection of new procurement laws.”

I also have an article from the *Newsday*, Madam Deputy Speaker, Saturday, March 09, 2013:

“Procurement legislation, which had been in the works since Government came to power in 2010”—this is three years after they come into power—“would be tabled in Parliament by April, stated Errol McLeod in his capacity as acting Prime Minister.”

So the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre in March of 2013, Madam Deputy Speaker, nearly one year ago, gave a commitment in his capacity as acting Prime Minister that new procurement legislation would be tabled in Parliament in April 2013. Well April came and went—May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December; we are now in January 2014 and there is not a sign of this new procurement legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I anxiously await the statements to be made by the Minister. I have noticed in the interim that the contractors have condemned some proposals. I do not know how they saw them. I mean, certainly we on this side have not seen them, so I do not know where these proposals are. Are they circulating in the ethos somewhere? But if I read from an article dated November 11, 2013, it reads as follows:

“THE Legislative Review Committee’s...‘present hodgepodge proposal’ on Public Procurement...needs to be replaced ‘before it becomes an embarrassment to the nation,’ says President of the TT Contractors Association...Christopher Garcia.”

November 2013, the contractors are complaining about some hodgepodge proposal which they have seen which appears to be a secret.

So the current Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development promised

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[MR. IMBERT]

Friday, January 31, 2014

this Parliament, on at least two previous occasions, that within a short period of time we would have legislation that would stop what has been described as “feeding at the trough” by friends and family members of Government officials. Twice the Minister has promised it, the acting Prime Minister promised it, the substantive Prime Minister promised it; the way this Government is going, they will go out of office without enacting efficient and improved transparent procurement legislation.

I hear the Member for Oropouche East saying, we will do it. You see the flippancy, the superficiality, as something like this, Madam Deputy Speaker. The last article I will quote is an article dated June 26, 2010, just one month after this Government was elected, and it states as follows:

“The People’s Partnership Government yesterday kept its campaign promise to place public procurement legislation high on its legislative agenda. As the House of Representatives adjourned yesterday, Government Chief Whip”—well that is Leader of Government Business—“Dr. Roodal Moonilal advised MPs that Government will treat with legislative proposals to deal with public procurement...when it next sits on July 2.”—2010.

2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and in 2013, what we are hearing from Government officials is that “it in progress and it coming soon”.

I would ask the Minister, please do not tell me that “it is a work in progress and it coming soon”. Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I notice that the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East is very impatient about the progress of the procurement legislation, but I think when you look at the history, which I will not today, you will see that under the administration before, the procurement reform process never ever got to the legislative stage, and was stalled always at the White Paper stage.

The commitments and promises made by myself, and if I can also speak for the hon. Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development when he made the commitment, would have been made in very, very good faith because the intention was always to bring this legislation to Parliament as quickly as

possible. It was a commitment and we were always committed to it. I would not also go through the history of the committee of Parliament, and what transpired to prolong the entire process. It really is not necessary, but I would say this. The Government did in fact, following the agreement in Parliament on the Joint Select Committee Report, proceeded expeditiously to the Legislative Review Committee stage and with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel to have the legislation prepared. And in fact, the legislation did make its way to Cabinet, it did make its way to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and it was sent back to the Legislative Review Committee.

I want to say that it was not a matter of secret or giving information to the private sector organizations, we had made commitments by verbal exchange and by written exchange that we would keep the private sector Civil Society Organization in the loop, and we did involve them in the process prior to bringing the Bill in Parliament. At one point there was a very shrill cry to withdraw the Bill, altogether, and there were various positions articulated in the newspaper calling for its withdrawal, et cetera. Of course, I took the reasonable path and I engaged the parties, and created the conditions in which we could agree on a way forward.

5.40 p.m.

I had to go through the same kind of process in the Joint Select Committee which I chaired, and always it was a question of trying to be reasonable and trying to get Members to cooperate and trying to get Members to do the work of the Parliament.

In this particular stage, when we were engaged with the private sector/civil society group and we had the shrill cry from the JCC, what we tried again to do was to get things back on the rail and to get to the point where we could, in fact, bring the legislation to Parliament.

So after that initial position of asking that we withdraw the Bill, we began an engagement with the private sector/civil society group and we took—*[Interruption]*—it has not reached the Parliament yet.

Mr. Imbert: So you are talking to them, not us.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: So we engaged them because it is reasonable for civil society to be involved in the process, and they have made contributions to the Joint Select Committee during the period. What we are doing now is that

we are at the point where—I would not want to upset my hon. colleague by saying very soon—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Say next week. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie: I do not want to give a date because it has turned out to be very difficult, once you give a commitment. [*Crosstalk*] But very soon it will be through the legislative review process, and we have made a commitment to engage the civil society/private sector group and to give them sight of the legislation. They have since made proposals to us on five items, having had the benefit of the last draft of the legislation. We have taken those issues into account and we are proceeding, as expeditiously as we can, to bring this to conclusion.

There are two very important things that I need to mention, in managing the outcome in terms of getting this Bill to Parliament. The first was to establish a policy which not only the Government agreed to, but that the parliamentary committee also agreed to, and we were able to achieve that. The hon. Member was part of that committee and he contributed positively to that process.

The second thing is that once we had the policy, and the report from the Joint Select Committee was completed, we had to ensure that the legislation conformed with the policy direction that we had agreed to in the Parliament—through the parliamentary process. Therefore, that was a second commitment that we wished to honour.

The third issue that we are trying to honour now is to keep good faith with the private sector/civil society group, which has a major interest in this matter. So we must now marry the adherence to the policy positions that we agreed to, to the idea of satisfying some of the concerns of the private sector/civil society group.

That does not mean to say that we will capitulate on every issue, and it does not mean to say that we will ignore entirely what people have advocated. What we will do—and we have made a commitment to that effect, and the Chairman of the Legislative Review Committee has agreed—once the legislative review process is completed, we will provide a copy to the private sector/civil society group and engage them at the level of the LRC, explaining the rationale behind what we chose to include and what we did not, and why. And we will engage them in that way.

They may not be happy at the end of the day, or they may be cautiously responsive, or they may be very happy at what we did. But the end result is that by the time that situation is completed, we will have satisfied the requirements for good policy governing procurement legislation in this country. We will have satisfied the fact that the Bill adheres strictly to the policy that we agreed to jointly in this Parliament, and we will also satisfy, at least, the concerns of the private sector/civil society group, which has really taken a strong advocacy position on this particular issue and this particular Bill. When we bring it to Parliament, we will leave it for three weeks, at least, for public comment and, therefore, ensure that we have a very, very transparent process in bringing legislation on procurement to Parliament.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to close by saying that I hope when we bring this Bill to Parliament, that the Opposition will find it possible to support the Bill.

Thank you very much. [*Crosstalk*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.46 p.m.