



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

# Debates of the House of Representatives

---

4th Session – 10th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 20 – Number 2

---

**OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK  
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN  
DEPUTY SPEAKER

**Friday 6th September, 2013**

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE: JACQUI SAMPSON-MEIGUEL**

**EDITOR: KATHLEEN MOHAMMED**  
Telephone: 623-4494

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



## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
LEAVE OF ABSENCE ... ..	21
INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS [ <i>Madam Deputy Speaker</i> ] ... ..	21
PAPERS LAID ... ..	23
ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS	
[ <i>Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal</i> ] ... ..	25
Eden Gardens Property (Details of)	
[ <i>Deferred</i> ] ... ..	25
Aircraft by CAL (Details of)	
[ <i>Deferred</i> ] ... ..	26
CAL London Route (Details of)	
[ <i>Deferred</i> ] ... ..	27
MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL, 2013	
[ <i>Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan</i> ]	
First Reading ... ..	27
Second Reading ... ..	28
... ..	151
Committee ... ..	332
Third Reading ... ..	337
POSTPONEMENT OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS (CLARIFICATION OF)	
[ <i>Hon. Dr. K. Rowley</i> ] ... ..	27



*Leave of Absence**Friday, September 06, 2013***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, September 06, 2013*

**The Procedural Clerk:** Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 5, I wish to advise that the Speaker is unavoidably absent from today's sitting. Accordingly, the Deputy Speaker is required to take the Chair.

The House met at 10.30 a.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members: Mr. Patrick Manning, Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, is seeking additional leave for a period of 42 days with effect from August 18, 2013. This request was accompanied by a medical certificate from the specialist medical officer who has been assigned as the health-care provider for Mr. Manning since his return to Trinidad and Tobago on July 31, 2012; hon. Stacy Roopnarine, Member of Parliament for Oropouche West, has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House; hon. Rodger Samuel, Member of Parliament for Arima is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

**INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS**

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, during the recess period the Parliament received greetings from the Canadian Parliament and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I will now read those greetings into the parliamentary record.

“August 31, 2013

Senator the Honourable Timothy Hamel-Smith  
President of the Senate...

The Honourable  
Wade Mark, M.P.  
Speaker of the  
House...

*Independence Anniversary Greetings*  
[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Senate and the House of Commons, it is our pleasure to offer our best wishes to you and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as you celebrate your National Day.

As presiding officers, we encourage parliamentary cooperation and exchanges which strengthen the bonds between institutions and between nations. Successful parliamentary diplomacy also involves sharing ideas and experiences as we work toward a common goal of peace and prosperity for all.

Please accept the assurance of our highest consideration on this important day, as you and the people of your country take pride in your past accomplishments and look forward to a promising future.

Yours sincerely,

Noël A. Kinsella  
Speaker of the Senate

Andrew Scheer  
Speaker of the House of  
Commons”

“Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

16 August, 2013.

Hon. Wade Mark, MP  
Speaker of the House...

Hon. Speaker,

Re: On the Occasion of the 51<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Independence of Trinidad and Tobago.

On the occasion of your country’s 51st Independence Anniversary, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association extends congratulations and best wishes for a safe and joyous Independence Anniversary.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I wish the country and all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, stability and ever growing prosperity.

*Independence Anniversary Greetings*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Hon. Speaker, please accept our best wishes for your good health.

Yours sincerely,

Dr William F. Shija  
Secretary-General”

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Consolidated Financial Statements of the Business Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2011. [*The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
2. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
3. Annual Audited Financial Statements of Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
4. Annual Audited Financial Statements of Caroni (1975) Limited for the year ended June 30, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
5. Annual Financial Statements of First Citizens Holdings Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
6. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the Taurus Services Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2009. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
7. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

*Papers 1 to 7 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

8. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Eastern Regional Authority for the year ended September 30, 2010. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
9. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended December 31, 2002. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

*Papers Laid*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

10. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended December 31, 2003. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
11. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the nine months ended September 30, 2004. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
12. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
13. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended September 30, 2006. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
14. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended September 30, 2007. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
15. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended September 30, 2008. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
16. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended September 30, 2009. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

*Papers 8 to 16 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

17. Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2013. [*The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan)*]
18. Draft White Paper on Local Government Transformation and Modernization 2013. [*Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan*]
19. Criminal Procedure Rules, 2013. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
20. Marriage (Amendment) Order, 2013. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
21. ILO Recommendation No. 202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012. [*The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod)*]



*Papers Laid*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

22. Annual Report of the First Citizens Asset Management for the year 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
23. Annual Report of the First Citizens Investment Services Limited for the year 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
24. Annual Report of the First Citizens Brokerage and Advisory Services Limited for the year 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
25. Notification of His Excellency the President, in respect of the nomination of Mr. Martin Anthony George for appointment as a member of the Police Service Commission. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
26. Notification of His Excellency the President, in respect of the nomination of Mr. Addison Masefield Khan for appointment as a member of the Police Service Commission. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
27. Notification of His Excellency the President, in respect of the nomination of Mrs. Roamar Achat-Saney for appointment as a member of the Police Service Commission. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
28. Notification of His Excellency the President, in respect of the nomination of Dr. James Kenneth Armstrong for appointment as a member of the Police Service Commission. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Madam Deputy Speaker, we just ask that for today, if we can have a postponement of one week for questions No. 1 to No. 3.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Dr. Keith Rowley:*

#### **Eden Gardens Property (Details of)**

1. With respect to the purchase of the Eden Gardens property at Calcutta Road, Couva, could the Minister of Housing and Urban Development state:
  - a) Who were the owners of the property prior to its acquisition by the HDC?
  - b) On what date was the property offered to the HDC by the previous owner?

- c) What was the date of the first valuation obtained by the HDC and what was that figure?
- d) What was the date of the valuation obtained by the Commissioner of Valuations?
- e) How much of the purchase price of \$175 million has been paid?
- f) When was this paid and to whom?
- g) What was the recommended valuation of Linden Scott and Associates for the purchase of this property?
- h) What was the source of the funding which facilitated payment to the previous owners?

**Aircraft by CAL**  
**(Details of)**

2. With respect to the Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL) purchase of “wide-bodied” aircraft to re-establish a London route, could the Minister of Finance and the Economy state:
- a) What is the age of these aircraft, from whom were they purchased and when was the transaction initiated?
  - b) Whether any agent, local or foreign, was involved in the procurement process at any stage?
  - c) If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, what was the extent of the involvement and how much were they paid?
  - d) What was the total cost associated with the purchase of the aircraft?
  - e) What is the total cost associated with the pilot training, storage, reconfiguration, upgrade and other related expenses in order to operate these aircraft?
  - f) How was the transaction financed?
  - g) On what date was the aircraft purchased and when were they put into scheduled service?

**CAL London Route  
(Details of)**

3. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy state:
- a) What is the total cost incurred in relation to “wet-leasing” of aircraft for operation of the London route to date?
  - b) When did Cabinet authorize the expansion of CAL onto the London route?

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL, 2013**

Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, Chap. 25:04, [*The Minister of Works and Infrastructure*]; read the first time.

*Motion made:* That the next stage be taken later in the proceedings. [*Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**POSTPONEMENT OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS  
(CLARIFICATION OF)**

**Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin East*): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of clarification. I observed that the Leader of Government Business asked for a postponement on the answers to questions 1 to 3, for one week. Next week is budget week. Is that an understanding that these questions would be answered during the budget presentation; the days of the budget debate?

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)**: Madam Deputy Speaker, we are prepared to answer those questions at the next sitting. The next sitting would be the budget on Monday. Subsequent to that, the following sitting would be the Friday, when the Leader of the Opposition would speak. If it is agreed with the Leader of the Opposition, we would be prepared to answer the questions next week Friday at 10.00 a.m. prior to his contribution.

**Dr. K. Rowley**: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have a bit of a tradition of not having questions taken on budget week and since we know that next week is all budget week, Monday to Friday, then asking for a deferment of one week is not really practical. So I am asking the leader if he could consider asking for a proper deferral of two weeks.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Then Madam Deputy Speaker, we ask that the questions be deferred for two weeks and certainly immediately after the budget debate.

**MOTOR VEHICLES INSURANCE  
(THIRD-PARTY RISKS) (AMDT.) BILL, 2013**

Bill to amend the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third-Party Risks) Act, Chap. 48:51 [*The Minister of Transport*]; read the first time.

**LIBEL AND DEFAMATION (AMDT.) BILL, 2013**

Bill to amend the Libel and Defamation Act, Chap. 11:16 to abolish the criminal offence of malicious defamatory libel. [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL, 2013**

**The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move:

That a Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, Chap. 25:04, be now read a second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am extremely privileged and in fact delighted to present to this honourable House this particular piece of legislation entitled: the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2013.

For me, and I am sure for significant numbers of persons in this country and those who have always been proponents for a fairer system of representation, the introduction of this Bill will in fact be warmly welcomed and applauded. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are always going to be those who will say that now is not the right time, that we need more time, that we need more dialogue. But, since the 1920s, the idea of proportional representation has been mooted in this country and several commissions have in fact met and spent very long hours, in terms of deliberating on this matter, receiving significant contributions from members of the public, listening to the voices of the citizens and concluded that we do need to re-examine the first-past-the-post system in order to achieve greater participation by the public, in terms of how they are represented, and especially, by members of the public who might be excluded, in terms of representation, simply because of the first-past-the-post system.

**10.45 a.m.**

This attempt here today in the Parliament to introduce a form of proportional representation in the election of aldermen, represents a significant step for the country, and this Parliament, and for us as legislators. But it also is a gentle way of introducing the idea of proportional representation and giving to the citizens the opportunity to examine and experience this at the level of local government. It is, therefore, a historical moment in the political history of our nation in terms of representation, and as alluded, by so many commentators after this announcement was made, it is a deepening and widening of our democracy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the term “participatory democracy” has been used from time to time, to speak about political philosophy. In fact, there is hardly a political party in this country, in this Parliament, or outside of this Parliament that has not used the words participatory democracy as part of its own political philosophy. But with the passing of this amendment, what we will be doing, we will be giving meaning to the term “participatory democracy”, and we will do so with the way we use proportional representation in what is called “the Hare method” in the choice of aldermen for the regional corporations. In other words, what we are doing here today—[Interruption]

**Mr. Imbert:** Is nonsense. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—is making alive and giving real meaning to participatory democracy and a more effective participation of our citizens in the decision-making process and in matters that would affect how decisions are particularly made at the local level.

Local government is about local democracy. Local government should be conducted in a fashion that embraces the ideas and aspirations of every single citizen in a particular regional corporation or local area. We must try as far as humanly possible to ensure that we have systems at the level of regional corporations which ensure the widest level of participation in decision making. Because one of the things that we have to correct in this society, and one of the things that we have to promote in this society is greater citizen commitment to the affairs of their community. We cannot build communities unless citizens feel that they are empowered to contribute to the building of those communities. We cannot build communities if the ideas of citizens are somehow not brought into the domain of decision making. We cannot build communities if, in fact, citizens are not allowed to have their ideas and their vision—whether personal or collective for their communities—brought into the domain of the interest of the greater good.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Madam Deputy Speaker, all of these are important considerations that I am sure we will debate here today and for which the population as a whole would also have comments to make.

I want to say that after 1990, when the Municipal Corporations Act of 1990 was presented and accepted in the Parliament, this is perhaps the most significant amendment that will be legislated in terms of that Act; this amendment. But this amendment is not the only amendment that the Government is interested in. This amendment is an important one in that it signals the intention of the Government to engage in reform of local government. [*Desk thumping*]

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, you would have seen that we presented—laid on the Table today also, the report of the consultations that were conducted across the country, and the White Paper on Local Government Transformation and Modernization 2013, which is a very exciting document, contains a wider package of reforms which, in fact, will transform the way local government is conducted and the way communities are brought into the ambit of participatory democracy and decision making.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this amendment not only deepens participatory democracy, and though limited to how aldermen are to be chosen, it also signals that the Government of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar is prepared to go where administrations in the past have feared to tread; and that is important. [*Desk thumping*] It gives the citizens an opportunity to examine and experience an aspect of governance for which there is real support in Trinidad and Tobago. It is path breaking and has the potential to affect how parliamentary representatives, whether in the Senate or maybe in the House of Representatives, could be chosen and how the Parliament could be constructed in the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are those who would be afraid of it, because one leader had this to say at one point in time following the Wooding Commission, that proportional representation will be like a dagger in the heart of the PNM, but we must not think about things in that selfish mode. [*Laughter*] If we are really citizens interested in building a nation, then we must think about what is the manner for proper representation and true participation and true participatory democracy in the affairs of our country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the decision therefore to introduce this particular amendment is a clear statement by the hon. Prime Minister and the Government, that this Government, this administration, is prepared to introduce change and to lead change in the interest of a more equitable and fairer system of choosing

representatives. The comment has been made by many persons in the society that you voted for change and you want change. This is an example of the Government moving to implement change in a particular area of governance.

But Madam Deputy Speaker, as I am on the point of governance, there are those who question also governance by the administration, but they fail to recognize that the Government has been engaged in important pieces of consultations and legislation that will, in fact, show that it is interested in quality governance. For example, the procurement legislation is going to be brought before the Parliament; the consultations on the Constitution which are being conducted under the aegis of the Minister of Legal Affairs, hon. Prakash Ramadhar, that is coming to a conclusion and a report will soon be presented; the consultations on local government have been concluded after approximately 2,000-plus persons were consulted, apart from organizations and others who sent in papers, [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] and that report has now been laid in the Parliament.

Therefore, what I am saying to you is that it is not true to say that the Government is not interested in good governance. We are interested in good governance and we are demonstrating by all of this that we are prepared to govern in the interest of the people, [*Desk thumping*] and when these consultations take place, and when the reports are presented in the Parliament and laid in this House, it represents the views of citizens which all parliamentarians will then have an opportunity to comment upon and from which we can get the kinds of results that will meet the needs of citizens as they have expressed them.

**Mr. Sharma:** Excellent point.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, so what we are looking at here today is a Government which is prepared to lead change, a Government prepared to initiate change, and a Government prepared to look at ways and means of engendering a more equitable and fairer system for choosing representatives. It is a statement of a Government even if its own position will be at stake, to do what is required in the interest of the nation rather than the interest of person and party.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the manifesto of the People's Partnership presented for local government in 2010, [*Crosstalk*] in the manifesto in the section entitled "Pillars for the Institutionalisation of Meaningful Local Government", Pillar No. 2, Good Governance is a section from which I would like to quote, because it reflects what we are doing here today, is that we are also

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

carrying out our manifesto pledge of 2010 which was in our local government manifesto. In this document it is stated and I quote:

“We will enhance democracy by embracing the philosophy of meaningful Local Government. We maintain that the people are sovereign and that government is the servant of the people. This requires that the people be engaged in discussions on issues that affect their needs as far as possible within the democratic representative system. To this end, we must strive towards a system that is free of any encumbrances that can limit, undermine or marginalise the spirit of total participation.”

**Mr. Sharma:** Well said. Well said.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** And how is this to be achieved? In this document, we say:

“This will be achieved by strengthening existing institutions and by establishing new ones or appropriate infrastructure to advance accountability, transparency, consultation, participation, consensus-building and more meaningful representation.”

It is important, therefore, that I make reference to our manifesto promise under the section “Pillars for the Institutionalisation of Meaningful Local Government”, Pillar No. 2, Good Governance. In that document also we spoke of the new local government and there on page 11 of the document it states:

“Our system of Local Government must create a new leadership and endow leaders in different spheres such as politics, economics, industry, science, the arts and culture. There must be a complete overhaul and restoration of both the spirit and manifestation of participatory politics.”

And I will show later on that in the recommendation being made in this amendment to choose four aldermen rather than two in 12 of the corporations, and just four in Port of Spain and three in San Fernando, that we will be engaging a wider number of persons with specialized skills, or specialized interests, to come and give representation to stakeholders’ interests that will not normally have a place of importance at the local government level, and this is a major thing that will happen [*Desk thumping*] in this legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on page 8 of the manifesto of 2010 which was laid in this Parliament as a policy document, we stated there also that:

“The objective of constitution reform...”



—and this is under the section “Good Governance—People Participation”. So people participation has always been an objective of this Government; let us not be fooled. People participation, listening to the people has always been an objective of this Government.

“The objective of constitution reform will be to establish a framework for good, responsive governance and to nurture and build a participatory culture and to strengthen democracy; this will move us away from the culture of maximum leadership and develop a politics of inclusion...” [*Interruption*]

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

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—“rather than the present system of winner takes all.”

I wanted to make reference to these two particular statements that we made in our manifesto. In this regard, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you look at commentaries that have been made over the last couple of days, you will see that there is widespread support for what we aim to do in terms of this particular amendment.

I want to make reference to an article by Andre Badoo on Saturday, August 31, 2013 in the *Newsday*—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Sharma:** They tried to lock him up.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—a well-written, well-researched article.

**11.00 a.m.**

In this article,

“Former Chief Justice Michael de La Bastide...urged the population not to illogically dismiss the proposal to introduce proportional representation in local government without considering its merits, saying”—that—“the system would potentially be fairer and result in more meaningful elections.”

And the very distinguished former Chief Justice Michael de La Bastide is not just someone who is speaking as a Chief Justice. He is speaking from a position of research and a position where he listened to the views and comments of persons when he “sat on the Hugh Wooding Commission which in 1974 first proposed the concept of proportional representation in local politics...”

““In our report,””—he said—“we had recommended a mixed system of proportional representation in Parliament,’...The current proposal””—which

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

is the proposal now in this Bill amendment—“appears to be almost a pilot project in the context of the local government councils; and”—to quote him—“I think it is interesting because I am still in support of proportional representation in a mixed form. It helps to soften some of the inequities produced by the first-past-the-post system.’

The retired President of the Caribbean Court of Justice...said the system of proportional representation”—being proposed will—“see the party with the most councillor votes voted in and given the lion’s share of aldermen positions while allowing minority parties to have a voice on corporation bodies...” [*Desk thumping*] And this, Madam Speaker, he admitted “could encourage voters.”

So you have a higher level of participation and you will increase voter interest in the affairs of the nation and in this specific case also, in the affairs of the communities.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Who saying that?”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** And this is former Chief Justice, Mr. Michael de la Bastide being quoted here in an article by Andre Bagoo.

I just want one more quotation from him because I think it is important. He said:

“...it appears that the Opposition and persons in and out of Parliament appear to be dismissing it without considering it on”—its—“merit. Even if it is being introduced for the reasons they suggest, logically that is no reason not to consider the bill on its merits.”

Then he said:

“But, of course logics and politics make strange bed-fellows.”

And those are the comments of former Chief Justice, Michael de la Bastide. But there was another member of the Hugh Wooding Commission, Prof. Selwyn Ryan, the distinguished Prof. Selwyn Ryan, noted commentator and noted political analyst. He said:

“...the system would be fairer—the system would be fairer...‘I support the principle which is a fair principle which can be implemented in a number of ways. My only concern”—he said—“is the haste with which it is being implemented.””

But I say today, if not now, when? If not now, when? Because a lot of comments—every time this Government attempts to do something innovative and creative, there are always going to be commentaries that suggest we need to wait; we need to wait, wait, wait. But I say today, if not now when?

We are here today as a Government to govern. We were elected to govern and we must govern in the interest of the nation as a whole and that is why we are here before the Parliament to debate this. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Sharma:** In our manifesto, we covered—

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** That is why we are here in this Parliament to get the views of people in this regard.

There is another interesting series of commentaries made by Dr. Ryan in a series of articles entitled, “Persistence of an Ideal”. I believe it was a three-part series carried in the *Trinidad Express*, but Dr. Ryan makes a case for proportional representation and shows some of the misgivings of the first-past-the-post system and in this story on February 04, 2011, he says here:

“Following the 1981 election, the demand for proportional representation resurfaced with a vengeance. The ONR had secured 91,700 votes (22.28 per cent) and won not a ‘damn seat’. What galled many was that the PNM secured 26 of the 36 seats, the largest number it had ever won, while winning only 53.1 per cent of the popular vote (218,557).”

What was—“Even more outrageous”—says Dr. Ryan—“to the ONR crowd was the fact that the United Labour Front won a mere 62,781 votes (15.25 per cent) but secured as many as 8 seats.”—And Dr. Ryan comments, he said—“Clearly the electoral system had failed to produce a result that was fair and just;”—and—“demands for electoral fairness increased.”

But then he comments:

“Ironically...the electoral system overcorrected itself in 1986, and worked to the disadvantage of the PNM. The former ruling party won 32 per cent of the votes, but secured only three seats.”

Thirty-two per cent, but secured three seats.

“The newly-created NAR won 66 per cent of the popular vote and secured as many as”—33 seats, or—“91.66 per cent of the seats. The PNM was made”—Dr. Ryan comments—“to pay the price for its obstinate refusal to consider any version of PR.”

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

But not only the Wooding Commission had recommended some form of proportional representation, but you will recall that the matter was always seriously debated by the Hyatali Constitution Commission, which was appointed in 1987 to consider that and other matters. You will also recall that later on, the venerable Sir Ellis Clarke also had some very positive comments to make about some form of proportional representation in the composition of the Senate in that particular time.

So, Dr. Ryan, you know, makes some very interesting comments himself about proportional representation. So, over time, our commentators have, in fact, been very, very vocal in terms of their interest in proportional representation.

There is one final article I would like to refer to, Sunday, June 09, 2013 in the *Trinidad Guardian*. It is a letter written by Kenneth Lalla SC (Senior Counsel) and Kenneth Lalla makes some interesting points also about proportional representation when he says:

“More importantly, proportional representation promotes greater co-operation and collaboration as well as consensus and compromise among parties and limits the imposition of policies by minority government over the majority of the voters.”

I think in the context of local government, where you want to ensure that there is always harmony in the community, where people can disagree, but come to agree on common positions and where you can maintain neighbourly and very good fraternal relations in those communities, in the interest of the community, proportional representation has the ability to promote greater cooperation, collaboration as well as consensus and compromise among the different interest groups.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you are still going to find, despite all of the positive comments about the need for some form of proportional representation, you are always going to find that there are those who question why the rush to proportional representation as is today’s editorial in the *Trinidad Guardian*. But one of the good things in this article, it says:

“This new level of transparency in forcing political parties to let the public know their pool of talent for potential aldermen before the holding of a local government election is a welcome development...” [*Desk thumping*]

In other words, when people go to the polls, they will not only know the councillors that they are voting for, but they will know the list of aldermen, who

will also be the pool from which aldermen will be chosen for the corporation. I think that is a really important development in terms of how we see this development.

Then, one other commentator, Miss Gillian Lucky, in her article today, while she says that:

“...once the concept of PR becomes a reality when the requisite legislation is passed, the fact is that political convenience would have opened the doors for meaningful change in our political landscape.”

And I think that is an important comment because while she has some scathing comments to make otherwise in the article, she does go on to say:

“With the introduction of PR, each citizen will be assured that his vote carries a value and that a party, although not winning a particular Corporation, will have some representation on the Council.

Even if the fear factor, is primarily responsible for the introduction of this form of PR in the local election, it is good that the process of electoral transformation, in which there is a better chance for proper representation of the people, has begun.”

I just want to say that this Government has no fear in terms of introducing this. This Government is not introducing this amendment out of fear at all. This Government has kept its pledges to promote democracy and in that regard, as the Prime Minister said, win, lose or draw, we have called local government elections when local government elections are due.

The TOP elections were called when the TOP elections were due and the general election will be called in 2015 when it is also constitutionally due. So there is no fear about this. We are a Government committed to promoting and upholding the Constitution and respecting the rights of citizens and the Prime Minister is demonstrating that by going forward and doing that which is right and that which is in the interest of the nation as a whole and not giving just lip service to the word democracy and the protection of the rights of a people under the Constitution.

Madam Deputy Speaker, based on our 2010 pact with the people, to create institutions and reforms for greater involvement and participation, the Government has brought this piece of legislation, this amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act. It is called the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2013, which I say is the first significant piece of reform that is being brought in

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

terms of the Municipal Corporations Act and people's representation since 1990. It is to allow for a system of PR to be used in the selection of aldermen for the regional corporations.

The question now arises, what is it that is being proposed? What is it that is being proposed in this particular piece of legislation? Madam Deputy Speaker, firstly, it is being proposed that the number of aldermen in each corporation will be four and not as currently obtains where, in 12 of the corporations you have two aldermen each; and in two of the corporations, Port of Spain, you have four; and San Fernando you have three. In other words, across the board, the amendment proposes that there will be four aldermen to be elected and these aldermen are to be elected by a system of proportional representation using a formula called the Hare method, whilst the councillors will continue to be elected along the first-past-the-post system.

So, you go before the electorate and the councillors will be elected first past the post, just like we do now; but in the case of the aldermen, the aldermen will be elected on the basis of PR.

**Hon. Member:** Proportional representation.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Proportional representation.

**Hon. Member:** Why not the councillors?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Thirdly, the list of aldermen, from whom the four will be selected, has to be made known at the same time that the councillors are putting in their nomination papers.

**Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*] See Lee Sing name.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** This is really very good because now a voting member of the public can say, "Well, let me see. These are the councillors that are being proposed by the party, but these are also the aldermen and I now know, if I am going to be voting for people that I really feel can represent my interest or the interest of my region." Compared to what exists now, that the day before the election of mayors and aldermen and so on, a couple of names crop up and nobody has a chance at that point in time except the councillors to elect the aldermen to the regional corporation. We are changing that.

**11.15 a.m.**

In this case now, the population in that area—the citizens in there, the electors—have a say in doing that, and that is a fundamental shift in terms of how

things are being done. So when you talk about deepening the participatory democracy, deepening the democratic process, this is what we mean, but it is also widened in that regard.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Bill, clause 5 which will propose amendments to section 12 of the parent Act, in clause 5(c) it says:

“(4A) A person who stands for election as a Councillor under section 11 shall not stand for election as an Alderman under this section.”

That is (4A), and (4B) says:

“(4B) A person who is a sitting Councillor having been elected Councillor shall not be elected as an Alderman.”

In other words, this is not a case where you could fail as a councillor—lose your seat—and then become an Alderman because your name is already there on the list at the time that the nomination process is taking place. [*Laughter*]

In order to fulfil this particular mandate and this legislation, of course, amendments are required, and this is what the Bill, of course, sets out to do; to make amendments to the parent Act and, particularly, section 13, which will be repealed and a new section substituted which is the section, election of aldermen.

Madam Deputy Speaker, some questions arise that might be in the minds of people. Is it truly appropriate for all posts of aldermen to be allocated to the winning party as exists now? And there is a building consensus that suggests no, because people vote and then they have no representation, particularly at the local level. If local government is truly about deepening participation in the affairs of local communities, it is about also reducing marginalization: the marginalization of community stakeholders; the marginalization of interest groups, and in the present system, it seems that is happening; that is happening.

People vote and then they feel they have wasted their vote. In this case, every vote counts [*Desk thumping*] because when every vote counts, it means that you have an opportunity to get a place of an alderman that can represent your voice. That has to be a better system than exists now. [*Desk thumping*] It has to be a better system, and that is the change people also voted for because people are clamouring in this society for a say in governance, and this Government is opening the door to engage people in the governance process, although it is at this stage at the level of local government, but give the Government credit for opening the door and doing that which is right [*Desk thumping*] and treading on ground

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

that other political entities have feared to tread. But we are going forward and going forward courageously because we know the population wants this deeper level of participation.

If we are to build a better society there must be more consensus in this society; there has to be more consensus. The whole world has changed. In every part of the world people want a greater say and it is, therefore, the responsibility of governments to provide the institutions and the mechanisms by which that greater say can be encouraged and that greater say can be made a reality, if not, you are going to have too many people living on the fringes of the society; too many people just looking in at the society rather than becoming involved in meaningful development of the society and the communities. [*Desk thumping*] That is the kind of marginalization that we have to strike out of the national agenda, and the way we do business—political business and other business—in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Sharma:** Well said.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** That is about good governance; that is about the new politics also that Mr. Dookeran speaks so often about—the wider involvement of people in the democratic process and in decision making.

And, therefore, Madam Deputy Speaker, the current legislation as exists, in my view, in the choice of aldermen, is flawed because I think I have demonstrated that aldermen selected by the current method may not represent the community's interest or all of the community's interest. They may not represent the region's interest as so happens at this time. The choice of aldermen may very well be a reward for political discipline or for supporting the party, or rather than a person being chosen because the person has the capability to make an important contribution to the region.

Now, political parties will be forced to look at the quality of people that they are choosing. They will be forced to do that. They will be forced to do that because people are going to say: "Is that what you are putting up for me? Does this represent the interest of this area?" And that, in my view, is going to make a change in how people vote in local government elections.

So aldermen, in my view, should not have to be chosen willy-nilly. Aldermen should be able to enhance and add value to the work of a corporation. Aldermen should be able to represent the interest of groups that contribute whether it is culturally, socially, economically or otherwise make important contributions in a particular region. The choice of just two aldermen, in my respectful view, limits



the ability of the community to have all of their community interests fully represented.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Insufficient.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** What is going to happen now is that minority interests, significant in their own right, are now going to be accommodated in terms of how aldermen are chosen because their party can now go to the electorate and say: “Alderman X, he is going to be representing the interest of A, B, C or D.” And by naming the aldermen at the time of nominations, voters can now decide on the best team capable of running a particular corporation; the best team capable of running a particular corporation and, maybe, this requires an example if I may so share.

Let us take the Port of Spain City Corporation. In the Port of Spain City Corporation, you have had running battles between the Mayor, His Worship Mayor Lee Sing, and several segments of Port of Spain. There have been conflicts between the businessmen’s association; there have been exchange of harsh words, at times, between the business interest and the Mayor and so on. With this particular system that is being proposed, the Port of Spain City Corporation—a party contesting the Port of Spain City Corporation may, for example, want to ensure that an Alderman of substance is named on the list of aldermen who will represent the interests of the business community in Port of Spain and, therefore, you will reduce some of the unnecessary conflicts, waste of energy and resources, the kinds of delays that occur, and create a greater consensus-building atmosphere by having a particular interest represented as an alderman in the corporation.

So, for example, it may very well be that DOMA might find a place as an alderman. It might very well be that the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce might find a place as an alderman on the corporation, or it might be that the regional corporation is concerned about social issues, and you might find an expert who is a specialist on social issues who might be put up there in terms of an alderman.

It might be that the corporation might want to emphasize local economic development; they may want to emphasize urban planning; they may want to lead to the transformation of Port of Spain and its environs and, therefore, through the alderman method, they may be able to place someone there who can bring that expertise to bear upon the deliberation of the council [*Desk thumping*] and to reallocate resources in the pursuit of those particular objectives. And I think that is important; I think that is very important.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

In my constituency, for example, I have a very large group of persons who are agriculturalists. It is said when Aranguéz floods it is Tabaquite that feeds the nation. There are over 600 persons who are engaged in agriculture in the constituency of Tabaquite, and when you add Caroni Central, and when you add parts of Chaguanas East and you add Chaguanas West—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—and Caroni East.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—and you add Caroni East—Chaguanas East, sorry, you will find that there are thousands of persons engaged in agriculture and farming and, therefore, the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation will do well—a party contesting that will do well to signal that there is someone who has an interest in the agricultural sector in the farming community and can represent those interests at the level of the corporation. So that when resources are being distributed, for example, in terms of the development of agricultural access roads, the corporation will also have an interest in ensuring that those needs are met [*Desk thumping*] in the particular case. That cannot be done right now.

**Mr. Sharma:** Excellent point.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** It cannot be done right now because councillors may not necessarily have the kinds of skill sets or competencies to properly represent the interest of a specific group of persons in a particular area.

In Sangre Grande, for example, the regional corporation in Sangre Grande—Sangre Grande is a place that has a wealth of potential for tourism. Sangre Grande Regional Corporation controls a lot of beaches. The whole area in Toco there, my esteemed friend, the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, Dr. Rupert Griffith, is pursuing many, many projects to deal with tourism and domestic tourism in particular and, therefore, an alderman with an interest in that, who can guide the corporation to put resources and part of its strategic plan directed at domestic tourism, such an alderman would find favour because he now brings a new expertise [*Desk thumping*] into the corporation. So there are tremendous advantages in terms of how we choose the aldermen in order to achieve these particular objectives, and to bring new competencies—additional competencies, I should say—into the domain of regional corporations.

Now, while it might be argued that this is the only piece of reform being brought here today before the Parliament, let me also say that reform of local government has been going on. It is not just the reforms that have been presented here and laid in Parliament as a result of the consultations that are going to be considered. I want to tell you that reform is an ongoing process, and it has been

continuing. I will give you an example of one thing that has been done, just one example.

As a former mayor—and my history with local government goes back to 1983 when I was first appointed as the chairman of the St. Patrick County Council, and I served there from 1983—1987 and then from 2003—2009 in Chaguanas—it used to take a minimum of six months and sometimes up to nine months before you were able to draw down money from the Ministry of Finance to get projects started. And, of course, those of you who know the system, you have to apply for the funds, you have to have confirmation of the funds, you have to get release of the funds and so on and then you can do work.

I want to tell you that working with the local government corporations—and this has been a golden year for the local government corporations [*Desk thumping*]*—working with them, the very CEOs, administrative staff and the corporations, wherever they are—whether they be PNM-controlled, COP or UNC, something startling happened. We were able to improve the processes and the systems to such an extent that within five weeks of the budget being passed last year, the corporations were drawing down money for their development projects. [Desk thumping] So reform in the systems and processes in order to have speedier delivery is, in fact, something that is going on. What I would like to say further is that by the end of the seventh month of the fiscal year, corporations had completed between 70 and 90 per cent of their development projects. [Desk thumping] Unsurpassed! That had never happened before in local government, and it is the very same people because we engaged them in a new thinking.*

**11.30 a.m.**

So reform is not just about this, this is path breaking, this is deepening democracy, but we are also concerned about the speed of delivery and the quality of delivery, and reducing the frustration of people to get goods and services to them in the quickest time. You know, another simple reform or something that we have set up. If you go to the Ministry of Local Government today, you will see that there are video-conferencing facilities attached to all the regional corporations, so someone does not have to travel from Mayaro or Sangre Grande to come to Port of Spain for a meeting. These are done by video conferences, saving a person five hours of travelling time, let us say you are coming from Mayaro or Sangre Grande into Port of Spain, back and forth.

And what this does, it also allows something else to be done. Where the meetings are taking place, it is not just one or two persons coming to Port of

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Spain for that meeting. In the corporation all the files are available; the technical staff is available and you are able to resolve matters much more quickly, and this is why we were able to get so much more done this year under local government than we have ever done. So reforms are taking place, even as we speak reforms are taking place in local government, and during the next three years an entire package of reforms will of course be introduced into local government and maybe at a later stage of these deliberations, I will speak about some of those particular reforms that are taking place.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, in conclusion let me say that this piece of legislation, this amendment, that is being brought here to the House today is path breaking, it is historical. One might describe it even as a legacy piece of legislation, and this Parliament, those who sit here today will go down in history—will go down in history—whether you are against it or whether you are for it, but it will go down in history that one day your children and grandchildren, who will see that the PR is a much more effective and fairer and more equitable mode of representation, they will be proud to say that my ancestors sat in that Parliament and made decisions [*Desk thumping*] that were for the benefit of this country as a whole. I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Leader of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I want to thank you for taking up the mantle of holding the Chair for a full debate in the absence of our substantive office holder.

Madam Deputy Speaker, no matter that comes before this Parliament is to be taken lightly, because if it is a light matter to be taken lightly it has no place in front the Parliament, and when a matter of this nature is before the Parliament, one has to assume that it is a serious matter being taken seriously by a serious government. And it is from that standpoint that I want the population to pay attention to all the lofty statements just made by the outgoing Minister of Local Government. As a matter of fact, apparently there are two of them, there is one in here and there is one on the way, [*Desk thumping*] but since this one is in here, we have to deal with the one who is here.

I want the population to understand that the PNM has no problem in engaging in a debate of this nature on this subject of proportional representation. In fact, historically, if they want to look at our historical antecedence to know where we came from, where we are and where we could be going or whether in fact we

would be in the position to make adjustments of any kind, I will direct them to page 149 of *Forged from the Love of Liberty: Selected Speeches of Dr. Eric Williams*, and they would see the verbatim there of the founding father of this nation on this subject of proportional representation. This matter has been with us since those days, and a number of governments have come into office and a number of issues have been dealt with since then, and if it is that we are to go and have a debate as we are having now, let me tell you how this Government has gone about bringing us here this morning.

Up until last Thursday, we on this side knew nothing about the requirement to get involved in a debate on proportional representation, whether it is for alderman, “alderlady, [*Laughter*] alderboy, aldergirl”; we knew nothing about a debate. The first time we had an official position was the Prime Minister after Cabinet, because the Cabinet decided that they are going to come to the Parliament and pass a law to introduce into our electoral system, this fundamental change of putting persons into office on the basis of proportional representation. That was the Cabinet’s position, and the Cabinet, when the Prime Minister was asked if they have consulted others, they said, “No, we have the votes to pass it.”

**Hon. Member:** Um-hmm.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** That is the approach. So all that he has said there about what a wonderful thing about participation and bringing it down to the people, and representing the people, all of that went out in the Prime Minister’s comment, “we the office holders in this House”, meaning those in the Government cabal, they have the votes to pass it. And I want to put the population in the picture again, that was being made expressly on a day when the Opposition was sitting down with the Government on the Opposition’s initiative to deal with matters pertaining to crime.

**Hon. Member:** Hmm.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Take that one. So the Prime Minister was leading the charge, Thursday afternoon goes before the press and announces what the Cabinet is going to do, so we are here doing it now: we are going to be going to Parliament next week Friday to pass it in the Lower House and it is going to be passed in the Senate the following Tuesday. About two hours later, they said—the Attorney General, no less a person than the Attorney General who was participating in the collaborative talks with the Government, “chooks” in the hand of the Chief Whip this working paper and says, “Rambachan send dat for you”.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

That is how the Opposition is introduced to the idea of an introduction of proportional representation in Trinidad and Tobago. It is only when the Chief Whip went home and opened the envelop she realized it was the working document of the Government and proportional representation still in red and blue, they are still working on it—and gave it to her on Thursday night and by Friday night we got an email of a Bill which is now being described in all the lofty way as it is being described there as though it has come from some serious well-thought-out arrangement.

**Hon. Member:** Discussions.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I tell you this so you could put everything that he has said in the context with how we have arrived here. It has nothing to do with any altruistic principle to give anybody any democracy. [*Desk thumping*] And insofar as it is to be a change, they have already taken the position it is going to be done on the votes that they already have; they have the votes to pass it.

**Hon. Member:** This is a formality then?

**Dr. K. Rowley:** But what is new? That is how this Government has been running this country's business in every single sphere of activity, [*Desk thumping*] whether it has to do with appointing people to the SIA, appointing people to boards, appointing people to the Cabinet; that is how this Government has been conducting public business, and it is wholly unsatisfactory.

As I sit here now—where has he gone? I just saw the world record holder of Cabinet posts, [*Laughter and desk thumping*] the Minister of National Security. He is now holding his fourth Cabinet post in 36 months, and if anybody thinks that is a joke, that is how the country's business is being mismanaged, and [*Desk thumping*] if there is to be a debate—if there is to be a debate in this country as there ought to be, that the Government intends to introduce into law, proportional representation, and in a creeping way because he told us it is a gentle way of introducing it. Well most laxatives are introduced gently [*Laughter*] and most enemas are that too, right—a gentle way of introducing it. So we have to say, they have an intention to do more of it.

**Hon. Member:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Now if that is so, then come clean on top the table in front of the people and tell them what you are doing [*Desk thumping*] so they, the very people you speak so passionately about, tell them exactly what we have embarked

upon and of course, you know, one of the reasons why the population does not trust us, Madam Deputy Speaker, is because we have asked them not to trust us.

The high point of his presentation this morning is what Mr. de la Bastide said. I want to ask him: Is that the same de la Bastide who said we should be using the CCJ as our final Court of Appeal? [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** Um-hmm. That is right.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** When he says that, you dismiss him in the most insulting way. “Dr. Ryan says”: Is that the same Ryan you call a PNM stooge whenever he interferes with the Government’s business? And, of course, “Mr. Dookeran says”: Is that the new politics that is missing?

**Hon. Member:** New politics.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Let Mr. Dookeran speak for himself please. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** He is in the House.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** And now that the coalition has collapsed, I see them calling now for government of national unity, that Rowley and Warner and London could work together.

**Mr. Warner:** Not me.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** We want no part of you, we want you out. [*Continuous desk thumping*]

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “No part of dat!”

**Dr. K. Rowley:** So you are fooling nobody with your behaviour because it is not new. I want, Madam Deputy Speaker, to dismiss everything he has said here this morning.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Oh yeah. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. K. Rowley:** This is political expediency.

**Hon. Member:** Um-hmm.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** The Government has sat down, they have received their polls, the polls have shown that the UNC is going to be wiped out across Trinidad, [*Desk thumping*] and they have decided to come up with this ruse on the advice of their known advisor that if they use this discourse on proportional representation,

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

knowing that there is something here to be discussed and some people believe it is a panacea for our political problems or some improvement to our problems, if they introduce it, it will save them the embarrassment they faced in Tobago in the THA election.

Before the THA election they had a similar problem, they were not sure what the result was going to be, but they had wedded themselves to a TOP in Tobago who had spokespersons in this House threatening the PNM with decimation, but they were not sure, but the one thing they were sure about is that they wanted public money to spend in the campaign in Tobago. So you know what they did, Madam Deputy Speaker, all in the name of the same argument he gave us this morning, serving the people, giving them authority at local level and giving them money to spend; they came up with this idea of giving MPs \$10 million per MP to spend in their constituencies, and the sole and singular purpose of that, wrapped in this argument about reform and serving local government, was to allow the Tobago West MP and the Tobago East MP to have \$10 million each of taxpayers' money to spend in Tobago.

And these people, Madam Deputy Speaker, they were so “don't-care” about the rest of the country and the public purse, they were prepared to give every MP, the other 39 MPs, \$10 million of taxpayers' money, that is \$390 million, in order that Tobago East and Tobago West could get \$10 million each for the election. When it was pointed out to them that, okay, you can do that, you can give us all \$10 million each—in Trinidad no problem, but if Tobago West and Tobago East spend any money in Tobago outside of the THA because of the existence of the THA Act, we are going to take you to court, they realized that it would not work. And what happened? They dropped it and dumped it like a hot potato.

**11.45 a.m.**

The next thing we know, a Member of the Cabinet is informing us that he spent \$25 million of his own money in Tobago. The original intention was \$20 million of taxpayers' money. You are fooling no one. You are fooling nobody. [*Desk thumping*]

So now the election has been called. We know when the corporations have to go out of service; we know when—July 26 or whenever it was. The election has been called. After the election has been called, this Government gets this brainwave to be this giver of things democratic, and we have to go to PR: a discussion that started here since in the 1960s. A number of PNM Governments passed there, an NAR Government, UNC Government, coalition—all of a sudden.



It is only when they realized that Diego Martin corporation—UNC, zero; Arima: UNC, zero; San Juan/Laventille, they may scrape through one or two; San Fernando, zero. With all these zeros plus Tobago, zero—

**Mr. Warner:** Chaguanas, zero.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Chaguanas zero too? [*Laughter and desk thumping*] So they have come up with this approach, that if we go to proportional representation, increase from two, and in the case of Port of Spain from three to four, put this formula in place, at least it would give them an opportunity to get an alderman—to get an alderman—in these corporations where they otherwise, like Tobago, would have zero.

Now, that is not the end of it you know. What is the purpose of wanting an alderman in a corporation where the majority is controlled by others? What is your alderman going to do for the UNC? Let me tell you what it is going to do. It is going to do what is going on right now. As the corporations have gone out of authority, the law permits the Minister and someone in the corporation, in this case under the law the chairman or the mayor, to run the corporation. Let me repeat that: the current arrangements when the corporation goes out of office by expiration, as it has done in July, the current law allows the Minister and either the chairman of the corporation, where there are chairmen or where there are mayors, to run the corporation. That is what has been going on under law since July.

In fact, it has been going on since before July, because this Minister of Local Government has been usurping the authority of the Executive even before the corporations expired, and has been riding rough shod over the Executive and micromanaging and awarding contracts. That is why he got his name called in an election by one of his colleagues, his party chairman, his—

**Mr. Warner:** I have no colleague, you know.

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—Acting Prime Minister in this Cabinet saying that if this country has two corrupt persons, the Minister of Local Government is 16. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] My understanding of mathematics is that that means that corporation corruption allows one to interpret that the Minister is eight times more corrupt than the average person in the country.

**Mr. Warner:** That is correct. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. K. Rowley:** That is what is being said in Government circles. When the corporations expire, this allows that the Minister runs the corporations. They want that to continue.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

So where the zeros will come on election day, they are now using the Parliament in this lofty argument to insert an alderman into the corporation, and the expectation is that they are still in central government. Somebody else would win the corporation, but the Minister would continue to run the corporation through an alderman of their choice. Because it would mean that this alderman is the hand-picked person of the Government or the Minister, which would come in under this law, and the Minister will now begin to misbehave by blackmailing the corporation, “If you do not do what the alderman say to please the central government, then we squeeze you; you will get nothing.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard somebody mention Mayor Lee Sing’s name just now. You know, Mayor Lee Sing served for three years, and he is a very loud fella. For three years he has been calling on the Minister of Local Government—first the one in yellow, then the one in green or blue or whatever it is, to release unspent balances. The corporation has money called unspent balances, but under the law it requires that the Minister release that money before it can be spent. Mayor Lee Sing has been crying out for three years asking the Minister to release these unspent balances so that the burgesses can be served by that money being spent on their needs. They will not do it. The day the corporation ended its life and the authority fell to the Minister and the mayor, with no executive in place the Minister released the balance.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** The minute there was no executive in place to take executive decisions, where there are PNM people, COP and UNC in the corporation, [*Interruption*] the money is now made available. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members, please. Let us have some silence while the Member is on his feet making his contribution. You may proceed.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** So the Minister is only inclined to release unspent balances when he is in total control and there is no executive in place. I tell you this so you could take reality as separate and apart from the gobbledegook we just heard about democracy and deepening democracy and red letter day and “all kind ah story”. It has nothing to do with such altruism. It is all naked political expediency. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, he could have made one sentence and sat down. He could have said, “It is an intention to undermine the elected executive, even before they have been elected.” That is what this means. Even before the people who are going to be elected are in office, they are to be undermined by this effort

of the Parliament to put an alderman in there which would be the basis on which the Minister, in his short and sorry term that is left, will proceed to run local government.

Why would they want to do that? They believe that spend and give is how they will retain political office, because after this local government election we are heading straight into a general election a few months away. They do not want to accept the reality that corporations will fall into the control of others and an election is coming. Right? So they want to be in a position to control expenditure in local government for the general election, even when they have won no seats. That is what this is all about. It has nothing to do with anybody and any PR. It has to do with undermining the corporations. [*Desk thumping*] You are fooling no one.

If you want a debate on proportional representation common sense would have shown that you would have talked to people before. You put it out there before. Look at this: we have to come up with a list from which you would choose aldermen. Should we be preparing this list now when there is no law about that or after the law is passed? So after next week Tuesday, when it is passed in the House, if it is passed in the Senate, we now are authorized. There is a law which requires a list.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** It has to be assented to.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, they have failed largely because they have taken the people of Trinidad and Tobago for fools. Nobody believes what you are saying. Nobody believes you, and that is why there is a lack of confidence in everything this Government does. [*Desk thumping*]

What is amazing, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that there are supposedly sensible people around this Government who would get up here in this Parliament and follow the same charade, and maybe only after they leave the Government they would start telling us, “We did not know; we now find out what they were up to.” Well I am telling you now: we know what you are up to. You are fooling no one. [*Desk thumping*] You have the votes to pass it, so pass it and go and make this earth-shattering change of adding an alderman to Port of Spain and adding two in San Fernando and two elsewhere. My colleague will deal with the details of that formula.

I will tell you what, I have seen the formula. Knowing the way the results have been coming out for the last decades and can come out in roughly the same way—four aldermen. You might automatically have two going to the winner.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Then you apply the formula, a third one is in contention that the winner might get, depending on how big you win and then of course all of this is a fight over the last alderman. That is what it is all about. When you are introduced as to how the mathematics will work, given how the results are likely to come in, you will see that it is all about a fight over the fourth alderman that they have added, and they want to get that alderman because their best chance of getting an alderman is alderman No. 4, which is a whole lot better than zero. That is 25 per cent. Before they had zero chance in those situations, now they have a 25 per cent chance of getting alderman No. 4. That is what this is all about.

And you ask yourself: why is this mighty partnership so desperate to get an alderman? Because they have disintegrated to disinfectant stage [*Laughter*] and they know they now are holding on to cobweb and straws to retain power in corporations where they rode like a colossus three years ago; [*Desk thumping*] where they have accepted that the population wants no part of them, but they want a part of the population's authority. That is what this is about. [*Desk thumping*]

I do not have to wait long to be proven right, you know. In a few weeks we will see it at work—in a few weeks. If what he said there was true, that was their real belief, why are you coming here to introduce PR on aldermen? Why do you not come and say, “Let us have proportional representation on local government, so you have a mixed system in the country. At national level we use the first past the post and at local government level we use PR, and it is not only for aldermen but for local government in general”?

You spent millions of dollars. My friend, a new hairstyle—he spent millions of dollars consulting the country. What comes out of it? Fight over one alderman in the corporation, and that is reform. Selling this as major reform, bringing the Parliament here today—major reform, and it is all about one alderman. What is the cost of that in millions?

Was there anything else in those discussions that took place around the country, where hardly anybody paid any attention to you, where nobody paid any attention to the report? Was there anything else in there that they recommended? Did anybody recommend that you give local government the authority to collect and keep and use revenues from land and building taxes, as the THA does in Tobago? The THA has been there for 30 years now, so we have seen it at work. It has made great improvements to Tobago. One of the reasons Tobago is presented in the way it is presented now is because the Executive in Tobago has a cash flow, and even though the cash flow may not be able to fund everything that they want to do, by having a consistent cash flow they are able to do things that corporations

cannot do in Trinidad. Did anybody recommend in your list of recommendations that we do that? Did you hear the PNM saying at convention in 2010 that we would support that and that was our policy, that for reform of local government we wanted to give local government that authority? That is not before us today though.

Did anybody tell you in the recommendations that it is possible to give local government the right to have the responsibility for maintenance of public buildings within the corporations' geography, so all schools, all health centres, all government buildings in there, let them be maintained by the corporation in which they exist, as happens in Tobago? No, that is not here. That would be meaningful reform. Give local government real reform.

### **12 noon**

You talked loudly this morning about people at the local level being given responsibility; give them responsibility to maintain a school. So this charade of every July and August the corrupt contracts come and go, and come and go and then you tell me, time for school to open, school cannot open. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** "Is de PNM fault."

**Dr. K. Rowley:** You bring no meaningful reform, but you bring this nonsense to fight over an alderman to undermine the executive corporation. [*Desk thumping*] Nobody asked you for this. This is a UNC bail-out [*Desk thumping*] and do not sell us this as any great reform proposal. It is not. It is another part of your untrustworthy action. "Yuh cyar trust dis Government with nuttin." [*Desk thumping*]

Did anybody tell you in your consultation that this minister of food card, when they were going around the country giving out food cards left, right and centre, that it is possible that local government could be brought into the system and that social service delivery could be had and managed and maintained at the local level, giving local government the responsibility for knowing who is aged and infirm; who is handicapped, who is this, who is that and the local corporation does that? In England that is how it is done. In England it is the local bodies that deal with those social services deliveries. Did anybody tell you that? [*Crosstalk*] You did not bring that here today though because that is real reform. You could not bring that? [*Crosstalk*]

Today every back road, every trace to be paved in this country is being done by central government. [*Crosstalk*] Did anybody tell you leave minor roads and

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

secondary roads as the responsibility of local government? Give them the responsibility for awarding their own contracts, building up within their community the capacity for small and medium contractors to do those kinds of jobs. “No. How dey go tief?” That is what they said. [*Crosstalk*] Okay then.

Now these are the kinds of things that real improvements in local governments would result in; giving them responsibility for collecting revenues due to the State on land and building taxes; giving them responsibility for secondary and minor roads, complete responsibility; giving them responsibility for maintenance on public buildings within their districts; giving them responsibility for social service delivery. You maintain a database. Every corporation could have its own database on who is living in there.

I have said many times in this Parliament—I went to Guernsey a few years ago on a CPA trip and I had happened to have asked the people, my colleagues in Guernsey, “What is your unemployment rate like?” And he said, Rate? I said, Yes, what is your unemployment rate?” He said, “We have 139 unemployed people on the island.” They were not dealing with rates. They were dealing with people, they knew everybody who was unemployed because at the local level you are required to know who is there.

We have come to the Government recently, from the Opposition, asking for collaboration on crime fighting. We have put to the Government the law exists, to put in place municipal police.

**Hon. Member:** “Hmm.”

**Dr. K. Rowley:** We have asked the Government, in Trinidad, to put 1400 people, 100 per corporation, under the executive of the local government corporation. That does not interest you. You want to talk about an alderman that you will fight over. That alderman—you said Eric Williams said that proportional representation is a dagger aimed at the heart of the PNM. Well if there is any dagger here today, in 2013, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century—Eric Williams spoke in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, right, 21<sup>st</sup> Century 2013—the dagger that exists now is this alderman “yuh looking” for [*Laughter*] aimed at the heart of the executive of local government. [*Desk thumping*] That is today’s dagger.

You all should be ashamed of yourselves to have so squandered your mandate that you have to come to the Parliament with this subterfuge to try and get some leeway and some leverage at local government—[*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** To get one alderman.

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—to get one alderman, and then he or she will then begin to flex their muscle and ministerial authority that if you do not let me run the corporation, if you do not do what I say, I will let the Minister “jar up de funds” because that is how it is done now. Local government has to wait for releases from the Minister of Local Government and if his man or his woman in there is not being treated the way he or she wants to be treated, then the funds can dry up or they can be delayed. That is your plan, and as we say in Trinidad and Tobago, “mas ah know yuh. Yuh ain’t fooling nobody. [*Laughter*] Yuh ain’t fooling nobody.” [*Crosstalk*]

All of a sudden you get this epiphany to want to deliver upon us proportional representation and we have to say, “Yes, Messiah. You have got it right. You are indeed the Messiah and we therefore have to accept what you offer us. [*Crosstalk*] Well local government [*Crosstalk*] is not about that.

**Hon. Member:** “He ain’t easy yuh know.”

**Dr. K. Rowley:** He talks a lot—they talk a lot when they want to palm off things on you. He talks about cooperation and making governance work for the people. This is the same Government, you know.

In 2011, there was a series of murders in Arima. The Leader of the Opposition, me, wrote to the Government saying, listen, this matter of crime is not to be politicized. We are prepared to work with you so we can have a common position against these criminals in this country. How many Prime Ministers ever received a letter like that from an Opposition in this country? Never received a reply.

**Hon. Member:** “Hmm.”

**Dr. K. Rowley:** When the Prime Minister did in fact reply, she replied in here saying: PNM was there before. Did not do it. Had nothing to offer. [*Crosstalk*] And they went and declared a state of emergency. [*Crosstalk*]

**Miss Cox:** Who was the advisor at that time? [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Please. Please. Please.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** In the meantime things have got from bad to worse. I was shocked yesterday to see the Prime Minister—the same Prime Minister—talking about her desire [*Laughter*] for “left to her alone, she would have a Government of national unity where London and Rowley and Warner can work together”—

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

[*Laughter*] Well she could speak for Warner. [*Laughter*] Well she could speak for Dookeran. She could speak for the cabal, [*Crosstalk*] the PNM will have nothing to do with that. [*Desk thumping*] What we want—“we want you all out of de way” [*Desk thumping and laughter*] so we can begin to take responsibility for this country—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Good governance.

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—and rectify the damage that you have done. [*Crosstalk*]

You know, in all this talk about how governance can be improved in this country, these are the same people in the middle of an election in Tobago—not unlike the current situation—the Prime Minister leading the charge in Tobago, somebody, some mysterious advisor, again, draft up for Tobagonians a Bill to give Tobago internal self-government, believing that by making that offer to Tobagonians, the very offer of internal self-government in a draft Bill, would have influenced the electorate in Tobago.

Come back from Tobago into this Parliament—history will show that I came back with her—and we made one statement in here; you are fighting the election here? The election is in Tobago—and by the way, your Bill is replete with the dangerous and foolish clauses. The Bill eventually lapsed. They lost all interest in Tobago’s internal self-government after they got the 12-nil.

Then, you know, that was not the end of it. That was being done against the background that the people of Tobago had had three years of consultation in Tobago, had come to a position—that position was in front of the Government. They totally ignored and refused to deal with that, came up with their own proposal of internal self-government which, quite predictably, the people of Tobago rejected out of hand.

Today, TOP do not even know who is bottom, [*Laughter*] who is middle; they are in disarray, and those are the fruits of trying to fool people. [*Laughter*] Trying to fool people because that Bill that came to this House, had we not stood up to it, and the people of this country had not rejected it, these individuals, our colleagues on the other side, were quite prepared to enact into law something that could have damaged our legal status as an archipelagic state which would have had serious economic consequences for Trinidad and Tobago because it would have damaged our claim on resources in our sea bed east of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** “Hmm.”



**Dr. K. Rowley:** They were prepared to do that to try and win a seat in Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** “Huh.”

**Hon. Member:** “And I believe dat.”

**Dr. K. Rowley:** You better not believe it. [*Crosstalk*] You do not believe it; you are a part of it. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] They were quite prepared to enact into law something here which would have had the effect of nullifying our declaration of our country as an archipelagic state.

**Hon. Member:** Shameful!

**Dr. K. Rowley:** We are claiming territory [*Crosstalk*] east of here because of our position in Tobago as our furthest point out in the Atlantic.

When they came with the nonsense and it was pointed out to them, some of them came to me in this very Parliament and said to me, I did not know that, and secondly I do not know where this came from. It did not come from the Cabinet. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Must be Christlyn.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** These are the people who are prepared to do things like that to the people of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Part of his brain went.

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—to fundamentally alter our State as a nation and the Cabinet was confronted in the Parliament and they had to let the Bill lapse, and a Bill that was piloted by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

I will tell you all this, Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] to let the population know, do not trust this Government. [*Desk thumping*] They are dangerous. Even when they know it will be detrimental to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, they are prepared to do it to the detriment of the people if they believe it will serve their purpose. The record is there to show, and this is but another example. This has nothing to do with any debate on proportional representation.

Anybody getting up in this House and trying to introduce this as our embarkation on the road to proportional representation is engaging in tomfoolery.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Because if this country is to go that way—as we may or may not go in the future—this is not the debate. This is not the debate for that. The very way it has come upon us taints its birth paper.

I have no doubt that if the Government wants to lead, or anybody wants to lead in this country a serious debate on whether in fact, given our plural society or whatever it is that we should have PR, we can have it again. But I will tell you one thing, those who advocate proportional representation as the solution, completely ignore the history of many people who have tried it, and it is—one of the negatives that has been held out against it is its propensity to generate perpetual instability in the politics of the country. That is one of the arguments against it. I am not saying that it is an argument not to do it, but I am saying that is one of the arguments put forward by people who have experienced it.

Now if we are prepared to disregard that and proceed—then that is one thing else. On the other hand there are those that argue that the first-past-the-post system is exclusionary. It excludes people who have had support, up to a certain level, and do not reflect that support in numbers in the various Parliaments.

So both systems have their pros and cons. [*Crosstalk*] But the interesting thing about it is that the advocates of proportional representation, back in the '60s, had used certain examples as to what they want us to follow. It is now 50 years later. We can look back at those people and those systems that they said would have been perfect for us and would have eliminated some of the negatives associated with the first-past-the-post system.

One of the main countries that was listed as the example that we should follow was Cyprus. I need not tell you—those of you who would remember—the history of Cyprus and its politics.

They also mentioned Kenya. At the time it was a solution to our problem. Let us do like Kenya. Let us have the Kenyan style. It was only about four or five years ago there was an election in Kenya and after the election, “all hell break loose”. As a matter of fact, the man who is today the President of Kenya is before the international court charged with, I think it is attempted genocide or genocide, or something like that, because the results of the election were such that what happened in Kenya attracted the attention of the International Criminal Court. And those who led the charge there are now facing the possibility of appearing before that court.

**12.15 p.m.**

So, these systems by themselves are not solutions to countries problems, and those who advocate that if we do that it will solve this problem, very conveniently, do not tell you what problems they will create as well. But I am not taking part today in any debate on proportional representation, because I know that is not the debate we are having here; not the debate.

If this country wants a proper debate on proportional representation then we must have it, because the points of view are out there. And do not just come and tell me what Dr. Ryan say, because Dr. Ryan has had the sharp end of your tongue on many occasions for what he has said. So you are cherry-picking now. [Laughter] You are cherry-picking what Dr. Ryan says to suit what you want to do today. You are cherry-picking what Mr. de La Bastide said, because it suits you today. We know that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What did they do different?

**Dr. K. Rowley:** What?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Besides cherry-picking what did they say different?

**Dr. K. Rowley:** If this Government was really serious in bringing to the Parliament for a debate in the Parliament the issue of proportional representation it never would have embarked upon it a few days before an election that is guaranteed. [Desk thumping] And knowing that it is its intention to introduce this into our electoral system, and it would have to convince the Opposition who has a history of opposing it, because we are not running from our history, you know. Our party was formed by Dr. Eric Williams. Our position on proportional representation is recorded in the annals of history.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Diego Martin West has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. K. Rowley:** If it is that it was the Government's intention to have a proper debate it would never have introduced this into the Parliament in this way. Never have! In fact, the Minister said: "Now is as a good time as any." He said: "If not now, when?" Now is the time when the Government is engaged with the

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Opposition on another matter. If you genuinely wanted to advance this for serious consideration and for serious debate, the environment was there, the climate was there.

I ask my colleague from St. Augustine, given the door that we have opened on the crime front, if it was your intention to let us expand that to discuss the electoral system, would you have so cavalierly squandered our trust in you by doing what you are doing now, and hoping to bully the Parliament into agreeing to this within the context of nomination day, and indicating that you would use the majority to railroad it through the Parliament? I will tell you one thing; the existing law protects us from your excesses. For there to be any change at the national level in the parliamentary elections, you require a certain majority which you do not have. And therefore, if you seriously want the country to take on board the idea of proportional representation, it is a nonsense to start on your own, having not even indicated to the rest of your parliamentary colleagues that this is attracting your attention.

In fact, what I expected would have been done, given what you did with your attempt to have discussion on reform of the Constitution, is that you would have fuelled this debate outside with the population, because Parliament does not exist for its own existence. Parliament has a purpose which you come here to pass laws on behalf of the people after the people know what you are doing. [*Desk thumping*] Parliament is not a place to spring surprises.

In the courthouse there is something called “disclosure”. If you are coming to prosecute somebody and you have evidence against them, there is something called “disclosure”. You have to tell the accused what you have against him or her so they can be prepared to defend themselves. There was a time it was not so, you know. There was a time when you kept your secret in your pocket and you spring it on the accused when they were in the witness box. And for the first time they were hearing we have a witness to bring to say so and so. We have evolved beyond that in the court, right.

And you here in the Parliament would spring on the country your “vaps”, that as of tonight we are going to go to proportional representation if only for four aldermen. All that does is destroy the confidence of the people in those who are conducting their affairs. That is all it does. [*Crosstalk*] That is all it does. And all I am saying is that this could have been a proper stimulating debate had it been arrived at in the proper way and had its intention not been so sinister. It will change nothing. For all those advocates about what this would mean, it will change nothing because it will not advance towards the loss of the first-past-the-

post system, it will not, because you do not have the votes to do that. What it is going to accomplish is to create an additional alderman in Port of Spain; big deal. If you get one you will have one out of what—15 people?

**Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** One out of 15. Why is that so important? In San Fernando you will get one out of—you add two more, so it is not that the corporation is being made up of—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Nine—

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—nine and two, 11 plus, you add one, so you will make up 12. So it goes from 11 to 12. What is all this? And he is so democratic. In Arima; we have six in Arima? You are going to increase aldermen now to four—

**Hon. Member:** Seven.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Seven, okay. You are going to increase aldermen to four. So you will increase the ratio of unelected to elected; that is what you have done. That sounds like democracy to you? You are increasing the ratio of unelected to elected and you are telling—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Baker:** On the elective—

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Madam Deputy Speaker, could you control the Member for Tobago West for me please, so he can learn something? *[Laughter]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Careful; listen.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I am not arguing about the principle of getting them by election. I am saying, the finished product by this proposal, increasing the number of aldermen in Arima from two to four and not increasing the number of elected persons even though you are electing aldermen in the corporation, the end result is—the finished product will be, there will be four unelected persons as—*[Interruption]* Steups.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Yuh dotish or wat.”

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I give up.

**Mr. Volney:** *[Inaudible]*

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I am talking to you.

**Miss Cox:** He cannot understand it. *[Crosstalk]*

**Dr. K. Rowley:** You will end up with four unelected persons and seven elected. Whereas, before you would have seven elected and two unelected. So what the thing does, it increases—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Cox:** He does not understand.

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—the number of people who have not been elected directly.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** You are electing them indirectly through the corporation's process of councillors electing aldermen. You are not changing anything significantly. And most importantly, most importantly, the election of the President is done by the Parliament. If you want to be this great reformist that you say you are and you are taking the people to this higher heights, where is the discussion in this country about having the President elected directly by the people? That is okay, for all times? Is that to come? We do not know, I am just asking. Is that to come? Because if we are going there—you know, one would understand that we have to get there by some intellectual prowess and not by subterfuge. But I give you the assurance that after they railroad this here, and they probably get it through the Senate, that will be the end of their interest in proportional representation.

I give you that assurance, because the only reason that they are interested in it now is because they see it as a way out of their present miasma. And we have to sit here and listen to them come and pontificate about what a wonderful thing it is, and what a wonderful thing they are doing and what wonderful reform—you know. It is like you cannot trust anything they say; you know. It is like yesterday I was listening to the Prime Minister justifying her Cabinet reshuffle, to “Broglie” the Cabinet. The Cabinet is growing like a cancer *[Laughter]* to the “eminent pain” of the host country, and she starts off with justification about her Government's performance. I would like to trust the Prime Minister's statement. First three items of government's performance: Bail out Clico. My mind was boggled because I was in the back bench of the PNM Government standing on that row—*[Points to the row]* taking issue with the PNM government when we were going to bail out Clico. As a matter of fact the record will show, my colleague here was Leader of Government Business and I had refused to vote because certain information was not available to me and the debate was adjourned. The debate was adjourned to the following day, because I publicly refused to vote for the bailout until certain things were satisfying to me and it was done, and the PNM bailed out Clico.

**Hon. Member:** Exactly! That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. K. Rowley:** As a matter of fact after the Clico bailout this Government spent two years criticizing the PNM's bailout of Clico. Lo and behold, yesterday, accomplishment number one of the coalition government: Bail out of Clico. And even before my shock had worn off, accomplishment number two, was food cards. I was in the Cabinet when Minister Rennie Dumas had to go and come and go and come with the Cabinet Notes until the Cabinet was satisfied and then gave the authority for the issuing of food cards in a PNM Cabinet. The fact that they increased the number to buy wild meat to go by a river and lime, that is a different story—[*Laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** Wedding; pay for wedding.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** We are now hearing that the food cards—the biggest accomplishment is that the food cards are buying wild meat for a river lime, and we know for a fact that the food cards were being used to sponsor the UNC people in Tobago who came to campaign for the THA election. [*Desk thumping*] We know that. So issuing of food cards is accomplishment number two. But the laugh of all loud laughter was the allocating of houses.

**Miss Cox:** Who build them?

**Dr. K. Rowley:** These are people whose record said that there ought not to be a Ministry of Housing and that public sector housing construction was the wrong policy. PNM ignored that and built and left thousands of houses there which they are now, some using them for their friends, their family, their “batchie”, whatever—[*Crosstalk*] and accomplishment number three is giving out of houses.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members, I need to listen to the speaker. You may continue.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I tell you all this, Madam Deputy Speaker, so you could understand why the population does not, would not, and must not trust the current cabal. [*Desk thumping*] Because even when it is patently clear and known to the population they will tell you it is something else, and it is coming from the top you know. Most tanks leak from the bottom—

**Hon. Member:** Ahhh!

**Dr. K. Rowley:**—this cabal tank leaks from the top. You cannot trust anything that they tell you; and justify it in the most lofty language as though we do not have any sense. I do not want to waste any more time with this. There is an election coming, meet us out there among the electors.

**Miss Cox:** That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you very much.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, now is a good time for us to break for lunch. The sitting is now suspended to 1.30 p.m.

**12.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**1.30 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

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

**The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Prakash Ramadhar):** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I say from the outset, that the Member for Diego Martin West chose to attack my hairstyle, but let me just say that he is stuck with his, [*Laughter*] and notwithstanding his best efforts he cannot change what he has. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Inside and outside.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** And I do not mean that in a physical sense; I am speaking now about his modus operandi. It is obvious to all who are willing to be truthful, to be honest and to be fair, that the chorus that he, as the Leader of the Opposition, has created in the society is to not trust this Government. That is a brilliant campaign. [*Desk thumping*] Brilliant campaign! But is it really of benefit to our society?

**Hon. Member:** No!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Let me just say that I was amazed and appalled at the same time that the expertise in wrongdoing that, clearly, the Member for Diego Martin West possesses is frightening, and I could only hope that it is purely theoretical rather than matters that had gone in the past or matters that are being prepared in the future, if ever he should become in a position of authority and power.

**Hon. Member:** Never!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** May I say that what is before us today really is a tectonic shift in the politics of this nation.

**Hon. Member:** “Yuh going back to dat again!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** It is as many who are willing to accept, admit that the greatest journey begins with a first step. Proportional representation—and I do not



intend to be long on my feet because, having heard the Member for Tabaquite, who well put the issues before the nation, there is little one could truly add in terms of the purpose of this change in our politics, but I think it is critically important for me, as the leader of the Congress of the People, following in the footsteps of the Member for Tunapuna and those who will come after us, to establish that the change that is necessary in this nation must come in this term.

The People's Partnership Government was elected on the basis of reform of the society. But I want to say that there are many on the other side and many others who clothe themselves in other offices who truly belong on the other side, who will criticize any effort to make change that is to the benefit of the people.

Permit me to read, Madam Deputy Speaker, from a document. It says:

“Participatory Democracy

Local Government.

Genuine democracy requires transparency, participation and accountability. This is what the Congress of the People will provide. If we change the lives of people in communities, we will change the life of the nation.

A COP government will provide citizens and communities with the opportunity to determine what priorities, projects and services will be delivered to the respective communities.

We will ensure that Regional Corporations and Municipalities discharge their responsibility for basic infrastructure, maintenance, services and other facilities, which are approved but not currently provided.

We will provide local government with the necessary funding and other resources from the central government to enable them to deliver quality services to the communities.

A Congress of the People Government will transform local government through:

- Devolution of authority and resources, within national policy guidelines, from central government ministries such as Community Development, Housing, Social Welfare, Sports, Planning & Development
- Equitable financial allocation to regions
- Adoption of the THA model for the regional development planning

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

- Collaborative governance procedures
- Regional coordination of the delivery of water, electricity and telephones
- Community-based security and rehabilitation arrangements
- Expanded responsibilities and increased compensation for local representatives [*Crosstalk*]

The Congress of the People will, as a matter of urgency, engage the population..." [*Laughter*]

I hear all the laughing because they may find it funny.

**Mr. Imbert:** We must find it funny.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They would find it funny because this is really the dagger in their heart.

**Hon. Member:** Exactly. That is right. Very true.

**Hon. Member:** True.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** And in the face of impending doom and disaster for their side, they will try to find humour in the most serious of the nation's affairs:

"The Congress of the People will, as a matter of urgency, engage the population in consultations for Constitutional Reform as anchored to the bedrock principle that the Constitutions should emerge out of the collective will and judgment of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If necessary a COP Government will table amendments to provide for and/or strengthen the provisions for:"—

And listen to these things:

- "Checks and balances to safeguard against the abuse of power
- Respect for the voices of minorities, as well as those of the majority
- A free press unfettered by government intimidation and uncompromised by government preference
- Access to official information
- Integrity in public life
- Eradication of corruption

- A right of recall for non-performing parliamentary representatives
- A fixed election date
- Opportunities for referenda process
- Limiting the Chief Executive to two successive terms as head of Government

Towards these ends, a COP Government will establish a Constitution Commission to engage in the widest possible consultation as a pre-requisite to constitutional reform. The COP is strongly of the view that the relationship between the Tobago House of Assembly and the Central Government needs to be revisited, with particular reference to the aspirations of the people of Tobago. The terms of the Constitution Commission will extend to the legislative provisions touching upon the THA and the unique status of Tobago.”

For those who do not yet understand what I just read—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Including “yuhself”.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—that was the manifesto of the Congress of the People in 2007. *[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Imbert:** “Why yuh banging de table?”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** And I take the opportunity to congratulate now—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Sharma:** Listen to something intelligent.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—and again, Mr. Winston Dookeran, for his vision.

**Hon. Members:** Yes, man. *[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Then I congratulate the present chairman of the Congress of the People who helped write this document, *[Desk thumping]* and therefore, the COP is completely committed to the reform of Trinidad and Tobago, *[Desk thumping]* not this morning, not last week, not in 2010, but from the very birth of our party.

May I then move to the People’s Partnership manifesto promise of 2010, and forgive if it sounds repetitive. It is taken almost word for word from the COP manifesto of 2007, under the heading: “The People are Sovereign”. That is something the other side will never want to accept. They will never want to

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

empower the people of Trinidad and Tobago. What this amendment does, contrary to all, contrary to the cacophony on the other side and all the misstatements of what the purpose is, this is what this amendment brings, empowering the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and permit me to read this.

“Our Government will create a continuing awareness among our People that they have a right to participate in the Governance of our country. We will incorporate mechanisms which will permit the Voice of the People to be heard and to be taken into account in the Policies which we adopt as a Government. Some of the actions that we will take are:

Constitutional Reform [*Desk thumping*]

As a matter of urgency, our government will engage the population in consultations for Constitutional Reform. We will observe the bedrock principle that the Constitution should emerge out of the collective aspirations, will and judgment of the people of Trinidad & Tobago. The difference will be that consultations will inform and influence documents produced and positions taken by Government. Our Government will table amendments to provide for and/or strengthen provisions for the following, as may be required:

- Checks and balances to safeguard against the abuse of power
- Respect for the voices of minorities, while acknowledging the will of the majority
- A free press unfettered by government intimidation and uncompromised by government preference
- Access to official information
- Integrity in public life
- Containment and Eradication of corruption” [*Interruption*]

Listen to this, please.

- “The introduction of Procurement Legislation which is fair, efficient and transparent” [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** Yeah, man. Yeah.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** “Mandatory provisions for making Local Government an integral part of the governance process

- A right of recall for non-performing parliamentary representatives
- Fixed election dates for national and local elections” [*Crosstalk*]

The Member for Diego Martin North/East will do well to listen to this one:

- “Mechanisms for a referendum process”

**Hon. Member:** Oh yes.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Referendum—and I shall deal with that in a moment.

- “Limiting the Prime Minister to two successive terms as Head of Government
- Rules governing the conduct of the Government”

Now the reason I took time—[*Interruption*] Could we have some respect for the House, if not for me?

**Hon. Member:** He has no respect for himself. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** He has no self-respect.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin North/East, I am hearing you loud and clear and I want to ask you to allow the Member for St. Augustine to speak in silence, please, because I want to hear him. You may continue, Member.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Thank you very much, not that I needed your protection as much as I needed now to reestablish—having heard His Excellency in this Parliament at the opening, I thought that some, notwithstanding the thickness of the cranium, containment that may have— [*Laughter, interruption and desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** Oy! Yeah, man! Yeah, yeah, yeah! Well said!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—might have learnt something if they did not learn it in their homes and in their schools—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Cox:** Madam Deputy Speaker, 36(4), please.

**Hon. Members:** “Whaa, wha!” [*Crosstalk*]

**Miss Cox:** Insulting language.

**Hon. Member:** That is not—no scientific fact. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** Define cranium.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Please. Continue, Member.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** It is important to establish that this Government came in on a promise of reform. We partnered. The COP came together with other partners, the UNC and others, and created the People's Partnership Government. We continue in the People's Partnership Government because we are committed to the promises we made from 2007 and in 2010 to fulfil those promises. Some may say, with great cynicism, that we—that is the People's Partnership Government and the COP—we would only talk about reform; we will talk about all sorts of wonderful concepts, but they would never see the day of light—the light of day. Today—[*Laughter*] The day of light, yes.

**Miss Cox:** The day of light.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Today is a day of light in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The darkness which had covered this nation, where government after government after government, until this time, spoke of constitutional reform; they spoke of all the processes and consultations and where are they today? Where are those reports? Have they ever been put into effect?

**Hon. Member:** Balisier House.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** I do not know. I do not think they would want them in Balisier House because it is anathemic, the suggestions to reform our Constitution because the power brokers—and that is what it is all about.

**Hon. Member:** This is not relevant.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Politics was all about power, not for the use and benefit of the population, but for the benefit of those who yield it, for their own personal ambitions, for their own benefit and never really in the interest of the nation.

Today is that first step from the old Chinese proverb. That journey of a thousand miles has begun today. Proportional representation is probably the single most important development in electoral reform. What this means, as simple as it is—and they speak with derisive terms about you will get one alderman. Well, let me tell you. In the past—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** You will get none.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** In the past, the population would have voted in local government elections; they would never have known who these aldermen would be. They were then selected by the power brokers, the party leaders and their cabal. And let us make no bones about it, in any organization there must be a group—a group—that speaks. So if they want to say a cabal, it exists in many different places.

**Hon. Member:** What! What!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** It exists in the PNM. It exists—[*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Ah! At last! There is a cabal.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Yes, and we should look at the definition of what it is and not be distracted by the term and the usage of these things.

**Miss Cox:** Admission.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** I made the point and I will repeat it for those who do not want to hear, that in the past after the election, the population will then sometimes be shocked and surprised as to who their aldermen are, who their mayors would be, and we think that is wrong.

**1.45 p.m.**

If it is elected governance and you give power unto those who are to look after your resource management, then you have at least a duty. The very least is that you must know who those persons are, or who potentially they are. This new law changes that. It changes that.

Let me just say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that were we to take the view—that is COP and the People's Partnership Government—that we should leave things as they were, then the world would have moved forward, the society would have moved forward, but yet the politicians would have remained as dinosaurs, which is what the PNM administrations of the past wanted us to be. Soon to be extinct, because as the population moves forward and their expectation rises in terms of the participation they want to see in their governance, then we would have been made irrelevant as some of them already are, and should rightly be so. Because if their mindset is that we should not improve our governance structures, then why in the world should they go to the population and say, you, give us your vote, give us the power, and after election day we have no need for you, we do not need to hear from you. You are irrelevant until the next campaign begins when renewed promises, renewed expectations are put into the public place, and the population—the voter—has to say okay, I accept this lie now.

This is change happening before the eyes of our society. They may giggle, they may laugh, but they must confront what is happening today. I am grateful from having heard the tone from the other side that we do not need a constitutional majority to change this law, because I suspect we may not get the

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

support to make a critically important change for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but I congratulate all my colleagues on this side who understand this need and will partner with the people to make this necessary and simple change.

Madam Deputy Speaker, left to the PNM—and I had thought and I had hoped that things would have changed with the new Members. There are good people on that side. Very good people. Very good people, but numbed somehow into the philosophy that any change that empowers people is really a dagger in your heart. If you do not accept that you must empower people and partner with them, then you will be relegated to the dustbin of history, political history, and that for some will be a welcome thing. I say I am not a part of that. I believe in a healthy democracy, I believe in good opposition, I believe in debated and well-articulated positions, and we have seen that happen from some Members on the other side that add at the end of the day to better law for our people. But to hear the Leader of the Opposition—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Mc Donald:** Lovely.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—do nothing else but to criticize for the sake of criticism—[*Crosstalk*]*—that is what it is. [Crosstalk]*

He did not attend, for a single moment, to the possibilities and opportunities that exist here and now, but found only the problems because his ambition really is to what? To preach the mantra: do not trust the Government, do not trust the Government, do not trust the Government. [*Desk thumping*] I say, on the other side and the people of Trinidad and Tobago trust this: they trust the PNM to ensure that they are entrenching themselves and never giving or opening up the transparency of Government to the people of Trinidad and Tobago; trust the PNM to do things against the will and intent of the people of Trinidad and Tobago; trust the PNM to never act in the interest of the people. Always act in their own interest. Let me tell you why I say these things.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition here today say, “If you wanted to debate proportional representation, we should have created it in the wider community, in the wider society.” Where has he been for the last generation? Proportional representation has been in the public domain and debated for more than a generation.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** He said so.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** But he ever participated in any of it?

**Hon. Member:** No! Never does.



**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Let me just say what a shame it is that this country gave the authority to its Government to consider amendments to the Constitution, indeed, to reform the existing 1976 republican Constitution. To that end, this Government put out into the public space widely held consultations. We had 17 consultations throughout this nation dealing with all of the issues as I have read before. This Government's point of view is that whatever Constitution we wish to have must come from the voices of the people. Not by others who prepare a document and then put it out there and say let us hear what you have to say about that—a Mickey Mouse sort of consultation. We went to the people throughout, and I want to congratulate immediately my friend and I think a future leader of the PNM, the Member for Diego Martin Central, for he was one of two PNM persons who came to the consultation, and you enriched the evening, and I thank you for that. [*Desk thumping*] The other was Penelope Beckles—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** Oh yes. “Yeh, yeh, yeh.” [*Member knocks desk*]

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—made wonderful contributions to the process.

**Dr. Browne:** May I?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Why is it the Leader of the Opposition—[*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Accept your compliment.

**Dr. Browne:** I am returning the favour.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** You do not need to give a standing ovation, please. [*Laughter*] The Leader of the Opposition—what was it? Was it beneath him to go with the people and consult, and tell us from the floor what you want in the Constitution? To debate—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Cadiz:** “You sure he is leader?”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** “I ain't going dey. Not today, eh.”

**Miss Cox:** When it is your turn stand up and say that.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—or to put forward his proposal for the new Constitution? Was it too much for him to even send an emissary to deal with those issues and put forward proposals so that we could all be enriched? What was wrong? But to come here today and criticize and ask about whether you were told, whether you were told this, whether you were told that, well; did you come to tell when the public was there in the public space? It was carried in the media. [*Crosstalk*] Why did they not come? [*Crosstalk*] So I want to know: are they ever

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

interested in changing the systems that we have in this country? They could call it weak, but let me tell you the greatest strength of Trinidad and Tobago is in its institutions.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** And where we have seen weaknesses in the institutions, we want to take steps to strengthen institutions. Not to strengthen politicians you know, not to strengthen Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition or whoever will occupy those spaces in the future, but to empower the institutions with the permission of the people to really be a check and balance on political power and manipulation.

**Dr. Browne:** Which institution?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** You ask what institutions? Well maybe when the report comes from the constitutional reform consultations we will share it with the entire nation and you will be part of that, rest assure, and you will see the sorts of things that the people of Trinidad and Tobago say they want to see. But let me take the opportunity now, Madam Deputy Speaker, to indicate that one of the highest priorities in the consultations we heard almost universally was the need for proportional representation into an electoral system.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not true.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** The other things that they asked for of the highest level—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Cox:** One person.

**Mr. Imbert:** One person.

**Miss Cox:** One person.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** I allow the dregs to settle.

**Hon. Member:** Dregs to settle?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** One person. One of their own people.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a fact and we were dealing with the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. Throughout every single consultation, almost in every single opportunity, the population said that this country needed proportional representation. What they also said they needed, was

referenda. What they also agreed with, was the fixtures of Prime Minister. What they also agreed with was fixed election dates. That is anathema to the PNM. One would have forgotten, and let me remind this nation, the disrespect shown to the population. Suddenly they are all paragons and defenders of democracy. Where were they when the local government election was put off year after year after year after year?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Three times.

**Mr. Cadiz:** They forget that.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** “Wow!” You had councillors sitting for how many years?

**Mr. De Coteau:** Seven years.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Seven years more than a parliamentarian without election, under the guise of what? Reform?

**Mr. Cadiz:** PNM styling.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** PNM styling. Use the words, give soaring language, give wonderful speeches before a contrived audience with the polish of an Obama-style campaign. But I say these things and this goes across the board, soaring language and high principle statements grounded in ill intent will create a disconnect, because your words do not match your actions by what you truly believe and, therefore, there will be a failure.

So I want to suggest to all of those who are in this Parliament, having taken an oath, to serve the people of this country, to stop the games, stop the talk and really get down to the promises that the people of Trinidad and Tobago expect of this Government. And of you Members of the Opposition, do not oppose for the sake of opposition, for the sake of scoring points only. Oppose if you have merit, but I have not heard your leader give a real reason why this legislation is bad, other than his contrived and convoluted and almost criminally suggesting the most improper of motives behind it.

**Hon. Member:** Criminally?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** But I stand—*[Interruption]* Yes, of course, any time you subvert democracy I consider that a criminal act. I say that I speak here in support of this Bill. As the leader of the Congress of the People, my party supports the introduction of proportional representation.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Five people?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** We will take it in degrees. It is a new concept. They may laugh and they may joke, and that is all that they do in the Parliament. That is all that they do. They laugh, they joke and they remonstrate, they criticize—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Cadiz:** “Kicksin.”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—and “they kicksin’ in Parliament”, when a most important and historic moment—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Historic?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Yes, it is historic because when this thing is unleashed on you, proportional representation—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** “Is now we getting there.”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—what it means the old statement that we will fight alone and we will lose alone, that is their philosophy. But do they not understand the new generation of voters—and that is not age centric, eh. The new generation of voters is very different and they will not support the old party structures. They will support ideas and what they consider to be in their interest and in the interest of the nation. And therefore, what this does as it moves forward into the wider population, into the next general election that the Prime Minister has already committed publicly several times, that proportional representation will be part of the next general election.

**Mr. Imbert:** How? “How yuh doing dat?” [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** “Alyuh leave we out ah alyuh bacchanal.”

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members on this side, I am pleading with you. You continuously disturb a speaker when they are on their feet making a debate. I want to ask you to refrain. Take some notes and your chance will come when you will be able to speak. So I want to ask you to allow the Member to speak in silence so I can hear. Member, you may continue.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They are just making me take longer than I want on a very simple point. The point I am making is very simply for those, once again—listen, if you do not want to hear it I will repeat it, so you have to hear it. Proportional representation will be, as Mr. Dookeran has described it, the removal of gatekeepers, where no one feels that they are supreme leader of anything, but that their power structure must now be shared, and the new electorate wants that. The criticism that it will create instability, they want the stability of when they

hear, they speak and “not a damn dog bark” as they say. The days for that are over. And therefore, the emergence of new political entities, small parties—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** What is it your brother say?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They will continue you know, and maybe I am too sensitive because I still care about them. But I am not one with a hearing aid to switch it off.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am making the point and I would ask, please, because I am truly listening or have listened to His Excellency the President, and I really believe that we need to set the right examples in this House.

**Mr. Imbert:** Stop bringing the President in this.

**2.00 p.m.**

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** You cannot expect the behaviour in parts of Trinidad and Tobago to be disciplined if we do not have it in our Parliament. You cannot expect the people to feel that we are serious about their business if all you do is make jokes and distract when important matters are being discussed, and I for one will tell you that when others are speaking, I do not interrupt them. Not because what—I may agree with them, because I think they have the right to be heard because people elected you here and you have a purpose to fulfil, and whether you want to or not, I will respect the people’s right to have put you here to be their representatives.

I am making the point, proportional representation will change the dynamics of politics in a structured way. [*Desk thumping*] The People’s Partnership was the first coalition Government; real coalition government in this country. Of course, it was not perfect—it is not perfect—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** NAR.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—but it was the first effort where independent political parties came together, not giving up who they are, not giving up their right, not giving up their identity but working together with a common view, and sometimes divergent views on things, but working together in the interest of the country and of the population. That is the check and balance the country now expects. That is a new standard.

The one way to ensure the success of future coalition governments—and anybody who believes that this country will not have coalition government, you

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

really are dinosaur-like in your thinking. If you do not open yourselves to that reality then you will be totally irrelevant to the politics.

Therefore, proportional representation: what does it really do? It gives, as we have said in our manifesto of 2007 and in 2010—respect to the voice of the minority so that no vote in the country will be wasted. There are some seats, Port of Spain South as an example, where there are many COP supporters, many UNC supporters—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “[*Inaudible*] supporters, where have them?”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—and they do not believe that their vote will count. As there are PNM supporters in some seats—Caroni Central as an example, St. Augustine—who believe that I could vote and it would not matter because, at the end of the day, who gets the majority of votes gets all of the power; all of it, not a part of it, all of it! Winner takes all; loser gets none!

So when you hear examples of Tobago, what happened earlier in the year; that is a real life example. What you heard about the ONR, that is a real life example; what you heard about the COP in 2007, that is a real life example. But what it does—and it is just not partisan, you know. This empowers you, if you do not know it, it means that your voters, in other parts of the country where you traditionally have not been able to have any electoral success, their votes will now count.

**Mr. Sharma:** That is right!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** It will now count! Do you not care about these things?

**Mr. Sharma:** Very important!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** And if you do not care about it, the people of Trinidad and Tobago do care. What it means is that people who never voted before because they think “my vote will not count”, will come out and vote.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They may even get involved in the democracy of their nation. That is what we mean by participatory democracy; that you participate in your democracy. Because election date—to say that you have elections every five years and you fix the date, that is not democracy, you know.

We have seen the abuse of our citizens and that is why I became involved in the politics where all promises are made, and you say, “Okay, let us give them a chance, maybe they serious about it this time”. You vote and nothing about their

promises are delivered, and next five years, you face the same ignoble efforts of persons who call themselves “honourable”. Go back to the population and make promises and because of the system of the past, it is either one or the other, you did not choose what is best, “yuh know”, you chose the one you did not like more [*Crosstalk*] to be in Opposition, and the one you disliked less, you let them go into Government. And there was no democracy during that period because democracy is about the voice of the people. I will not say the voice of the people is the voice of God here.

**Dr. Browne:** You should not say it!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** I will say that the voice of the people is what authorizes you to do things on their behalf. But what happened—I will give you the closest example—when this country said, “Listen, we doh want smelter”. “That is real life examples, eh!” Their friends will not have forgotten these things. The Prime Minister of the day who had all of the power, all of it, although he did not have all of the votes—I cannot remember how much per cent. Anil, how much per cent votes they had in 2007?

**Mr. Roberts:** Twenty-eight per cent.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Twenty-eight per cent votes that the PNM had?

**Hon. Member:** Yeah, minority votes.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** “Yuh hearing this?”

**Mr. Imbert:** You believe that?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Maybe I am wrong. That is a “hard-off” record.

**Mr. Sharma:** Minority government. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** A small minority position of percentage of the votes had all of the power, and when the population said we did not want smelter, the supreme commander—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** [*Inaudible*] “talking dat stupidity!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—the supreme leader, the general-in-command, said you shall have three of them.

**Mr. Roberts:** “Not ah votes cast. Ah votes!” [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** When they came about with the dreaded property tax and the population said we did not want it—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** “Howai say he bringing it!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—the COP led an initiative called the “Axe the Tax” campaign on the basis that there should be no taxation without representation, because their version of the property tax was this: they will value your home, put a tax on it, and the money that they collect from you went into the Consolidated Fund. There was no benefit to the communities that were taxed. There were evaluations that led some to the great fear and the likelihood that they may not have been able to pay because—a lot of them do not understand how our citizens live. They invest almost all of their life’s work into their homes—pretty it up, air-condition it, put nice tiles [*Crosstalk*] and that is something to be applauded.

What that meant was that when they came to value your home, they valued it at an extraordinary high rate, high rate, and the taxes you had to pay may not have been able—some people may not have been able to bear it. We said we do not want—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** What is the relevance?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** I will give you the relevance! The people are irrelevant to you, Sir.

**Mr. Imbert:** Hurry up!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** But I find them extremely relevant and the thoughts and wishes of the people are very relevant, and I walk the streets with many of my—in fact, all my colleagues here. That is why possibly we are on this side because we knew that the population spoke and what they wanted. They had no mechanism whatsoever—

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “And where the population now?”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—to influence government’s decision. It took a general election to remove the bane of property taxes.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Wipe yuh out in Chaguanas West.” [*Laughter*]

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** When the population said—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** And in Tobago.

**Mr. Imbert:** And in Tobago. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** “They could laugh about Chaguanas West, yuh could laugh about Tobago—[*Interruption*]



**Mr. Imbert:** I had a good laugh!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—that is the reality of the politics. If you feel secure in your own seats—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Good laugh!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—my friend from Chaguanas West will deal with you! *[Laughter]*

**Hon. Member:** “A-a, a-a! Wat is dat!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am making the point and these are critical points for the empowerment of our people. There is no mechanism in our Constitution today, today, for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to tell a government during its term that we do not like your policy. This Government has committed itself to referenda. What that means and I think it is the most sacred and important development in the political history of this nation—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Browne:** Why do you not put this to a referenda?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** You will get it, wait—that issues of grave national importance, great national importance—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Sharma:** And he might take it!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—put it to the vote of the people during your term. So if a government has a concern and there are loud voices saying, “We don’t want this or we want it the other way”, we give the people the right to vote in referenda as to whether they want this thing or they do not want it. That is democracy coming alive. No one else will do it but this Government, and we have promised to do it in this term, and I say here, in the sacred hall, that if it is not done, I will have no part because my purpose in Government would have failed—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** “It done fail.” *[Laughter]*

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—and I do not wish to be a failure in government. These are the things that we look forward to: the power of referenda. So the issue now of the highway to Point Fortin, our society, some are saying that they do not want it, others are saying they want it—

**Hon. Member:** Referendum!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—but there is no mechanism now to test it for the people to say what they want. It is left to a few to say they do not want it and a few others

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

to say whether they want it, and we have to speculate what the wider will of the people is.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, these are the things that we look forward to in this term; these things that will change the politics; these things that would change the people, because there is tremendous frustration in the old political realm, whether at local government, whether at central government. The systems that we have seen, good as they were when they were created, were intended to be run by men and women with noble ideals, but then we have found now that the politics has been distorted where the service of the people is no longer important, where it is the corruption of the institutions of State. Corruption does not only mean about money, “yuh know”, [*Crosstalk*] it means about—

**Dr. Browne:** Principle.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** You know, they could throw bags, they could throw what, but I will throw action.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yeah, yeah! [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Yes—we are talking about the systems that need changing, and as we put it before, unless we change the system of government, the system of governance, in elections yet to come, all you will have are changed faces with the “same ole same ole”, and this is the time that we take the steps to fulfil the promises that we made to the people.

Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition—he is not here, he just dissipates himself as soon as he finishes his minimum duty to the people.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Where your leader?

**Miss Cox:** Where yours?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yeah, where yours?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Doing the work of the people.

**Hon. Members:** Nah, nah, nah! [*Crosstalk*]

**Miss Cox:** Where yours?

**Mr. Imbert:** “Ole talk!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Let me tell you about trust. You know what trust is? Trust is a very fragile thing.

**Mr. Sharma:** “PNM eh no ‘bout dat!”

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Doh cry, doh cry.” [*Laughter*]

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Trust is something—let me tell you, you know—  
[*Continuous laughter*]

**Mr. Roberts:** “Yuh get bad over the holidays, boy!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** What! Carry on, carry on! It takes a real man to accept his emotions, eh.

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Yeah. It takes a real human being to have compassion. It takes a real citizen to make the sacrifices that are necessary to bring change.  
[*Desk thumping and continuous crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I am about to complete my contribution to this debate, I know they do not want to hear about trust, but trust is when you give your word, you fulfil it; if you make a promise, you deliver. And I ask for all citizens, contrary to the noises from the other side and which are all self-serving because it is a campaign of destruction to destroy—do not trust this Government that they do not know what they are doing or what they have done—

**Dr. Browne:** That is it!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—and continue to do, what they do is that they destroy the very organs of State. They have attacked the Office of the Commissioner of Police—

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They have attacked the DPP.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Nah, Ramlogan did that!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They have attacked the Judiciary.

**Hon. Member:** Ramlogan did that!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They have attacked all of the—they attacked, without doubt, the media.

**Dr. Browne:** Resmi!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They have attacked the institutions of state that are to protect the society [*Laughter and crosstalk*] and they have attacked the very system of governance, and that is why you will find that there is a dissonance in

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

the society where the population is showing a very frontal lack of respect for institutions, and they have—[*Crosstalk*] maybe we all have but certainly you have—contributed to the lack of respect for institutions.

Any society that does not have a respected institutional base, any society that does not respect authority is a society that is going to fall apart but we are not going to permit that. We will give that vent to the people to empower them so that they will respect the institutions as we empower and fix those institutions because of the problems we have seen and the failures of some of those institutions. I ask all because we will be judged, as you want to judge us now, not only today but on election day in 2015 when it is constitutionally due. As much as you would want it earlier, I say no—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** “A-a!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—because we have a lot of work to do.

**Dr. Browne:** “Dai Kamla!”

**Hon. Member:** A lot, a lot, a lot!

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** And we have promises which we made and we are working to fulfil [*Desk thumping*] and we will fulfil before that time.

**Dr. Browne:** “When Gypsy cross!” [*Laughter*]

**2.15 p.m.**

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Let me just say as an example, it seems almost fashionable now for everyone to speak about procurement legislation. How many years was it, how many years has that been promised to this population? When was it that the PNM ever made a meaningful effort to bring procurement legislation into this House to be made into law? The last effort we made the PNM withdrew their support from the Joint Select Committee when we shamed them by letting the population know that they were not contributing to this movement of this thing that we promised to the people, that the people said we want you as this Government to deliver, then they came back in.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** They were forced back in.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Augustine has expired.

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I want to thank my colleagues on all sides for extending my time and if they had not interrupted I would have long been done because I do not have to wait for standing orders to respect the time of this Parliament. Whatever I say I make it as quickly as I can and do not try to repeat. However, I would just take a few more minutes to close. We were on the point of procurement legislation.

I am more than pleased to say to this nation and to this House, with the work of Sen. Tewarie, the work of all those who participated in the Joint Select Committee, the work of Members of Cabinet, that Procurement legislation is before the LRC and should be put onto the legislation agenda in this term. [*Desk thumping*] A promise delivered!

**Mr. Imbert:** Delivered when?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** You can trust [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Trust who?

**Hon. P Ramadhar:** I would ask the population; listen, listen, so that in the face of truth all you have in response is: “Trust who? Trust who?” We trust the truth and we trust delivery. I was amazed to hear—imagine this Madam Deputy Speaker—the Leader of the Opposition and some on his side speak about campaign finance reform when it became—[*Crosstalk*—yes, yes, they spoke about it, a couple weeks ago. Maybe I misread it, but I thought and I said “wow”, how interesting that they are now talking about party finance reform and campaign finance reform. That is after this Government put it in its manifesto, the COP put it in its manifesto, Carolyn when? In 2007?

**Hon. Member:** Not Carolyn.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Yes, that is my Carolyn, yes, my Chairman. [*Crosstalk*] I am sorry. That was not for the record. I do not mean to breach any Standing Order. I am making the point that the COP was committed to that from 2007. It came into Government and our partners agreed to it and I am pleased to announce that this Government is pursuing apace the issue of campaign finance reform. [*Desk thumping*] Let me just say this, that my party, the COP, as much as you would like to say it is dead, it is of no relevance—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** “Is nuh we saying that.”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:**—it is the most relevant of parties because we now hold the hopes and ambitions of the future of politics in this nation. Not only did we

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. P. RAMADHAR]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

put it in our manifesto in 2007, not only did we partner in 2010 on that issue, because it is at the core of it, one of the major problems in the politics of the day when the population truly believes and, with good reason I imagine, having the history of O'Halloran and others coming down the line, that it is the political financiers whose interests are served by Government, after Government, after Government. Little do we know as a people, the average citizen, who pays for what and what benefit they get in return.

**Hon. Member:** They must know.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** They do not, and they suspect almost everything that is done in Government is for selfish gain and I say a healthy distrust is good, but this Government is not just saying and talking it, we are doing it. Indeed my party hosted on June 09 this year a conference on the very issue of campaign finance reform/party finance reform. We had a wonderful dissertation from Dr. Morgan Job, Sunity Maharaj, Dr. Patrick Watson and others because we do not just talk the talk, we actually take steps to make it happen.

So as I take my seat, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me just say that change is never easy but it is critically important. A small step on to a great journey is critical. The others on that side will criticize everything that enhances the rights of the people but we are the People's Partnership.

We partner with the people of Trinidad and Tobago to deliver them the things that they asked for and we promised to have delivered. It is to me a sacred duty to fulfil the sacred duties of the manifesto and my party and all of us in the partnership are committed to those promises. I do not have the time today to go through all of the things that we promised and have already delivered. I do not have the time today to go through all of the things that we have promised and are in the process of delivering, but I want to assure that once the COP is in this Government, the things that we promised in our manifesto must be delivered to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And I thank and congratulate all of our colleagues who share that same vision because I do not want to sound selfish for a moment but I must speak for my party and our position in Government and the reason we continue. It is not about taking a "wuk, anybody job" or anything like that. It is about the service of the people. It is about making sacrifices to fulfil for our children the expectation that we have for the best for them, to create the society we want for them. So that if the work does not start today, and as my friend I think you used the term, "if not us who, and if not now when?" I say it is we who must do it and it is we who must do it now. [*Desk thumping*] And I thank all on this side and I support this Bill. God Bless you.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you Madam Deputy Speaker. The last speaker spent in excess of 45 minutes—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** What is wrong with that?

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—and would you believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, the last person who contributed is the Chairman of the Legislative Review Committee whose job is to scrutinize legislation, not a word about the Bill before the House, [*Desk thumping*] not a word about a single clause, no explanation of anything. The presenter of the Bill also failed miserably in that respect and is now complaining about the fact that the Leader of the Opposition was not here to listen to his pie-in-the-sky contribution, but he has left. You see, do as I say but not as I do. Typical, typical!

But the thing is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the contributions of the Member for Tabaquite and the Member for St. Augustine, I am sorry, I have no alternative but to describe them as pathetic because they have not dealt with the issue at all and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have in my possession the relevant pages of the “yellow thing”, People’s Partnership manifesto of 2010, the section on “Participatory Democracy” which begins on page 15 of that document; it goes on to pages 16 and 17. I have the local government manifesto of the Partnership of 2010. I have read them both from cover to cover in the last—it took about five minutes. I went outside and printed them in the lunch break; it took about five minutes.

**Hon. Member:** You look inspired.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** And the thing is, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is not a word in either one of those manifestos, not the general election manifesto of 2010 or the local government election of 2010; not a word about introducing a system of proportional representation. [*Desk thumping*] Not a word! And the former Minister of Local Government, who still, for some curious reason, believes he is the Minister of Local Government because he gets up when they say Minister of Local Government—I saw on the TV last night that he is now the Minister of Works; but whatever, if he wants to believe he is the Minister of Local Government, no problem.

In the consultations that he spoke about, not a word, nothing in the White Paper with respect to local government that they published. Nothing in any

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

documentation, in any forum anywhere with respect to introducing proportional representation for the selection of aldermen. Not a word! And this is a Government that says it will always consult the people. What is it? Go and listen to the people first and then do; and they try to explain away the fact that they have not consulted with anyone in this country with respect to the use of proportional representation for the selection of aldermen within a local government system. Not a person have they consulted with except themselves. They try to explain that away by saying, “if not now, when?”. This is—[Interruption] They consult with no one except themselves. You see it is also transparent. The Member for St. Augustine is clearly still “bazodee” with licks that they got in Chaguanas West; “is bazodee they bazodee”, Madam Deputy Speaker, “bazodee”. “You know you get wipe out” two to one in your heartland—[Interruption]

**Mr. Warner:** Two and a half.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Sorry. I apologize. Two point five to one, almost three to one, “you get wipe out in your heartland, you lose every polling division in Chaguanas, central Trinidad, and yuh getting up here and talking about trust to the people” and the people have elected you and you have a mandate. [*Member steups*] My God!

**Hon. Member:** Home gone!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes, home gone! “Yuh house bun down and you talking about you have the mandate of the people.” The fact is, Madam Deputy Speaker, setting all jokes aside, it is obvious that the ruling coalition will have a problem in winning a single seat in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation in the next local election. They will have a problem. They will have a problem even winning one. “They facing zero, lose every polling division in that last by-election so they sure to lose all the seats in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, Madam Deputy Speaker.” So they will be irrelevant in “dey” heartland.

So how does one deal with a problem like that, that with the current system of first past the post the likelihood is that you are going to get wiped out and have no councillors in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation? You come up with this hare-brained scheme and drop it on us on the eve of the election, like a thief in the night, Madam Deputy Speaker, this hare-brained scheme. I did some very brief calculations to see what sort of vote count is required in order to get one of these four aldermen under this new system, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Let us use a hypothetical scenario where 24,000 votes are cast, and there are four aldermen now—I would go into that in a little while, the fact that there is no



rationale whatsoever in the magical selection of four aldermen. Just let me give you some idea of the numbers: Port of Spain has 38,000 electors, they will get four aldermen; San Fernando has 49,000, they will get four aldermen; Arima has 26,000, four aldermen; Point Fortin has 16,000 voters, four aldermen; Chaguanas has 61,000 voters, four aldermen; Couva has 37,000, four aldermen; Diego Martin has 85,000 electors, four aldermen; Mayaro/Rio Claro has 27,000 electors, four aldermen; Penal/Debe has 72,000, four aldermen; Princes Town, 74,000, four aldermen; Sangre Grande, 52,000, four aldermen; San Juan/Laventille has 133,000 electors, four aldermen; Siparia has 68,000, four aldermen, and Tunapuna/Piarco 162,000 voters, four aldermen. Who is the mathematical genius who came up with this application? “It doh matter how many voters yuh have, it doh matter what the size of your region is, it doh matter what is going on inside of there, four aldermen for you.”

**2.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Warner:** Where is the proportional representation?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** That is not proportional—thank you, Member for Chaguanas West. [*Desk thumping*] That could never be a fair and equitable system that has any connection whatsoever with proportional representation. So that in Mayaro/Rio Claro, with 27,000 voters, you have the same number of aldermen as in Tunapuna/Piarco with 162,000 voters. Who is the genius that came up with this; this magic number of four that is supposed to promote equity and transparency and fairness and all that pie in the sky stuff we just heard from the Member?

**Mr. Warner:** The cabal.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes, the cabal. “It ha’ to be the cabal because the point—what is—there is only one corporation dat bothering dem yuh know.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Chaguanas.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Chaguanas West.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Chaguanas bothering them.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Stick in dey throat.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Because they are fairly confident. They have done their polls, as people say. They have looked at the result of the last election and “Dey know is wipeout coming.”

**Mr. Warner:** Green.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** So what? Let me do the maths for you. Let us say 24,000 votes are cast and you have four aldermen. The quota to get one alderman is 6,000. So party number one gets 20,999 votes, 87.5 per cent of the vote. “Yuh know how much aldermen dey get?” Three. Party number two gets 3,001 votes, 12 per cent of the vote. How much aldermen dey get?” One. That is this crazy formula they have come up with, because it works on the principle of the remainder.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Um-hmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** So if party number one that has 20,999 votes, is allocated the aldermen, 6,000 votes each—so alderman one is 6,000; alderman two is 12,000; alderman three is 18,000—then you subtract that 18,000 from the number of votes that they receive from 20,999. You are left with 2,999 votes for the fourth alderman. “But de next man get 3,001, so he beat you.” So he gets the alderman. So a party that could get 12 per cent of the vote in a corporation will get one alderman. “Yuh see what dey want to do in Chaguanas?” Because that is a—I suspect that is what they would get, about 12 per cent of the vote in Chaguanas; 12 per cent. That is fair and equitable? That is proportional representation? So the party that gets 87 per cent will get three; the party that gets 12 per cent will get one? That is a—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Warner:** Who did that “maths”?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I did that based on just two parties contesting.

Let us look at three parties contesting—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** “Worse yet.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—which is more likely in our current circumstances. To get three aldermen, all you need is 14,001 votes; three aldermen, because you are getting the first two with 12 and to get the third one—remember you are splitting 6,000 in three—all you need is 2,001 votes to get your third alderman.

On the flip side, the third party—all that party needs in order to get the one alderman is 8.3 per cent of the vote, 2,001 votes. So with 2,001 votes, out of 24,000, “yuh get a alderman.” If is four parties, all you need is 1,501 votes out of 24,000; 6 per cent of the votes to get one alderman. Does that make any sense to you, Madam Deputy Speaker? And you see, I would have expected the former Minister of Local Government and the “champion of democracy” from St. Augustine, to go into these details and explain to us the thought process. Why are you implementing a system which you claim is equitable and fair and transparent,

where a party that gets 6 per cent of the vote could get one out of four aldermen in a corporation such as Chaguanas? And it is obvious, Madam Deputy Speaker, they want to somehow maintain some little kind of toehold in the Borough of Chaguanas, because using the current system they would have no representation. So when they are facing—when they come to meet with the Borough of Chaguanas—what they would consider to be a hostile corporation, because all the councillors and all the aldermen will be from some other party.

The conclusions are inescapable, that this is what has been done. Why this system of proportional representation? Why are you using the largest remainder system?

**Dr. Browne:** None of them explained it.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Nobody has told us about other systems of proportional representation that you could use. Why have you used this one, which is clearly intended to allow parties that get a fraction of the vote to get an alderman in the corporation? [*Desk thumping*] Is that representation? So 90 per cent of the people vote for other parties and 6 per cent vote for one party but somehow, because they just happen to have the one extra vote required, they could have a seat in the corporation?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I mean, this whole thing, as I said, it is just pathetic. I would expect these honourable men and women on the other side to come into this Parliament—you already have everybody suspicious of you—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Um-hmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Because you brought this thing—imagine election called—because there are legal issues here as well—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Mc Donald:** “Um-hmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—an election date has been called, using an existing law and before the election is held “yuh changing de law” in between. [*Desk thumping*] There has to be something wrong with that. People would have expectations that the aldermen would be selected in a particular way when you call the election.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Um-hmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Yuh call it and after yuh call it, now yuh want to change it to favour yourself? And talking about trust us?” Trust us?

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

I also want to explain to the population, because some people may listen to the Member for St. Augustine. I took notes of what he said. I wonder if he listens to himself. He said that the Prime Minister has promised that proportional representation would be part of the next general election.

**Hon. Members:** “Hmmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** He said when proportional representation is unleashed on you, you will find out.

**Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Unleashed. “So dey go unleash dat on us on this side and unleash it on the population. Wha, is a pit bull? Is a dangerous dog yuh unleashing on us?” And this has not been discussed in any forum in this country in the last three years. Since May 2010, nobody talked about this.

I just want to put on record, because I do not expect a lawyer who has had many years’ service at the Bar to be misrepresenting the provisions of the Constitution in this way. Thank God “dey cyah” unleash anything on us.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Praise God!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** And I am going now to section 54(3)(b) of the Constitution and let the me indicate what it says.

“In so far as it alters—

...(b) sections 22, 23, 24, 26, 28 to 34...”

I am going to take my time.

“38 to 40, 46, 49(1), 51, 55, 61, 63, 64, 68, 69, 71, 72, 87 to 91, 93, 96... 97, 109, 115—”

[*Cellphone rings*] Seems to have a lot of phones here today.

“138, 139”

[*Cellphone continues to ring*] It is all right, I will wait for you to turn it off.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Is de iPad.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Is de iPad.” It is all right, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is okay. These things happen. These things happen. I know there is no disrespect intended. I know that.

**Hon. Member:** Secure yourself.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** But let me go back. Section 54(3)(b)(i)—well section 54(3)(b) outlines all the sections of the Constitution that cannot be altered. It says:

“...a Bill for an Act under this section shall not be passed by Parliament unless it is supported at the final vote thereon—

(i) in the House of Representatives, by the votes of not less than three-quarters of all members of the House;”

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Um-hmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** So if you want to change section 40 or change section 72, you require three-quarters of the votes in House of Representatives and for those who do not know how you work that out, you take the 41 Members of Parliament, you add the Speaker, you get 42 and then you take 75 per cent of that number, three-quarters of 42, and you get 32 votes. The last time I checked, the partnership had 27 and it is going down. So thank God—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** God bless.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—they do not have 32 votes—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** God bless.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—and they will never get 32 votes. [*Desk thumping*] So they will never be able to unleash proportional representation on this population without the agreement of the Members of this House. Because you heard what the same Member for St. Augustine said? “Dat dey happy dat dey only need a simple majority to pass dis Bill?”

**Hon. Members:** Yeah.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Yuh hear de dictatorial tendencies?” And you have the Prime Minister talking about a “Government of national unity” yesterday. If she had her way she wants “to hold out olive branch to all kinda people”; to the Leader of the Opposition, to the Member for Chaguanas West, hold out olive branch: “If I had my way there would be a Government of national unity. And then today, 24 hours later, the Member for St. Augustine—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Hypolite:** Unleashed it.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—a senior member of the coalition, says: “Is a good thing we doh need all-yuh votes. We going ahead with dis.”

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Um-hmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** And this is something that has not been discussed in any forum anywhere. But I just want to put on the record that the Members opposite cannot unleash proportional representation on the population, ever. They need 32 votes for that, which they do not have and they will never get.

Just for certainty, I had indicated the various sections that require a three-quarters majority to be amended. But just let me go to two of them. Section 40 establishes the Senate—31 Members—and prescribes how the Senate is appointed and section 72 deals with the constituencies in Trinidad and Tobago. So they cannot abolish the 41 constituencies and they cannot abolish the Senate and the method of election of Members to the House of Representatives or appointment of Members of the Senate. They just cannot do it; pie in the sky.

So, for all members of the national community who may be a bit concerned about the way this Government is moving—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Volney:** They are “grand charging.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** They are “grand charging”, yes. They are “grand charging. Dey cyah do nothing.”

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Um-hmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Now, let us come to what they are doing today. What are they doing? As I said, they are telling you that if they use this convoluted, largest remainder system of PR, it will bring transparency and equity to the corporation. How? I would like to know how. So you have four aldermen, somebody gets 6 per cent of the vote, “somehow the numbers play out, dey get one alderman.” How does that assist that corporation to deliver goods and services to the population? The issue in local government is not this. This is not the problem. The problem is that the local government bodies, especially under this administration, are very inefficient in the delivery of goods and services and the Ministers involved they just like to talk.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Um-hmm.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The Member for Tabaquite is always telling me that he is an honourable man—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Nah!”

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—and that he would help anybody.

**Dr. Browne:** “He tell you dat?”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes! “And I believe him yuh know.”

**Dr. Rambachan:** Jehue Gordon. Jehue Gordon.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yeah. “Yuh” did not help him. Up to this morning—you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have asked the Minister of Local Government, the former Minister, to do one thing for one constituent in the constituency of Diego Martin North/East; one thing for one constituent for one year, since last year around this time.

**Mr. Roberts:** Alderman would do it.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** One, one. “De man tell me—the honourable gentleman tell me: ‘of course man, I doh discriminate against anybody. I am a different kinda person.’”

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “All ah dem.” All of them.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “You could count on me.” So that was September 2012.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** All of them.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** December 2012, “nutten happen. Ah ask, wha going on?” This is a deserving case. “Is not fuh me. Is to help out one of our young heroes. ‘Wey is dat?’ ‘Ah sorry boy, I will deal with it.’” March 2013, “ah gone again, ah say nutten happen. ‘Oh gosh man, ah go deal wit dat.’” June 2013, “nutten happen. Ah gone back by him. ‘Sorry, the engineer and de dis and nutten happen. De boy come and win a gold medal.’”

**Mr. Hypolite:** And things happen?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Nutten happen.”

**Mr. Hypolite:** Nah man!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Ah check dis morning. Nothing happen.” You should be ashamed of yourself, hon. Minister of Local Government. [*Desk thumping*] “If yuh did not want to do it, yuh shoulda tell meh yuh was not going to do it.”

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** And talking about representation.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Mamaguying people”.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** And talking about representation.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “A whole 12 months to build one retaining wall at the home of one of our sporting heroes; 12 months and yuh cyah do it and yuh talking

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

about equity and trust. And how this one alderman in Diego Martin go do it?" I would love to know.

**2.45 p.m.**

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** He building wall in Port of Spain.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that now that this matter [*Crosstalk*] has been put into the public domain, that whoever is running that Ministry now will get off whatever, and go and build the retaining wall for "de" people. I am ashamed, Madam Deputy Speaker. And you see—

**Hon. Member:** He is still in the Ministry.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yeah, well, he still calling himself Minister of Local Government. The fact of the matter is how does this one alderman deal with that? How does the one contrived alderman who is there because they got 8 per cent or 10 per cent or 12 per cent of the vote, how do they get that corporation or that local government Ministry to do something meaningful to fulfil a promise made by a government? How? How does this one contrived alderman assist in better collection of garbage in the borough of—let us use Chaguanas as an example. How does this one make-believe alderman that you are coming up with assist in the better delivery of services? How does this one alderman make sure your drains are clear?

Madam Deputy Speaker, in Diego Martin for the last three years I have had to witness the travesty of a corporation and particularly a chairman of a corporation, every year issuing a press release and going on TV—eh Member for Diego Martin Central? Every year, the chairman of the Diego Martin Corporation is on television together with his councillors saying, we have cleaned every drain in"—

**Dr. Browne:** Ninety-five per cent of the drains in Diego Martin.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** "Ninety-five per cent of the drains in Diego Martin have been cleaned." "Rain come, half an hour everywhere flood"; when you go down, bush everywhere. I have had to go through that travesty, Madam Deputy Speaker, to hear this corporation telling me that they cleaned every drain. "I passing de drain every day", bush taller than—

**Mr. Roberts:** You!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes, than me, which means it is over five feet. [*Laughter, desk thumping and crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** It is pretty tall.



**Dr. Browne:** “It too high.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** It is all right “yuh could make joke”, it is more than five feet tall. [*Laughter*] And Madam Deputy Speaker—you know I hear the Member for [*Crosstalk*]—what seat are you? “Oh yes, you go geh wipe out just now.” [*Laughter*]—Chaguanas East, soon to be forgotten. [*Laughter*] I hear the hon. Member for Chaguanas East who is on his last days—

**Hon. Member:** Last legs.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—last legs, last days, you gone. [*Laughter*] If they only had a by-election in Chaguanas East, you would not be here, gone through. [*Mr. Imbert claps his hands*] “De green wave woulda clean yuh out.” But anyway, the fact of the matter is, I hear the Member for Chaguanas East talk about—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** You gone green?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** No, no, I am red.

**Mr. Roberts:** “So whey yuh boasting bout green for?”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** No, well, there was a green wave, it wipe “all-yuh” out. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Facts are facts. “I doh lie yuh know. I doh lie.” So, Madam Deputy Speaker—no, no, look at me, this is my symbol. [*Mr. Imbert raises his necktie*] This hon. Member for Chaguanas East lives in my constituency—

**Mr. Roberts:** “And yuh treat him bad.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—passing “de” Maraval River every day—

**Mr. Cadiz:** Never visited me once in three years. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—all he seeing is bush and boulders and trees in “de” river.

**Mr. Cadiz:** [*Inaudible*]—the Member of Parliament for three years.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, and he knows the problems that we have in that constituency. He knows that his UNC corporation is not functioning. [*Crosstalk*] He knows all of that, but does he care? Everything is a big joke for him. The point I am trying to get through to my honourable constituent is that this Mickey Mouse thing that you are doing, that you are calling proportional representation, will not clean the drains in Diego Martin.

**Dr. Browne:** Correct.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** This one alderman that you want to get somehow, because you are going to be wiped out, Madam Deputy Speaker, they will also be wiped out in the Diego Martin Corporation in the next general election. [*Desk thumping*] “We taking all 10 seats.” [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** All! All!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** All 10.

**Mr. Roberts:** “Yuh going green fuh true?”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** No, red. All 10 will be red. Red!

**Mr. Roberts:** Keep talking. Keep talking. Green coming.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** No, no, no. Coming for “all-yuh”. Not for me. We could handle our stories. [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** And then we and green—[*Inaudible*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** And you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] when they get wiped out in the region of Diego Martin, and they no longer have any UNC councillors in the region of Diego Martin, but they get 6 per cent of the votes, and you might have had three or four parties contesting, so they somehow contrive and they get 1,501 votes and they get an alderman, is this alderman going to deal with the neglect of that region that has been visited on us for the last three years, Madam Deputy Speaker? This is what I want to hear these honourable people opposite tell us. “Yuh say this thing is fundamental. Yuh say it is far reaching. Yuh say it is historic. Yuh say it involves people participation.”

**Dr. Browne:** Tectonic shift.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “All kinda ting.” Earthquake. Explain to me what are the other reforms that are happening in local government. “Yuh” take three years to look at all the problems that exist with the local government system. You heard the Leader of the Opposition speak about the fact that one of the things that we should do is allow the corporations to keep whatever taxes they collect within the region, use it for their own cash flow, use it for their own projects and so on. Did we hear you speak about that? No. We talked about giving councils more autonomy so that they would not be just puppets under the hand of the local government Minister. “Yuh” spoke about that? No.

We talked about reforming the local government system so that people will demand accountability, even the right of recall within the local government system. You have a non-performing councillor, you could have a vote and remove that councillor. “Yuh talk about that?”

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** No. There is nothing that has been presented to this Parliament that tells us how this thing that the Members opposite have come up with in the last week or so is going to enhance the delivery of local government goods and services, Madam Deputy Speaker.

You know these days when you call the corporation, you have a problem; they have no equipment. When they have equipment, they have no driver. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, you are an MP, you do not have to answer me, but you know. They have no equipment. They have no driver.

**Dr. Browne:** No materials.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** They have no materials.

**Hon. Member:** No gas.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** They have no gas. They have no funds. The fellow with the keys did not come out to work. “They waiting on the release from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. They short staff.”

**Dr. Browne:** Financial year come to a close.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Dey planning dey family day and dey long service award ceremony.” Hon. Members opposite, this happens in every local government corporation. *[Interruption]* Yes, “dey having a fete”. This happens in every local government corporation. As a Member of Parliament you are trying to get services for your constituents or people on their own volition are going to the corporation to complain that the grass in the drain behind their house has not been cut for the last two years and that is what you hear: “Oh, ah raise it at the last council meeting”. Councillors famous for that you know. “Ah brought it up at the statutory meeting, dey ent taking me on. I in a minority, nobody bothering with me. Dey doh listen to me.” This is what you hear, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We had an opportunity to grasp this thing and to fashion local government into something truly efficient and productive. We could have been debating here about giving local government corporations complete autonomy. Giving them

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

tranches, funds just like the Tobago House of Assembly gets its money in block votes, they get 25 per cent of their allocation every three months. We could have been talking about that.

We could have been talking about, as the Leader of the Opposition has proposed, giving local government corporations the responsibility to repair schools; to repair police stations; to repair health centres so that that monster that is the Education Facilities Company that we have scrutinized so many times and found it wanting so many time; that monster, the Education Facilities Company Limited would no longer have to exist if the corporations had the responsibility to do routine maintenance. They do not have to do capital maintenance; they do not have to demolish a school and rebuild a school. But all of these school repairs could be given to the corporations with the necessary autonomy, with the necessary procurement regulations, with the necessary funding, with their own source of funds, their own cash flow, they are collecting taxes within their region, and so on and they are getting the work done, because they are on the ground and they understand what is going on.

You heard the example, Madam Deputy Speaker, about Guernsey where they could identify exactly how many unemployed persons there were in the island of Guernsey, because they had local knowledge.

**Mr. Roberts:** Spell Guernsey.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Spell Guernsey?

**Hon. Member:** He cyah say—[*Inaudible*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Yuh” want to know how to spell it? [*Crosstalk*] “Yuh” really do want to know? Do you really want to know?

**Mr. Roberts:** “Ah want to know.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** It starts with “ah” G—

**Hon. Member:** Pronounce it.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** It have ah “U, ah E, ah R, ah N, ah S, ah E, and ah Y”.

**Mr. Roberts:** “Oh gawwwd!”

**Mr. Cadiz:** Brilliant.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] a little light-heartedness will do well. [*Crosstalk*] The fact of the matter is [*Crosstalk*] the

person from the island of Guernsey was able to say ‘we have 139 unemployed persons’.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Oh gawd, yuh repeating—” [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes, I am repeating. It is an important point because a local councillor, I dare say, that is doing his or her work can tell you which schools in their district are in need of repairs. They will be in contact with the school principals, with the parent/teacher associations, they will be visiting the schools on a regular basis. They will know exactly what needs to be done. They could work together with the people in the education system, to structure the repairs so that all of the preliminary work is done in the school term. So as soon as the school breaks up for the summer vacation contractors have already been awarded contracts, mobilized, and come in within a day or two of the end of term, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the local knowledge is there.

And as the Leader of the Opposition has indicated you could have a cadre of contractors from within the region, small and medium sized contractors who could be deployed to repair the schools. So that every year we do not have to hear the Minister of Education boasting, I have repaired all the schools in the country.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** One ninety-six.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Whatever. One ninety-six, 296, 396—

**Dr. Browne:** Not in Diego Martin.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All over the country.

**Dr. Browne:** Not in Diego Martin.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are over 400 primary schools in this country, 400—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You leave 100—[*Inaudible*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—but the hon. Member for Caroni East speaks to—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will respond when the time comes.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—repairing 196. [*Crosstalk*] What happened to the other 204? [*Crosstalk*] And we are talking only about—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You asked me.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, could you control the Minister of Education? [*Laughter*] I know it is upsetting him, you know. He is demonstrating his lack of knowledge of the education system. [*Desk thumping*] He is making my point, [*Desk thumping*] that if you had local councillors given the responsibility to monitor the schools within their districts and given the responsibility to procure repair contracts—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We will get “ah” alderman to do that.

**Hon. Member:** “Oy!”

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—then if that was going on, he would know there are over 400 primary schools in this country and [*Crosstalk*] he would not be boasting. Madam Deputy Speaker, really, I do not know what is their problem, could you deal with them for me?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Chaguanas East and Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, you are disturbing the speaker. You may proceed.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I know it bothers—[*Crosstalk*] Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, when you are living in a fool’s paradise, you could have all kind of illusions, you know. But the fact of the matter is every year we hear the Minister of Education boast that he has repaired so many schools, and then TTUTA goes on strike, then the parents start to demonstrate and then the reality unfolds.

Yesterday I met one of my constituents—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** After three years.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—you know that is another thing, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let me make a point here. [*Crosstalk*] Let me make a point because again, we have spoken about the delivery of social services by local government bodies; again, the local government councillors. [*Interruption*] Madam Deputy Speaker, could you talk to the Members, please? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** No, no, no.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Nah, is you.”

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, I want to ask you to stay focused and I want to ask you to address the Chair when you are speaking—

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes. But I am also asking for your protection.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:**—in that way it is hardly likely—Members, please allow the goodly Member to speak in silence.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I know what I am saying is upsetting them, you know and that they cannot help it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we got a request from the Ministry of the People and Social Development. All Members of Parliament received a request from the Ministry of the People and Social Development to send in a list of names for cards, for school supplies. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Oh boy, not one.

**3.00 p.m.**

**Mr. C. Imbert:** We all, I am pretty certain, as conscientious Members of Parliament, we all did the necessary screening, picked the most needy people in our constituencies and submitted the 50 names with their ID card numbers, their date of birth and all of the other information that was required. And we all did this at the appointed time, long before the beginning of the school term, in good faith, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** Not one. Not one.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** But what has happened? Another promise unfulfilled, undelivered by the partnership. [*Desk thumping*] So the school has begun—

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Parents already buy dey ting.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** And, yes, parents have already used what little money they have to buy books because they “cyar” leave their children without uniform, without books and so on. They got this promise from this unscrupulous Government that they will be given \$500 towards books and uniform and so on; they trust the Government in good faith, school has begun, they “cyar” send their children to school without books, without uniform and so on.

**Dr. Browne:** Not a single—

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Not a cent; nobody, at least in my constituency, has received anything.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** None, none.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** They have just gone dead. The last I heard, they were blaming the bank now. It is the bank's fault.

But the point I am making is that yesterday, I was in a particular area of my constituency, and I met a constituent and she told me, "What about the thing they promise us with respect to this grant for books and uniform?"

I said, "Well, typical UNC. They promise you, but they doh really mean it, so they have not done it." She said, "It is all right; my child school close." [Laughter] Tranquility. "It would not open for the next month, so it is all right. Go on, see if you can get it from them."

And this is the reality of Trinidad and Tobago. "While the Minister is there boasting about how he repair 196 schools, parents' children are at home. They cyar go to school because the school is closed because the repairs have not been done."

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** And they wrote the Minister a long time.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** And the information would have been in the education Ministry months ago.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** I have it. I have a copy.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** But you see—and I am tying it back into what we are doing today—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, what is wrong with the Member for Caroni East? Could you speak to him, please? Really.

**Dr. Browne:** He is a serial offender.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** He is a serial offender.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You asking for protection [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Caroni East, Caroni East, please allow the Member to speak.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You should be ashamed.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Caroni East, Caroni East, please allow the Member to speak.



**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Madam Deputy Speaker, I know, I know they doh want people to hear these tings—”

**Dr. Browne:** He has been warned three times.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—and, Madam Deputy Speaker, he has been warned enough times, “eh”. I will ask you—I will request your indulgence to invoke the Standing Orders because he has been warned twice already and he is still going.

So anyway, the point is if this Government really cared about reform, this is the kind of change they would make at the local government level. They would empower the councils to deal with local infrastructure, particularly the repair of schools, particularly the repair of health facilities and other important facilities—social welfare offices and so on—within the community.

That is the kind of reform that we on this side would support. We would support giving more autonomy to local government bodies. We would support giving a source of funding to local government bodies so that, as we say, the taxes that they collect within their regions they can keep them and use them for their expenditure, Madam Deputy Speaker. We would support a proper procurement system whereby local government bodies do not have to keep running to the Ministry of Local Government for approval to spend \$5.

That is how it is right now. Everything is centralized. The whole thing, it makes a nonsense of the whole system. Everything is centralized, so that the councils have to keep running back to the Minister to get funds, to get approval to award contracts; to get approval to get projects done in their communities, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But we are not hearing about this and the thing about it is that this will benefit everyone in this country. Whether the corporation is controlled by the PNM or controlled by the UNC or the COP or some other party, this system of devolution and autonomy and flexibility for local government bodies will benefit everybody in this country.

But we are not hearing about that. You know what we hear instead? They want one more year. Instead of three years, they want four years. How would electing a councillor for four years make that councillor more effective? That is the kind of thing we have to hear from them.

**Hon. Member:** Widening democracy.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** That is how you widen participation and democracy. You increase the term of office of a local government councillor from three years to four years. How does that increase people's participation in the democratic process? How? That is what we are hearing from them.

We heard the Member for St. Augustine make an astonishing statement about procurement legislation, trying to blame the People's National Movement for the delay in the enactment of procurement legislation. This People's Partnership Government, this UNC Government came into power in May 2010. It is September 2013. It is almost three and a half years since they came into office. They came to this Parliament in October 2010, three years ago and laid draft procurement legislation and a policy document for procurement, Madam Deputy Speaker.

When they did that in October 2010, they had 29 votes in this House. As I said, they still have 27. In order to pass procurement legislation, you require 26 votes. Twenty-six! You still have 27. You had 29 in 2010. You had 29 in 2011. You had 29 in 2012. You had 29 up to the beginning of this year. Madam Deputy Speaker, they, at any point in time over the last 36 months, the last 40 months, this Government could have brought legislation to reform the procurement system.

What did they do? They have failed to do that? When you talk to one chairman; well, they get rid of him. The Member for Caroni East was chairman, spend a whole year in committee with him, reach agreement, they fire him. They bring Sen. Tewarie. He spend a next year, doing over all the work that the Member for Caroni East did, come up with something and then disappear from sight.

Three and a half years, no procurement legislation. They have the special majority required. They do not want it. Madam Deputy Speaker, every day I get a package in my mailbox, you know. Yesterday, I get some files on one of these state corporations. "When I look at it, it is about two inches. I say: Hmm, I cyar read that. I going through breach of tender procedures, fraud, corruption, in another one of these state enterprises. I will keep it for the budget. But the whole point is, I look at this thing, I say, what? A next one; hundreds of pages of malfeasance. Every day I get this. Somebody else tell me they have a package for me—"

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** "And dey talking about the PNM."

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—and it is all to do with irregularities within the procurement process, with people awarding contracts to the highest bidder, awarding contracts

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

to firms that have not prequalified: no value for money. That is what it is all about, coming into Government with a set of big talk about how there will be equity and integrity and three and a half years later all you could do is unjustifiably blame the People's National Movement for not bringing new procurement legislation when you have the 26 votes required to pass that law.

You see, there are members of the national population who will believe the propaganda that is being promoted by the Members opposite that, "oh, if the PNM does not support it, the legislation cannot pass". Nonsense! Obviously they do not want it. Obviously, it suits them; it works for them not to have any proper procurement legislation in this country.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin North/East, take your seat.

Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East has expired.

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And you know what bothers me with these hon. Members opposite? Not only they do not do their homework, I dare say, that Bill was not properly vetted by the Legislation Review Committee, as usual. Sometimes Bills come into this House where the chairman admits that he never saw them; that they just reach on the Table in the Parliament; never passed through LRC. I doubt that this legislation ever had any proper scrutiny by the various committees of the Government.

I doubt it because what is in this legislation is something unknown to any country in the world. In the proportional representation system, it is called party list voting. This particular mechanism they are trying to introduce of using the largest remainder approach to seat allocation, it is called the party list system so you have a list of persons from your party who are going to be potential persons who would be elected or appointed to some post, whether it is as a city councilman or, in this case, as alderman and so on.

There are two systems known to the modern world, only two. One is called a closed list and one is called an open list. In the closed list system, the party indicates in order of priority, the persons who they wish to serve in the particular position. So whether it is as a councilman or as an alderman, the party will put up

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

10 names and the first name on the list is the first person who is the preferred candidate to be the alderman or councilman. The second one is the second candidate and the third and so on.

So, you put up a list of 10 names; you may get six seats, so the population, when they go to vote, they know that the first group of people on the list are going to be the people appointed to the position. That is called the closed list system so you know upfront the preference of the party for the people on that list.

The other system is called the open list, where, on the ballot, the person votes for the party, in this case PNM, UNC, as the case may be, that is the left-hand side of the ballot; and on the right-hand side of the ballot, you indicate your preference for which of the people on the list you would like to see appointed or elected to the position. So, when the ballot comes in, you will have a count of the number of votes that each party gets and then there will be a count of the number of votes that each candidate gets.

So that, again, if a party is going to be allocated six seats based on the percentage of votes that they got, you will know that the candidates who receive the most approval, the most approval votes from the electorate, are the ones who will become councillors. That is the open system.

So, in the first system, the party decides who are the people who will be elected. In the second system, the people decide who are the people that they wish to be selected from among the wider poll—closed system; open system. This system? What is this? This is a “half-pick duck” because they have a list, but they are not telling you who is their preferred person on that list and the list is going to be equivalent to the number of seats.

So, in Tunapuna/Piarco, for example, you have a list of 15, but you are not required as a political party to indicate on this list of 15, who is your number one choice; who you have in mind for mayor; who you have in mind for deputy mayor; none of that. Just 15 and when the election is over and you get your three aldermen or your two aldermen as the case may be, you could pick any one of those 15 people to be the alderman.

So, it is neither an open system where you have genuine participation by the voters, where they can indicate that out of those 15 people, these are the three or four people that we would like to see as aldermen. They are not giving the population that opportunity. You are denying them that opportunity with this legislation and you are also not telling the population that out of these 15

people—because you are only getting three aldermen. It is going to be very, very unlikely that any political party will get four aldermen under this new system. So the most you can get is three aldermen.

So, let us go to Tunapuna/Piarco as an example. A list of 15 names, of which only three could possibly be aldermen from each party, but you are not telling the electorate who are your preferred three and you are not giving the electorate the opportunity to tell you: well, we prefer this one and we prefer that one. So this is neither a closed system nor an open system. This is a secret system, Madam Deputy Speaker; a secret system, and the foolishness about all of this is that I heard an hon. Member say, “Now we will know who is going to be the mayor.” How would you know? Who says the mayor cannot come from the elected members? The mayor does not have to come from this list of 15 at all. It could be one of the elected councillors, so you have no way of knowing from this list of 15 “who dey going to pick, who dey prefer”; who is their number one choice; their number two choice or their number three choice. You do not know. So what is the advantage?

### **3.15 p.m.**

So they throw out a pool of 15 names; “12 is bush and three is the ones dey really planning to unleash on you, buh yuh doh know” because they could pick any one of the 15. I would like the Government to explain: why have you decided not to go with the closed-list system where you tell the population your preference—this is my number one choice, my number two, my number three, my number four choice for alderman, or the open system where you let the population tell you, this is our preference for number one, number two, number three, number four? Tell the Parliament why you have decided to go with neither of these systems, but with a list and you will decide afterwards in some back room, which one of the 15 will be an alderman. Explain that!

That is why I say the contributions of the other side are extremely weak, extremely weak, Madam Deputy Speaker. They have not got into the meat of this matter at all. Explain why you are using the largest-remainder approach to seat allocation? Why? They have all sorts of systems. You have single-transferable vote; you have mixed-member proportional voting; you have choice voting, which I just spoke about where the electorate can indicate out of the 15 names you have given them, who they prefer to be aldermen. Explain why you have come up with this approach to proportional representation, which is not used anywhere else in the world, or if it is, it is used in a very small number of places,

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Madam Deputy Speaker. This is what we expect from the Government. Do not come here and tell us you are doing proportional representation, and you come here with this Mickey Mouse thing.

As the Member for Diego Martin West said, why did you not go brave and say we are going proportional representation for everybody, all the councillors? Why did you not go brave with that? Because as the Member for St. Augustine said, you do not need our votes, simple majority. A lot of people do not realize the system of local government is not enshrined in the Constitution. It does not require a special majority. You could repeal the local government—the Municipal Corporations Act with a simple majority. You could replace it with whatever you want; all you need is 21 votes and, as I said, so far you have 27.

So why did you not go brave—if you so want to involve the population in participatory democracy, all this fancy talk—and tell us, “Right, we are coming with a Bill, everybody is proportional representation”, and then you bring your arguments and bring some kind of intellectual content in the debate—bring some depth, bring some debate into this House—so that we can talk about it, and look at the advantages and disadvantages of proportional representation and whether it is applicable to our local government system. Go brave, but no, you come with this Mickey Mouse foolishness.

As I said, it is neither an open system nor a closed system. It gives no choice to the electorate. It gives them no opportunity to participate in the electoral process, nothing different from what they have now. All you are doing is telling them, “Well, I will pick from this list of 15, three ah them will be aldermen possibly or maybe two, but ah ent telling yuh who dey are eh, yuh go find out afterwards.” Is that reform? Is that reform hon. Members? They have not thought it through, Madam Deputy Speaker. They have not thought it through.

And you see; if they had consultations, if they had brought this thing into the public domain so that we could have a proper discussion with respect to whether we should have proportional representation in this country in any form or fashion—put it on the table, be honest, come clean, put it in your manifesto, bring it for debate in all these various town meetings and so on. If they had done that, Madam Deputy Speaker, then we could have had an informed debate; we would have had feedback from the population.

If there has been proper explanation—up to now nobody on that side has explained to the population—the only person who has explained to the population how this thing will work is me, Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Desk thumping*] and I

am a Member of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*] This is not my responsibility [*Desk thumping*] but I have decided to explain how this ridiculous system will work because they have not explained it; so let me go over it again.

The way they are going to do this, I will use the hypothetical example that in a corporation—assume 24,000 votes are cast. Four aldermen deliver a quota of 6,000 voters per alderman. Assume that one party will get 18,000 votes, another will get 6,000; it means that the one who gets 18,000 votes will get three aldermen, the one who gets 6,000 will get one alderman. However, if it is not an equal number, in other words, it is not divisible by 6,000, Madam Deputy Speaker, you allocate the aldermen based on the multiples of the quota.

So a party might get 15,000 votes, so they will get two aldermen because that two by 6,000 is 12,000; leaving him with a remainder of 3,000 and then when you go to select the third alderman, you look around and see who else got that many votes—whether anybody else got more than 3,000 votes or less than 3,000 votes—and if someone else has received more than 3,000 they will get the third alderman instead of the party that got the first two. Then you go to the fourth alderman—the party still has its 3,000 votes which you will apply to the fourth alderman—you look around again, and you see who else got votes, and if somebody else got more than 3,000 votes they get the fourth alderman. That is how this thing is going to work, and there is no explanation.

I have made the point that you could have a four-party scenario with a party getting just over 6 per cent of the votes getting the fourth alderman, or a three-party scenario with a party getting just about 8 per cent of the vote getting the fourth alderman. Is this what the people want?

But, you know, it is just more of the same, Madam Deputy Speaker. They did it on the eve of the Tobago House of Assembly election. They come now, local government election is just six weeks away, they come with this thing. They have not explained it to anybody; they have not asked anybody what they think; they have not gone through the various alternative approaches to proportional representation.

In some systems, in many systems, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have a run-off, so you check to see who gets the most votes—whether they get a majority, and if there is nobody there with a majority—if there is nobody with a majority of votes, then you have a run-off and you distribute the votes of the candidates who do not make the first cut to the second-round candidates and so on, and you keep going. It is done in sporting organizations; it is done in many countries in the

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

world where you have a first round, a second round, a third round of balloting and, as you go, you distribute the votes to the people who did not make the cut in the first round, the second round, the third round, into the fourth round, and then eventually you come out with a winner. That is another form of proportional representation. That is the most widely used form of proportional representation. It is called the single-transferable vote. Why did they not come with that?

I certainly hope that we will get some answers because all of this tra-la-la about participatory democracy, that is just pie in the sky, empty hollow words, hollow empty words. They have not explained the anomalies that are going to arise with the implementation of this system. We have a party with a very small percentage, 6 per cent of the vote getting through with one alderman, and the others combined have 94 per cent and some of them will not get an alderman, Madam Deputy Speaker.

They have not explained the anomalies; they have not explained why they are going this way; they have not explained why they feel it is necessary only for aldermen; they have not explained why their view is a constant number—four aldermen in corporations like Mayaro which have 27,000, and four aldermen in corporations like Tunapuna/Piarco which have over 160,000. They have not explained how does it deepen and strengthen democracy when in Mayaro you are increasing the number of persons in the council by over 50 per cent. You are increasing the number of persons. I have the actual numbers here.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me go to my notes where I looked at each corporation. In the Mayaro/Rio Claro Corporation, there are six electoral districts and you are going to add four aldermen to that. So you are going to increase the number of persons from six to 10, almost a 50 per cent, hoping to get one. That is Mayaro/Rio Claro; so four aldermen added to the six councillors. So you could have a complete change of the balance of power in that corporation depending on how this anomalous formula works. But it made sense to add four aldermen to Mayaro/Rio Claro which only has six councillors, but it also makes sense to add four aldermen to Tunapuna/Piarco which has 15 councillors. So in Tunapuna/Piarco you are going from 15 to 19 which is less than a 25 per cent—  
[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Jehue Gordon won again.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** He won again? “Yuh making joke!” Madam Deputy Speaker, I have just been informed that my constituent, Jehue Gordon, has won



again. [*Desk thumping*] Let us congratulate one of our sporting heroes. “Yuh doh want to pong de table?”

**Miss Mc Donald:** “Dey ent pong?”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Yuh did not pong de table.”

**Miss Mc Donald:** Not a person over there. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to stop. I thank the Minister for telling me 48.3—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Roberts:** Point two.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—point two, whatever, that is a very good time.

**Mr. Roberts:** Fantastic! [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** In fact, you know, if he had made the time he made in the World Championships in the Olympics, he would have got the silver medal, you know.

**Mr. Roberts:** Correct.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** So this is a rising star, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Roberts:** Bovell also.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** No problem. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

**Mr. Roberts:** How he said the time, 21.51 would have been silver in the Olympics?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Whatever. Make him an alderman. [*Laughter*] Madam Deputy Speaker, the point is, let us get back to the matter at hand. If this Government cannot explain, with 15 electoral districts in the region of Tunapuna/Piarco they have only added four aldermen, whereas in the district in the region of Mayaro/Rio Claro with six councillors, they have added four aldermen.

In the Borough of Point Fortin, six councillors, they are adding four aldermen; in the Borough of Arima, seven councillors, four aldermen; in the Borough of Chaguanas eight councillors, four aldermen. So they are adding 50 per cent more aldermen in the Borough of Chaguanas whereas in Tunapuna/Piarco it is less than 25 per cent. Can we get some explanation please, because you are talking about systems with participation; you are talking about proportional representation. Where is the proportionality?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Flawed.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I know for some of you maths is a challenging subject but where is the proportionality?

**Dr. Browne:** They took that out of the exams this year.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** When you add four—they took proportionality out of the SEA exam? He take it out! [*Laughter*] Madam Deputy Speaker, let the Minister explain to me, where is the proportionality—4:15. What is the ratio of 4:15 and 4:6? How can 4:6, 4:7, as will occur in Arima and Point Fortin, be equivalent to 4:15 as will occur in Tunapuna/Piarco or 4:13 as will occur in San Juan/Laventille? Where is the proportionality? Where is the equity? Where is the citizens' participation? I would like an explanation for this, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is clear to me this legislation was developed by vaps. It is a knee-jerk reaction to the defeat that is going to come as night follows day in the upcoming local government election. [*Desk thumping*]

It is an attempt on the part of the Government to save face, to see if they could keep a little toehold in corporations where it is almost certain they will be wiped out, such as Diego Martin and Chaguanas. It is an attempt to keep some “lil” toehold inside of there. It has nothing to do with proportional representation, nothing, because if it did then the number of aldermen would be proportionate to the size of the electorate or the number of districts within each corporation [*Desk thumping*] and that will be a true reflection of the proportionality of the vote, but it is not so. It is an arbitrary figure plucked from the sky in order to allow them to retain some slight bit of influence within some of the corporations where they are going to be wiped out, and it is for these reasons that we cannot accept this.

**3.30 p.m.**

We have had no explanation why they are using the largest remainder approach. We have no explanation as to why they are using neither a closed list nor an open list approach. No explanation whatsoever, and there is no justification for this arbitrary number of four aldermen per corporation no matter what the size of the corporation, Madam Deputy Speaker. This Bill has no intellectual content whatsoever. There is nothing there, Madam Deputy Speaker; it is a hodgepodge of words and figures, and I really would expect the Government in its dying days, come better than that. Come better than that.

**Hon. Member:** Die for dying days.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Die better than that “nah”. Die better than that, Madam Deputy Speaker. I expect, I call upon the Government to explain itself; explain to the population what they are doing. Let us have a discussion on this thing they call “proportional representation”, so we can understand what they are doing, because, Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that even they do not understand what they are doing, and 90 per cent of their Members have no idea where this arbitrary number or four aldermen came from. Somebody pulled it out of the proverbial hat, and because they are all sheep on that side, they just said “yea” and they followed, and they went with it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot support this legislation. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Tunapuna. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Winston Dookeran):** Madam Deputy Speaker, we had four contributions so far in this Parliament— [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Three and a half.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—from the Minister of Local Government, from the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, from the Member for St. Augustine, and recently the Member for Diego Martin North/East. What has brought all of them together is an expression of a deep appetite for political reform in Trinidad and Tobago, and each one of them has expressed that in no uncertain terms. Some may have queried whether it was sufficient. Some have indeed queried whether in fact the timing is not suspect. Some may have queried whether the mechanics of the operations fulfil the objectives of the Motion, and some may have queried whether or not this is good law at all.

The truth of the matter is we are not here today to deal with all of the issues of political reform. A Parliament deals with a specific aspect of political reform at any one point in time, [*Desk thumping*]— [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Correct.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—but the country has been engaged in the search for political reform for a long time. In fact, if there is any issue to which the country believes that the leaders have not responded, now, in the past and perhaps in the future, it is on the issue of political reform.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** When the debate started, I turned to my good friend, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, and asked him whether he was present at a meeting that took place in Mayaro in 1977, when people who called themselves Trotskyites and Leninists and Marxists and communists—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Albanian socialists.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—and Albanian socialists came together. [*Laughter*] I was not yet in the political front line, but I was at that meeting, and then these were citizens of our country. They were looking for a voice. They felt that there was no voice for many of the citizens of this country, especially the citizens of the country who are not part of the political directorate.

Since then there have been many, many instances, and I believe the Member for Tabaquite outlined some of these experiences, of political reform. I do not want to go and repeat what has been said; I think it is all there for the history, but why has it never succeeded? That is the question. Why is it the Parliament is holding back this country from real political reform that this country wants? [*Desk thumping*] Because every time you come to interfere with the process of the political comfort zone that keeps this Parliament in purpose, this Parliament rises up against it—they find a reason. And if you look back at the history of it, you will see that this has been so for all times. [*Crosstalk*]

For all times, we have had this resistance by those who are in power to embark on the real programme on political reform, and I believe even though what you have is not clearly the total picture, we are again falling in the trap in resisting any form, and in this case, electoral reform, but I want to say the country has moved from that position. I myself returned on the political platform on the subject of getting the politics right.

The system of governance and election prevented the expression of that view in this Parliament, in its own right. Getting the politics right is a demand of the people of this country. Belated as it is, I am happy that we have now seen the light to start that debate, even initially. [*Desk thumping*] But I am sure that this country has a strong, strong appetite for getting the politics right, whether it is the reform of the parliamentary system, whether it is the reform of the political structure of power, whether it is the reform of the electoral system, we are today behind the population. All the electoral events of recent times are but an expression of the desire of the people for real electoral reform, and I will say, the recent events that took place in Chaguanas West is testimony of that desire on the part of the people.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** We cannot ignore that. Now, we need to have law that is indeed all-embracing. We need to have law that is complete. We have to have law that the mechanics can be understood, but the question that we must ask ourselves in the Parliament here today: is this good law or not good law?

Those who have spoken have questioned not the merits or the demerits of this, what I call a “catalyst for political reform”, because we have been suffering from a cycle of political paralysis for 50 years, and the cycle of political paralysis has to be broken. The people are willing to break it; the parliamentarians are resisting that break. This is not the first time, in previous sittings of this House when most of us were not here, they were always rejected—all sort of reasons. Proportional representation is a dagger in the heart of the PNM.

**Hon. Member:** That was 50 years ago.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** Yeah, but what I am trying to show you, there is an institutional bias against change that is coming from this very Parliament, [*Desk thumping*] and this very Parliament that talks about change is itself a victim to resisting that change.

**Mr. Imbert:** Talk something different about that “nah”.

**Mr. Sharma:** Keep quiet “nah”.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** And that is how I have to put in context that you have reduced a debate which is a catalyst to start a step of proportional representation into a debate about arithmetic. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** It is a shame.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** And when I want to learn about arithmetic I go to the school and I learn about arithmetic, but here we must come and talk about the real intent [*Desk thumping*] and the merits and the demerits of the case. And both the Member for Diego Martin West, and more so, the Member for Diego Martin North/East reduced this debate to a debate about arithmetic.

**Hon. Member:** Proportional representation.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** They call for a larger view—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not about proportions or fractions.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—and I think they are right, but what they have to understand is that if you want to bring about change, you have got to start that process of change with one small step, [*Desk thumping*] and it is in that context I see the legislation before us.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. W. DOOKERAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

The legislation before us amends a very important Bill, an Act to amend the Municipal Corporations Act. All it has done, it has introduced the notion of election of aldermen by getting the people involved so that [*Desk thumping*] no vote will be wasted in the election.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. Member:** “Maybe it wasting here.”

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** Perhaps it is not sufficient, perhaps it could go beyond that, I agree, but each vote will count. You will now establish—and I believe clause 6 says it very clearly, that:

“The Act is amended by inserting after section 12, the following new section:”

And the new section 12A(2) has to deal with:

“The quantum of names on the List of Aldermen to be submitted by each party...”

Now that is a significant departure, for political parties have not been recognized explicitly as having a voice; they are recognized as having a voice via their elected Members. And it goes on to say, later on in that particular clause that the number of aldermen to be awarded to a party shall then be determined and divided by the total number of votes, et cetera.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is arithmetic.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** I am just telling you that it deals with that issue.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is arithmetic.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** Well that is not all it dealt with, it dealt with a major change now in the electoral system, and the Elections and Boundaries Commission shall then acknowledge this. That is all this Bill is about.

The merits and demerits of this Bill are simply to introduce as the catalyst for proportional representation in an election that is going to take place shortly, the use of that in selection of aldermen. What I hear is that the arithmetic is wrong, that there is an ulterior motive, and it has been reduced to a fight for one alderman. The debate has turned out to be: Are you going to create an opportunity for election of one alderman, when what you are really doing is unleashing the beginnings and the catalyst for change of electoral reform which must follow as night follows day? [*Desk thumping*] Whether you have or you do not have the majority, which is the debate that emerged in my view,—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** “Yuh doh have.”

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—you will find that electoral reform will become a voice, a demand of the electorate of this country, for we are now living in a different world where parties can no longer approximate a national interest on their own; it calls for a coalition of interests in order to approximate a national interest of a country at any one point in time. And if we are not reading the development carefully—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Just vote for you.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—we will find that the entire Parliament, as it has done in the past, will become a resistance to change rather than a *[Desk thumping]* promoter of change in the field of electoral reform.

**3.45 p.m.**

That is why I have decided to say a few words, because what is happening in the country is making greater demands than this, and this is but a start. The nation at large has been calling for electoral reform. At the genesis of that electoral reform is a recognition that coalition politics is the basis on which the national interest will now be determined. *[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Member:** Correct, correct!

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** It is not only here, it is in many other parts of the world. Coalition politics have now become the norm. Here, unfortunately, we have the feeling that we can return to monolithic politics, one party will determine the national interests of this country, but I can tell you that will never be so again in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

Whether the coalitions are explicit or they are implicit, coalitions are a necessary requirement for good governance in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* What we are doing here today is simply opening the door—simply opening the door. I heard the member for Diego Martin West say that it brings instability, but there are many countries and there are many occasions in which there is instability with or without coalition politics. So that is not a reason. The population is making that demand. Getting the politics right makes us take a start.

I do not think that this has put the House on fire. I do not think the issue of electoral reform will suddenly be resolved by passing this Motion. I do not think that we can claim that we have a total programme of electoral reform, because it goes beyond this House to other places. But what I can claim is that proportional

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. W. DOOKERAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

representation is put in the statute books of Trinidad and Tobago to be built upon in the future, and whether we are here or not here we have now introduced something that before now was never even considered to be legitimate in the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. To me that is what we are doing here.

That is why I say, when you reduce this debate to a question of arithmetic, that is the reduction of the argument to the sustenance of power of this Parliament over the people of this country. It is about time the power of the people supersedes the power of the Parliament of this country. [*Crosstalk*] The Parliament must take a step in that direction. We must do much more. We must do much more. I hope that out of the exercise on electoral reform will come concrete measures for genuine political reform; real measures for furthering the electoral reform to acknowledge what the demands of the population are; that parliamentary reform will take place, even up to the point of the Standing Orders. We have been talking about that.

When I came into this Parliament many, many years ago the debate was how we could review the Standing Orders of this country. That was 30 years ago. All governments have come because there is an inherent interest in this Parliament not to have political reform—that is the point I am making—when the population out there is demanding it. [*Desk thumping*] I am not fearful to say that what happened in Chaguanas West was an expression of the demands of the population to move away from gatekeeper politics in Trinidad and Tobago. But we must not, not listen to what the trends of the people are.

So those in the Opposition who are saying they are not going to support any kind of reform unless it is total, or they are not going to lend their support to a reform that does not outline the details of local government reform, which is what the Member for Diego Martin North/East was saying—

**Hon. Member:** So he was wrong?

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** He is right, but would you stop us from starting the reform in order for us not to have the reform in the long run?

**Hon. Member:** “Dat is what dey want.”

**Mr. Imbert:** Get it right!

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** That is the point I am making. That is why I put this in a structural context. Every time issues of political reform have come to the Parliament of this country, now and its history, there has been resistance of some



form for it. This is not today. The Member for Diego Martin North/East is not expressing his own opinion; he is expressing an institutional bias of previous policies. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not true. “Take dat back. Dat is not true.”

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** It happens to coincide. [*Crosstalk*] The institutional bias of the past coincides with the current bias of the Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Laughter*] I raise these issues just to forewarn this Parliament that the time has come to listen to the voices of the people, and the time has come to embark on a serious programme of reform of a political nature. There is reform of an economic nature. There are other reforms. Today, we cannot talk about all the areas, but we can start this part today. It is in that context, therefore, I see the legislation before us.

It is easy to try and say that it cannot work because we are caught up in a cycle of political paralysis, and nothing will work when we want to preserve our own power. That is why we were not brought here—the people of Tunapuna did not bring me here from Tunapuna to preserve my own power. They brought me here to change the power structure of this country to create a new support base outside. [*Desk thumping*] I am warning our parliamentarians today, let us start the process.

I hope that this would be multiplied upon. I hope that the majority that is required to move forward will not be used as another instrument to prevent it, that when you get the full works, because now you have put that into the statute books of the country, you will be able to build upon it, and be able to become consistent with what I believe—and I think you all believe it.

So when we talk about delivery, it is related to the structure of power in the country and in institutions. Madam Deputy Speaker, this has connections to that, but we cannot claim all that with this little piece of legislation today. Today we are starting the process of introducing the notion of proportional representation at the level of the selection of the aldermen in the local government system. That seed we shall sow will grow and grow and grow for subsequent parliamentarians to follow, including parliamentarians in this Chamber. That is all we are doing, and that is the philosophical intent of this. That is not arithmetic. That is not arithmetic.

It is not a matter of arithmetic. [*Crosstalk*] I am saying that you have reduced the whole debate to one of arithmetic. You can explain those details: whether it is an open system, closed system or as you call it a secret system, whether it should

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. W. DOOKERAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

be four or whether it should be in proportion to the number of councillors there are, and whether or not you can go further and ask that the number of councillors should be related to the population of the constituency and the area. Now we have this disparity in population and representation, these are all issues.

**Mr. Imbert:** Why you did not bring this up?

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** I am saying you have to start somewhere, because you have an institutional bias against political reform in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the real point I am making. Without you realizing it you are really simply falling into that trap. In fact, this itself—

**Dr. Khan:** A shift in the paradigm.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—is a major change in thinking, but this is not the answer. This is not the answer, but it is so because in Parliament we tend to look at these things in terms of whether they would benefit us or they would not benefit us. The way I look at it is whether it would benefit this generation or the next generation, regardless of who is here. [*Desk thumping*] It is in that context I think this has to be seen.

**Mr. Imbert:** No way.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** If your view is to preserve your power, then you will want no change, because then all you have to do is re-enact the politics of gatekeeper politics and deny the concept of getting the politics right, which the Member for St. Augustine spoke about. This therefore is an opportunity for us to embrace this change as a start, as a catalyst of electoral reform, with a commitment that we will continue this roadway in the months ahead of us, with a commitment that we shall go further. I believe the onus is on the Member for St. Augustine who chairs that committee to come up with real proposals that go beyond this, in order to articulate the political reform that is required in the future. That is where we are and that is why this debate is important.

This is why if we reduce this to sort of feed on the sense of political discontent in the country, we are really not doing a service to the national responsibility we have. When you build an entire campaign on what you perceive to be the level of political discontent, then you will not produce good laws. You will produce laws in relation to the context in which you have created it. I urge the Member opposite to review that the law—

**Mr. Imbert:** The law is bad.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:**—the merits of the law suggest that this is a start. Of course I do not expect the Opposition, or the Member for Diego Martin North/East to—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** You did not discuss it.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** Well, he said he did not discuss it. That is another issue.

**Mr. Imbert:** You did not.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** I think the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about Dr. Eric Williams' book and said we could check chapter 3 in which this issue was discussed.

**Mr. Imbert:** Not with me, I am here now.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** No, not with you.

**Dr. Rowley:** Page 149.

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** Page 149; the Wooding Commission was established, the Hyatali Commission was established. I was involved in the NAR Government when the Hyatali Commission reported, and to my astonishment all the parliamentarians decided they wanted no change because that was going to unseat them all.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** That was then! That was then!

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** The same thing is happening now. *[Crosstalk]*

**Hon. Member:** Do not say that!

**Hon. W. Dookeran:** That is a small change, where we are going to test the opinion of the people. *[Crosstalk]* Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill before us, and I repeat, is not a Bill on the totality of electoral reform, but it has introduced the concept of proportional representation in the laws of this country. It has therefore allowed the people now to recognize that their vote will matter, regardless; as small as it is in this rounds, but their vote will matter. The votes of the people of this country have been consistently disenfranchised by the very political system we have. This is what this debate is about.

It is about whether we want to move forward to bring about the reform, but there is need for haste. There is need for urgency. There is need for full debate and full disclosure. We agree with all that, and that is why the committee has been set up, and presumably it will reflect the views of as many people who may have contributed to its deliberations. But the onus is now to move on that, and then, I

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. W. DOOKERAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

myself will feel a sense of satisfaction that the road of getting the politics right has begun, late as it may be, but it has begun on the electoral level. [*Desk thumping*]

That is my urging and hope. That is why I lend my support to this small but significant measure that would change the way in which the people relate to the elected representatives.

Thank you very much.

**4.00 p.m.**

**PROCEDURAL MOTION**

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** [*Crosstalk*] It is not this debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the debate on the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2013 be suspended in order to commence the debate on the Elections and Boundaries Commission—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** What? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** No. No.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:**—(Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2013. Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** No!

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Deputy Speaker, could I indicate to my colleagues opposite, who are shouting, that I did have discussion with the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Whip to indicate that we would suspend, temporarily, debate on this matter to do the Order and return immediately after to continue debate on this Bill. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, we did consult on the matter [*Crosstalk*] and we expect to finish this matter quickly and return to the Bill since, as I indicated to the Member opposite, there are some imperatives concerning this Order. I beg to move. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** May I have some silence, please. [*Crosstalk*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION  
(LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND TOBAGO  
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY) ORDER, 2013**

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I call upon the Minister of Local Government.

**The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion:

*Whereas* it is provided by subsection (3) of section 4 of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, that as soon as may be after the Elections and Boundaries Commission (hereinafter referred to as “the Commission”) has submitted a report under paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 4 of the said Act, the Minister shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval the draft of an Order by the President for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report:

*And whereas* the Commission has submitted a report to the Minister in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 4:

*And whereas* the draft of an Order entitled the “Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2013” giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission was laid before the House of Representatives on the 2nd day of August, 2013:

*Be it resolved* that the draft of the “Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2013” be approved.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Elections and Boundaries Commission Sixth Report was based on an electorate in Trinidad of 950,248 as of January 22, 2008. However, the Seventh Report is based on an electorate of 1,009,752 as of March 28, 2011. This reflects an increase of 59,504 which is equivalent to 6¼ percent over the former total.

The EBC, using the revised data, applied the statutory formula set out in the EBC Act, Chap. 25:50. Accordingly, the EBC recommended that there should be one additional electoral district in each of the electoral areas of Couva/Tabaquite and Princes Town. There should be changes in the boundaries of 16 electoral districts of the electoral areas of four municipal corporations.

Secondly, there should be changes in the boundaries of 23 electoral districts of three regional corporations. Further, the EBC also recommended the names of the

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

proposed new electoral districts in the electoral areas of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo and Princes Town respectively, should be Carapo/Mamoral and St. Julien/Princes Town North.

In addition, the EBC recommended the name of one electoral district in the electoral area of the municipal corporation of Chaguanas, the names of five, and three electoral districts in the electoral area of the regional corporations of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo and Princes Town respectively be changed as shown in table two of the Seventh Report. And table two, which is of course, included in the summary, in the report.

Fifthly, the 136 electoral districts in the 14 electoral areas in Trinidad should carry the names as shown in Appendix C of the Seventh Report. So we are moving from 134 to 136 seats according to this report. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Electoral districts.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Electoral districts to be contested in this election.

Sixthly, the said electoral districts be defined as shown in Appendix C1 to Appendix 1 of the Seventh Report.

Seventhly, the distribution of polling stations by the electoral districts at Appendix R of the Seventh Report—a further recommendation.

Finally, the said electoral districts in 14 electoral areas of Trinidad be delineated and shown and defined as described in the composite map that is attached to the Seventh Report.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** You want to debate it?

**Mr. Imbert:** Of course. [*Crosstalk*]

*Question proposed.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** You may proceed, Member.

**Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin North/East*): Madam Deputy Speaker, I received this document yesterday. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Members:** Last night.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Some of my other Members received it last night.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Nine o'clock; after nine.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I received a Supplemental Order Paper this morning telling me that we have to come here and debate [*Crosstalk*] the local government—what you call it? Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order—  
[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Sixty-five pages. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, this report was received in July of 2011.

**Hon. Member:** My Lord!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The Minister received this document, the recommendations [*Desk thumping*] of the Elections and Boundaries Commission in 2011—  
[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Um-hmm.

**Hon. Member:** What is this?

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—and on the eve of a local government election we are told today is the deadline to pass this.

**Dr. Rowley:** What a Government!

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Terrible.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** And that is what the Member for Tunapuna will get up and talk all this—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** And bad talk us.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—empty words about participatory democracy. [*Desk thumping*] Hollow platitudes! Hollow platitudes about resistance to change and all sorts of things! [*Crosstalk*] But the Member for Tunapuna will condone the Government, of which he is a part—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—delivering to Members of this House—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Mc Donald:** At nine o'clock.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—a report changing the boundaries of local government districts the day before—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** An hour.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—a debate. And some Members received it an hour before.

**Mr. Warner:** I have not gotten mine as yet.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** And I understand the Member for Chaguanas West has not received his copy yet. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Warner:** I have not got “none”. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I got this—I came to a meeting here yesterday, Madam Deputy Speaker, to discuss matters of crime with the Government, “and when ah was leaving they say, aye look something for you.” [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Warner:** “They hug up, you see. Yuh hug up.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** True “and ah say, what is dat?” “Oh, well when yuh reach home, yuh go open it.” “When I get home in de night and see this thing, ah say what is dis? Well dat mus be for some debate three months from now. Then I get a supplemental Order Paper this morning telling me we going to debate new boundaries for local government corporations”—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Increased numbers.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—“increased numbers of seats, on the last day dat is allowed by law, for this thing to be done. [*Crosstalk*] And the Minister of Local Government has had these recommendations [*Crosstalk*] since July 2011. On the front page, Madam Deputy Speaker, it says July 03, 2011.

**Dr. Rowley:** Super Minister.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** That is competence? That is courtesy? That is participatory democracy. [*Crosstalk*] This is absolute contempt for this Parliament! [*Desk thumping*] Contempt for the population. It makes a mockery of everything that the Member for Tunapuna just spoke about [*Crosstalk*] fundamental change and so on.

**Dr. Rowley:** This Government is a disgrace.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** This Government is a disgrace. I totally agree. [*Desk thumping*]

Then I hear the Leader of Government Business saying, oh they only want one speaker. You must not talk! So even though there is more than one Opposition party in this House.

**Hon. Member:** I said we have—



**Mr. C. Imbert:** They only have one speaker. That is why you did not give the Member of Chaguanas West a copy so “he cyant talk about it”? Oh, yes, yes. You go ahead. Yes. And you have to suspend an important debate, break the rhythm of an important debate for this. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister made no contribution in his introduction to this. He said nothing! All he said is that the EBC says that they want to make changes to the number of local government districts. They want to change it from 132 to 134 or 136. No justification whatsoever. No explanation. No rationale. Nothing, Madam Deputy Speaker! Just take that! “And one speaker and vote on that and leh we move on.” [*Crosstalk*] This is what—this is the tone we are getting from Members opposite. We must just agree. Say, yes! “The numbers doh matter.”

A system of proportional representation, which these [*Crosstalk*] no, it is, because these 134 or 132 seats will now influence the election of aldermen using a new system of proportional representation. [*Interruption*] Very well, does matter. [*Crosstalk*] But I have to listen to somebody tell me that in a system of proportional representation, which is based purely on numbers, has nothing to do with except numbers. It is everything to do with arithmetic. “Somebody tell me, doh worry about arithmetic. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Warner:** “Ah just get me copy eh.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Yuh just get yuh copy” and you are expected to debate this.

**Hon. Member:** Still warm from the copier. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** That is Government UNC style.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are anomalies in these corporations. [*Desk thumping*] There are anomalies. In some of the corporations, you cannot change the number. If you go to this report—if you go to Appendix A, you would see that there are certain municipal corporation areas, Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, Point Fortin, Chaguanas, according to the law, which was passed by their Government, it does not matter how many electors reside in those particular corporations, whether it is Port of Spain, whether it is San Fernando, Arima, Point Fortin, Chaguanas. It does not matter. You could have 10,000, 20,000, 100,000, according to the law you cannot change the number of electoral districts. They are fixed by law!

In the others, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, Diego Martin, Mayaro/Rio Claro, Penal/Debe, Princes Town, Sangre Grande, San Juan/Laventille, Siparia,

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Tunapuna/Piarco, they can be changed. A formula is applied. You look at how many electors you have, you divide by 15,000 and you work out how many local government seats you have.

If we are talking about reform, if we are talking about change, if we are talking about citizens' participation, why is it we are sitting here like sheep or we are expected to be here like sheep and just say yes to any foolishness that the other side lays in this Parliament.

**Miss Mc Donald:** The MPs? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** We are supposed to just say yes, that you could leave the boundaries—the Borough of Chaguanas—the number of districts “cyar” change from eight. Chaguanas could go to 200,000 electors, you still only have eight local government councils inside of there, but you could change Tunapuna/Piarco to 15 and San Juan/Laventille to 13 and Princes Town to 10. That is the kind of debate we are supposed to be having here. What is the sense in that?

The Municipal Corporations Act when it was enacted by the NAR was done after a coup and just before they were booted out of office. It was a badly done piece of legislation. It was not thought through. What was the thinking behind leaving the number of electoral districts in Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, Point Fortin and Chaguanas fixed at 12, nine, seven, six and eight, when you have population migration; the demographics of the country were changing. You have urban shifts.

What was the thinking in leaving all of these—the number of seats fixed and allowing the EBC to change the number of districts within all the regions based on population growth? That is the kind of debate we should be having here. Not this nonsense that the Minister just come and say, oh the EBC say they want to increase the number of seats from 134 to 136 or whatever it is. They want to add a district here, and they want to add a district there. Why? What is the rationale behind all of this?

**Hon. Member:** It is your job as Minister.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** That is your job as Minister to come and explain to us— [*Crosstalk*] It is 2011. The document is dated 2011; 2011.

**Miss Mc Donald:** When did they get it?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The Minister—no, no, no. Listen. The Minister was Chandresh Sharma; the hon. Chandresh Sharma.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** So all of them over there had it? [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rowley:** The Minister who does nothing. He works nowhere.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The point I am making is that the Minister who received this document [*Crosstalk*] in 2011 was the hon. Chandresh Sharma.

**4.15 p.m.**

They had to sit down there on this, sit down on this for two years, do nothing, and now come on the eve of a local election and drop this on us, and we have no opportunity because they are not bringing any reforms, they coming with a Local Government Bill that does nothing with respect to the way districts are allocated within corporations. There is no connection between the demographics of a region and the number of local government seats. No opportunity to deal with any of the boundaries because all of the boundaries of regions are fixed by law.

That was another piece of craziness they did in that 1990 legislation. You could only move around districts within the external boundaries, but the boundaries of the Diego Martin region, for example, are fixed. The western boundary is by Cotton Hill in the St. Clair area—the eastern boundary, sorry. The western boundary is in Carenage, the northern boundary is just beyond Paramin, fixed by law. Who came up with this idea, and why are we now debating in this Parliament? Is it a good thing to have huge corporations like the Tunapuna/Piarco with 162,000 electors and tiny corporations like—

**Hon. Member:** Point Fortin—

**Mr. C. Imbert:** No, let us use Mayaro/Rio Claro with 27,000. Is this democracy? Is this really citizens' participation? So in Tunapuna/Piarco 162,000 people have to fight up with one corporation. But in Point Fortin and in Mayaro/Rio Claro it is only 27,000 and 16,000 respectively. Arima is only 26,000. That is the kind of debate we should be having, and I am disappointed that a former Governor of the Central Bank, a former Minister of Finance whose whole career has been based on numbers and arithmetic would not understand— [*Laughter*] arithmetic and numbers; would not understand the importance of numbers. Why are we not discussing why the Tunapuna Corporation has 160,000 electors in it, while the Mayaro Corporation only has 27,000 electors in it and each is going to get four aldermen? That is the kind of discussion we should be having.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is an abomination.

**Hon. Member:** It is. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I reject this out of hand. I do not understand; what is the point? We could have had the local government election using the old system. The way the law works, if you do not bring the thing to the Parliament within the prescribed time, you operate under the old boundaries. What is the big deal? The whole country has been prepared. Candidates have been screened based on certain electoral districts. People have been selected. People out in the field are getting ready for local government election and you come now one month before the election and decide to lay a report, use your majority, bully it through the Parliament—

**Hon. Member:** Bullying it.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—so that you are going to change the whole composition and flavour and impact of the election within certain corporations and there is no explanation, there is no reasoning why. Why have you come on the eve of election? Are you just saying that this Parliament is a rubber stamp, that whatever—so what is the point of the law? If it is that the law says that this Parliament must approve, modify or reject the recommendations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, why is the Minister behaving as if this Parliament is a rubber stamp? Come and just say the Parliament say approve, that—“alyuh say yea” and that is the end of that. Well, it is an insult to the population, it is a contempt of Parliament—[*Desk thumping*] not going to help you, not going to help you because the corporations where you are going to get trouble, I am happy to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that no changes in the corporation of Diego Martin, no changes in San Fernando, no changes in Sangre Grande, no changes in Tunapuna/Piarco. But guess what, changes in Chaguanas, changes in Chaguanas. So the number of districts—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is July 2011.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—the number—yes, yes, and you could have left it right there you did not have to bring it today. You waited two years until you get wiped out in the Chaguanas West by-election to come with this—[*Desk thumping*] hoping you will get some sort of advantage because six of the districts in Chaguanas the boundaries have been recommended for more modification, six of them, six out of eight. It is clear as day. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You come in the middle of the night.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** It does not matter, it does not matter, Madam Deputy Speaker, they can be contemptuous of the parliamentary process. They can be insulting to the democratic process. They can be insulting to the population. They can be discourteous to the entire electorate, the same “cut tail” will occur, Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Chaguanas West. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Jack Warner (Chaguanas West):** Madam Deputy Speaker, if ever a Member of Parliament was angry, I am. I want to publicly apologize to this nation for having worked critically to foist this Government on this country. [*Laughter*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have just gotten this, and this is deliberate, and I must read all of this. I am about to rise to respond to the debate on the municipal Bill, especially to the last speaker, Member for Tunapuna, I am about to rise and do that, all set to go and I am told again, based on numbers, sheer numbers we have the adjournment to discuss this which I received five minutes ago. If this is not an abomination, Madam Deputy Speaker, tell me what is? How long will it last? How long? This kind of arrogance to bring at this level here has to stop, has to stop. And to talk about participatory democracy—

**Hon. Member:** Exactly!

**Mr. J. Warner:**—mind you, it is nothing but a farce, and in case you do not understand the spelling, f-a-r-c-e. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, Chaguanas is the area where you have the highest demographic shift in this country, in Chaguanas; the biggest population shift you have in Chaguanas. And I, after fighting the most brutal by-election against the entire Government, against all the boards, all the corporations, all the 27 lawyers in dark suits—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Cabal.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Well the cabal is capital—[*Laughter*] 27 lawyers in dark suits, after doing all of that, my family being despise and ridiculed by them, today, they bring this for me to read in five minutes and I must read that in five minutes because I am the MP for Chaguanas. This is the respect they have for me as Chaguanas MP.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they fail to understand that what has happened in Chaguanas is spreading through this country like a wildfire. And therefore it is not in Chaguanas alone, because the fact is that Chaguanas we screened 33 persons;

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

in Tunapuna we screened 57; in Sangre Grande we screened 39—129 persons. As I speak to you we are in Diego Martin screening. [*Crosstalk*] You could laugh if you want and then talk about arithmetic. And talking about arithmetic, I come here to hear an MP who I used to look up to, coming to this House to talk about arithmetic. What is election about, not numbers?

**Mr. Imbert:** Is numbers.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Is numbers.

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Warner:** I get 12,642 votes, Khadijah get 5,800, is that not numbers? [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Is that not numbers?

**Hon. Member:** That is arithmetic.

**Mr. J. Warner:** You come here and talked about arithmetic and I must listen to this and, as I was about to rise to make my contribution on the municipal Bill, I am given this. For the record I want to say, this is an abomination; this is an insult, not to me because they have done the worst to me already. They have insulted me to the nth degree and I have withstood all of that, but this is an insult to the people of Chaguanas and more so Chaguanas West. I am saying again the people of Chaguanas West, in particular, do not deserve this, do not deserve this.

Then I sit down here and I hear “only one person speaking”, so I want to know what he is talking about I say, what are you talking about, because I have to speak. “One person speaking”. I could not believe a debate would ensue, based on this, and this was lying for two years at a Minister who has changed—we changed three times in three years based on his competence. [*Laughter*]

In three years, lying there, and I must take this. And I must listen to the mega Minister coming to talk here and say now that is for debate and I must say that is okay. Because the fact is this, you know: you guys believe that you could do what you want but it is not for as long as you want. You cannot do what you want for as long as you want. And if you have not seen the writing on the wall yet then I will tell you again, I will only say what I said just now, “time longer than twine”. My grandmother tells me, “who doh hear will feel”. And if “stick break in alyuh ears” I will tell you again, “who doh hear will feel”. This is wrong; it has to be wrong. It is insulting. It is a disgrace. If ever a man is glad he is on this side now looking down on that side I am. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Volney:** Welcome.

**Mr. J. Warner:** I am. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sorry, because I am very angry. I am agitated because I could not believe that my former colleagues, men who I ate with, drank with, sat with, would have done this, not to me, but to Chaguanas West, the constituency I represent. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** You may proceed, Member.

**Dr. Rowley:** Are you going to recognize me, because I am indicating. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Keith Rowley (Diego Martin West):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I get the impression that you are a little bit nervous.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** No, no.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Ohhh! Madam Deputy Speaker, now that we are on even keel, I am not angry, I am not surprised, I am just worried for Trinidad and Tobago. I got up here this morning and I spoke about how the previous Bill got here. I told you how it got here to the Chief Whip and to the rest of us. We have heard a lot of highfalutin air. This, Madam Deputy Speaker, I got this package last night.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Me too, nine o' clock.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I was downstairs in my house, in my office working; they said Parliament send something for me in a brown envelope. I did not get upstairs to read it until early this morning, only to discover it is the Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not worry then because I know I have been in this Parliament long enough, I have been here since 1987 and I know that these reports come according to law from time to time. The EBC is required to do them by July of every year or whatever and they come. However, if they are not brought to the Parliament and debated to be accepted as the rule of the day going forward, then, the situation, the status quo remains, and therefore when I saw it, it did not bother me, even though I saw that it was dated July 2011. But in fact when I saw it dated July 2011 I assumed that automatically meant that it is meant to lie, the election has been called, I lead—again— [*Interruption*] sure, sure.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I just wanted to enquire from the hon. Member opposite and other Members as well, particularly Chaguanas and St. Joseph, yesterday in the afternoon all Members of the House were sent an email indicating that the— [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** “Yuh only wasting time”.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—that an electronic form of the report was on the Parliament website. I am just confirming whether or not yesterday afternoon you were aware that an electronic copy was laid—[*Crosstalk*] Listen, I am not saying that what has happened today is right. I am not saying what has happened is right. What I am saying is that yesterday afternoon an email was sent to all Members indicating that the electronic copy was posted. I want to confirm that Members did not receive the email. You receive it or you did not receive it?

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Only this morning.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** What does that have to do with it? [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Madam Deputy Speaker, I am responsible for the content of my contribution and I do not know what is the basis of the question or what answer he requires, but I have none to give him because the point I am making to you is this—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, now is an appropriate time for us to suspend for tea. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before we took the tea break, I had just risen to make a short intervention on my concern as to how the Government has gone about doing this.

I represent a political party which prepares for elections and one of the things that we do in preparation for elections is to screen candidates. We have completed the screening process under the understanding that a certain number of candidates were to be prepared for the known districts. That process started many months ago and we got through the process. We completed the process under the understanding that we are selecting eight councillors for electoral districts in Chaguanas. To my surprise, even though I got this last night and was unable to read it, I never became aware that Chaguanas had grown in number.

Of course, since this was prepared—I think it was July 2011—it must have been the best kept secret. It is dated July 03, 2011—by the EBC, I presume. I do not know when the Government would have gotten it but, I think, under the law, it



should have gone to the Government during that month of July. Even if it did go a little bit late, it would have meant that the Government would have gotten it some time well before now. It must have been the best kept secret in the country of Trinidad and Tobago that this report had been prepared requesting an increase in the number of seats in Chaguanas for local election, because having completed the screening process for the premier political party in Trinidad and Tobago, we have now been advised that the process is incomplete; and with a few days to go before nomination day, because of this approach of sheer incompetence or malevolence, I suspect it is more incompetence. This Government had no idea that it would have got its comeuppance in Chaguanas West, otherwise I did not see them wanting to do anything to give themselves an advantage in Chaguanas West. I think the EBC responded to the growth in Chaguanas West by requesting an increase in the number of seats.

Now, if the EBC is doing that for Chaguanas West then, clearly, we in Diego Martin, and elsewhere in the country, would have wanted a conversation as to whether in fact we, too, would qualify for an increase in the number of seats, especially in the context of all the talk this morning about representation and broadening the democracy, because if you have more seats then the councillors or the MPs have a smaller area and a smaller number of people to treat. Therefore, what is expected, like in a class, if you have less children to teach you expect that the quality of teaching would be better; if the class is too big, the teacher is not as effective.

So here is a report recommending an increase based on demographic changes, I presume; certainly not on geographical changes because the boundary has not changed; the external perimeter has not changed. So, I am assuming that it would have been done based on the change in numbers within the set boundary.

All I would say, Madam Deputy Speaker, is if the EBC saw it fit to make that recommendation for Chaguanas, such an argument could easily have been made for other areas in the country, especially in the context of the contribution of the Government spokespersons here this morning. But this secret remained on somebody's desk until a few hours before the expiration date. That is why I want the Government to explain that. If it was your intention to accept this report—which means accepting the recommendation of the Election and Boundaries Commission, to change boundaries within the corporation of Chaguanas; to increase the number—because that is what your acceptance will do. If that was your intention, as you are quite entitled to do, why is it that you let this thing come to the House a few hours before the deadline?

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Some call it insult, I call it incompetence of the most demonstrative type. This is the Government at work again. We have had this from June 2010 to now, September 2013. This Government cannot and will not change. What is the explanation for this? And even so, their incompetence knows no bounds. If you realize that you have not brought it to the House for debate and the acceptance of the report so as to bring about the recommended changes, the next thing that is required to do is to leave it alone and let us conduct the election on the existing law. [*Desk thumping*]

So you were not content to ambush us with lists for aldermen for local government under your new numbers game of proportional representation; you now bring, at an even later hour, information in a debate triggered by you—you triggered this debate—and then I am being disturbed by my friend, the Member for Oropouche East, to ask me, in the context of what I am saying here, if I did not get an email last night, as if getting an email last night would change the fact that last night and tonight, in this, makes no difference. If the email is coming last night to tell me that you intend to debate it today, it does not change my argument. It does not. [*Interruption*] Because my argument is, if you did not agree to let it lapse then, “what are you coming to send me email for”?

If you know what the effect of bringing it here for a debate this afternoon means, why do I need to know that? But you know Chaguanas has extra seats to get, so I presume that in your political party you have organized yourself to please Chaguanas borough by getting all the seats available; screened for and have people available. So you know because it was on somebody’s desk, I presume, probably since 2011 and the rest of us, who are supposed to be this participant in this grand design of greater democracy, we do not even know that there are more seats. What do you have to say about that? I am not here arguing fairness. I am just arguing, how can we conduct public business in Trinidad and Tobago like that? How can you do that? Then, in the midst of a debate where you are portraying yourself as Sir Galahad, you have to stop the debate to introduce this.

You know, traditions are built up from practice and acceptance of practice. We have accepted in this House, more often than not, that the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, an independent commission which is highly respected in this country, notwithstanding what anybody else says; the peace and good order in this country are major components, from the existence of an effective and respected Elections and Boundaries Commission. So when the report comes to this House we usually accept the report without much rancour or

amendment. Today, we cannot accept this. You are forcing us to vote down the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. We have to vote against this.

My recommendation to you, Sir, is, given the fact that you have brought this here minutes before the deadline bell, it is not necessary, you withdraw it and let us not have this debate and continue to conduct the election on the existing law. There is no need for this. [*Desk thumping*] If in fact, as the Commission is recommending, the seats in Chaguanas are to be increased without similar condition for elsewhere, then we will want a proper debate in a timely manner on the rest of the country; a strategic debate. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** The number remains the same, the boundaries change.

**Hon. Member:** Where you see—[*Inaudible*]

**Dr. K. Rowley:** The boundary changes, right. So if it is that change needs to be made, a proper debate in a timely manner—[*Interruption*—let me ask you a question.

I am told by the Minister, because I have not had an opportunity to read this document; I got it too late, that we are looking for 136 candidates. [*Crosstalk*] That is what I am saying. Who got new seats? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** “Must be Chaguanas.”

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I know this because we have just screened for 134 candidates overall. I am told it is 136 now. So, somewhere two seats have appeared.

**Hon. Member:** Princes Town and Couva/Talparo—[*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Well, you know that. I am now hearing that for the first time. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** So, then withdraw it; withdraw it forthwith.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** You had this for two years, you know that. Look at it, I am now hearing it. Therefore, I am saying to you, Sir, this is unacceptable. This is unacceptable, we would not accept it; we would not vote for it and we are recommending that the Government withdraw this and we continue to do the election as we started out when election was called.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. NiLeung Hypolite (Laventille West):** Thank you kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am here to place on record that I, myself, would have been at a meeting yesterday evening. On leaving that meeting, I went home to start to prepare for the Bill that we should have been debating all now, the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, only to realize, on reaching home, that this document—a document of over 250 pages—would have been on my study desk waiting to be debated today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, by all means, I would have hoped that this—*[Interruption]* 265-plus pages—could have been sent to us two years ago so that we would have had sufficient time to go through this document and have a proper debate on it.

You see, when we look at this document—I just want to look at one page that speaks about the municipal corporations electoral areas. You have the city of Port of Spain; the city of San Fernando; the borough of Arima; the borough of Point Fortin and the borough of Chaguanas, with a subtotal of a 192,364 electorate. But, then you have all the other regional bodies being Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, Diego Martin, Mayaro/Rio Claro, Penal/Debe, Princes Town, Sangre Grande, San Juan/Laventille, Siparia and Tunapuna/Piarco with a figure of a 1,000,752 electorate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we had started speaking about the amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act and we were speaking about proportional representation—and we will come back to this when we come back to that Bill. But I just want to put on record that the constituency of Laventille West, which forms part of the SanJuan/Laventille Regional Corporation, the members of that constituency must feel a bit insulted by this action here today. Therefore, I wish to state that I, myself, condemn this action of bringing this Report at this point in time when it should have been here two years ago.

I thank you. *[Desk thumping]*

**5.15 p.m.**

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Local Government.

**Mr. Imbert:** No. We have other people to speak.

**Dr. Khan:** I will move 43(1), you know.

**Hon. Member:** No, you cannot.

**Dr. Khan:** I can do it. It is tedious and repetitious; the same argument.

**Hon. Member:** Try it.

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

**Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh** (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): I rise to speak on behalf of the constituents of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. Madam Deputy Speaker, I received this voluminous document. I understand it is 265 pages. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am a new parliamentarian—fairly new parliamentarian. It will take me quite a while to go through this, and when I received it I was in the midst of preparing for the debate today. I find this was very unfair, very arrogant on behalf of the Government, very undemocratic and I would like to condemn this action on behalf of the Government—condemn it completely. I would like to put this on record, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Miss Donna Cox** (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Laventille East/Morvant, who I proudly represent, I would like to condemn the act of this Government by bringing this—as a matter of fact, I got this document this morning. This is 265 pages or more, and this morning I got my document—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** This morning—insulting.

**Miss D. Cox:**—and I just would like to say that we condemn the action of this Government by bringing this document so late for debate. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for La Brea.

**Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey** (*La Brea*): Madam Deputy Speaker, I will speak on behalf of my constituents in La Brea. Let me state emphatically that we reject this late delivery of this 265-page said report of the EBC which is dated July 03, 2011. We only had this document in less than 24 hours to peruse while the Government had over two years.

What could be the possible reason for the Government Members having access to this information for two years and you foist this on the Members of the Opposition in less than 24 hours? That is total disrespect and I think we strongly condemn this action of this Government. It means that since the licking in Chaguanas West they are still bamboozled and still cannot “ketch deyself”. We condemn this action of this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Amery Browne** (*Diego Martin Central*): Madam Deputy Speaker, the Frenchman, Molière, once said: “Unreasonable haste is the direct road to error.”

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government once again has put us on the path of unreasonable haste and the direct road to error.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the manner in which this report has come to the House, and therefore to the citizens of this country, is an insult to the electorate of this country. The Government received this 265-page report two years ago, Madam Deputy Speaker. Over two years ago they received this report and I want to ask them a question this afternoon: what were they doing with this report for the last two and a half years? Who did they consult with on this report for the last two and a half years? What meetings did they convene to review this report in the last two and a half years? How many sittings of Parliament have passed? What statements by Ministers? What members of the population were alerted to these changes over the last two and a half years, Madam Deputy Speaker?

What were they doing with the report? Have they made any changes? The Minister certainly did not tell us when he—well, I do not even want to call it an introduction—when he stood up for a few seconds to further insult us. Did they make any changes to this report? If they did, we need to know what were the changes. And if they did not, we need an account of the time that has elapsed, Madam Deputy Speaker. Did they not know that local government elections were due in 2013?

**Mr. Imbert:** They very well know.

**Dr. A. Browne:** And we were regaled before from the Member for St. Augustine and his guru, the Member for Tunapuna, for hours today about the democratic tradition, making democracy wider, broader, heavier, et cetera, taller; all of the various adjectives, Madam Deputy Speaker; fixed election dates and all sorts of things, but yet they have come with more ambush politics. They feel they are ambushing the People's National Movement or any other party in the House, but they are really ambushing the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** That is right.

**Dr. A. Browne:** This is a sandbag attack on democracy, Madam Deputy Speaker. Did they not know that elections were coming up this year or due?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was engaged in a walkabout yesterday afternoon in Sinanan Gardens in Diego Martin when I received an email on my phone during the course of the afternoon. I asked for an excuse when my phone vibrated. I

looked. It was an email from the Clerk of the House: “You are”—Madam Deputy Speaker, maybe I should indicate what this particular email said:

Dear Member, the Leader of the House has advised that at the sitting of the House of Representatives to be held tomorrow, Friday, September 06, 2013, it is the intention of the Government to also debate Motion Number One on the Order Paper which relates to the following resolution:

*Be it resolved* that the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and House of Assembly) Order, 2013, be approved. (By the Minister of Local Government).

**Mr. Imbert:** “And yuh doh have de document yet, eh.”

**Dr. A. Browne:** The consolidated Order Paper resolution report has been uploaded to the rotunda. A copy is attached for easy reference. Hard copies will be circulated to Members shortly.

This was yesterday afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker:

The document can be accessed on the rotunda by opening the site.

And there were some instructions. This is yesterday afternoon while Members, I assume, were engaged in the work of servicing their constituents and also preparing for an important debate today, which we were alerted on just a few days prior, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Subsequently, I received a phone call from the staff of the Parliament who clearly were operating in emergency mode, because they do not normally go through these procedures when documents are shared by the Government for preparation for this House. But I want to commend them because they went further. I received a call asking: “Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, we need to locate you because we have some documents. We have to try to find you to get these documents to you. We realize it is the 11<sup>th</sup> hour.” I asked: “What is the size of this report?” I was told it was substantial. They probably could not bear to count the pages for me at that time. It was substantial.

Madam Deputy Speaker, a package was dropped at my constituency office. When I completed the walkabout, I went back there, after dark, only to discover—I still had to go home and further prepare for the debate that was scheduled for today—a 265-page report that makes fundamental changes in the way our local government representatives will be elected; will make fundamental changes that I suspect some in the Government have studied, but the population has no clue

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

about and at the end of this debate still will have no clue about, based on the manner in which this was introduced to the Parliament and the manner in which the Minister of—well, what is he?

**Dr. Rowley:** Cabal. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. A. Browne:** What is he?

**Mr. Imbert:** The Minister of Works—

**Dr. A. Browne:** The Minister of Works, acting as Minister of Local Government—which he no longer is—claimed to have piloted this particular report. Madam Deputy Speaker, when were we—echoing the lofty words of the Member for St. Augustine and the Member for Tunapuna—as elected representatives—when were we supposed to consult with our constituents on this report? I am asking the Government a direct question. When were we, as elected representatives—when was I, as the elected representative for Diego Martin Central, supposed to engage and consult with our constituents on this report, so that we could come to the House today and when we present, it would reflect their views, and when we vote it would be informed by the views of the people who brought us here to represent them?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I condemn this Government for a further attack on the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago. The haste and the manner in which they have brought this report to us after two and a half years can only lead us to further suspect that this Government is up to no good. We already did not trust them and they further violated that trust today.

On behalf of the constituents of Diego Martin Central, I condemn the anti-democratic actions of this Government. Wrapped in lofty words for the last several hours, they have presented exhibit A: How not to do business. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not new politics, this is not even old politics, this is deviousness in the Lower House.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for St. Ann's East.

**Mrs. Joanne Thomas** (*St. Ann's East*): Madam Deputy Speaker, I stand with my colleagues on behalf of the constituents of St. Ann's East, and what I want to indicate, I just received a well-binded copy—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well-bound.



**Mrs. J. Thomas:**—of this report. When I got this report yesterday evening after six at my home, and it was in a bulldog clip.

**Hon. Member:** In a what?

**Hon. Member:** A bulldog clip.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** A bulldog clip. That is what it was attached to. Right? So it was loose.

**Mr. Sharma:** I thought you said it was “well binded”?

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** So, Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Bound. Bound.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:**—I want to voice my condemnation of this and I take this as great offence, the way this Report was brought forward for us for review to debate today, and as my colleagues highlighted, 265 pages long, and I just want to put on record my dissatisfaction on behalf of the constituents of St. Ann’s East.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on behalf of the constituents of Arouca/Maloney to condemn the undemocratic actions of the UNC-A Government. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, yesterday, like my colleagues, I received this document on the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2013 via email, and it could have been somewhere after eight o’clock last night I received the hard copy.

You know, when I received the email I immediately called the Chief Whip and I said: “Did you see this document?” Because it said, based on the email, that this Motion would have been coming to the House for debate today and none of us would have had the opportunity to read it before. So I called her immediately and asked her: “Did you see it?” She said no; she would take a look at it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I became immediately upset because—and concerned because of the undemocratic nature of the Government. You know, they constantly talk about participatory democracy, deepening democracy; they talk about good governance and, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a good example of how undemocratic this Government is. It is a good example that they really do not care about participatory democracy. And, you know, I was reminded of

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

something that was said by the Prime Minister in their policy on Local Government, Transformation and Modernization, and she said—to quote:

We believe our nation can become more prosperous, democratic, stable and self-assured if all individuals, citizens, communities, groups and organizations are able to participate and contribute to the governance of this country.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, these words, as the Member for Diego Martin Central said, they are just lofty words; they are just empty words, you know, because at the end of the day they do not practise what they preach. They do not practise what they preach, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**5.30 p.m.**

One of the things they came to tell us here today, through the report, is that there are additional electoral districts in electoral areas such as Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo and Princes Town, and they have proposed name changes to these electoral districts, et cetera. Critical information like this has never been shared with members of the population. I am sure the media does not even know about it. So many individuals do not know about it, Madam Deputy Speaker. Our constituents are not aware of it. We were not allowed the opportunity to study the document, to share the information. None of that happened and, Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, the Government reminds me of a story I read this morning.

Early this morning, doing my Bible study, I read about Ahab and Jezebel, and Ahab was an unjust king who angered the Israelites at the time. He did all manner of evil and it just reminds me of the Government. They do all manner of evil in the sight of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but there is one thing that happened. There was a day when Ahab was judged for his injustice and for the evil that he had done, and I just want to tell them that, your day is going to come.

**Hon. Member:** “It coming.” [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon** (*Point Fortin*): Madam Deputy Speaker, indeed I view this as a very serious matter, and it is not a matter to be snickered at and laughed at as the other side is doing at this time. And so, I find solace myself as my colleague, the Member for Arouca/Maloney, in the *Bible* in the verse by Ecclesiasticus. It is said:

“The greater you are, the more you should behave humbly, and...you will find favour...”

And it goes on, Madam Deputy Speaker:

“There is no cure for the proud man’s malady, since an evil growth has taken root in him.”

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the actions by the Government today with regard to both Bills—and indeed many of them have used the word “significant”—significant changes to the manner in which the country does its business with regard to election of its officials.

I have to say on behalf of the people of Point Fortin that this is an absolute atrocity. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Travesty.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** It is a travesty, and we reject outright this abomination which is now forced upon us. This is arrogance I say of the very highest order, and it is the reason this Government, since it has been in office for three years, has not been able to permeate the society. It is the reason you are finding yourself in the difficulties that you are in now and you will pay the price for it.

So once again, I reject outright, the people of Point Fortin reject outright what you have foisted upon us today, and we strongly, strongly condemn your actions here today. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Herbert Volney** (*St. Joseph*): Madam Deputy Speaker, I join to agree, to concur with those who have spoken in condemnation of what has happened here today. The parliamentary Chamber is the body where the laws of this land are enacted, and in order for there to be a worthwhile contribution for those whose duty it is to study closely the intent of the policy and the implementation of new law—the enactment of new law by the Government—there must be some reasonable opportunity by those who may very well want to support any measure as opposed to opposing it for the sake of opposing it; to study the documents in support of the measure.

On this occasion, while it is that I join to condemn the late arrival of the documents, I think that it is not good enough that this measure should just be the conduct of how this matter arrived before us, should be just condemned. I think that the proper and right thing for the Government to do is to adjourn further debate on this Motion [*Desk thumping*] in order to allow those of us who are still

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[MR. VOLNEY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

to speak, to look at it, including those on the Government side itself. This is wrong. This is plainly wrong and I have to protest on behalf of the constituency of and my constituents in St. Joseph.

I hope that the Government will see its way to apologize, not just profusely, but sincerely by having this matter adjourned in order for it to be looked at. Right is right and wrong is wrong, and on this occasion the Government is clearly wrong and this is indefensible. It is undemocratic. I do not even want to go so far as to say it is unparliamentary conduct, but it really is and I condemn it entirely. And should all that we say come to zero, I think that for the record and for posterity the vote should be put individually, that it be recorded—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Warner:** A division.

**Mr. H. Volney:**—that there be a division, that it be seen who participated in this very undemocratic and reprehensible deed here today, and that it does not happen again, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I thank you.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Local Government.

**The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan):** Thank you. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have listened with great concern—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Really?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—to the statements made by Members of the Opposition and wish to say that I apologize on behalf of the Government [*Desk thumping*] for the fact that this arrived late in the Parliament, and sincerely do so.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this report did reach the Parliament on July 03, but as you would recall Parliament was not convened until this point in time—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Which year?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** This year—and the calling of the election made it imperative that this matter be brought here today, which is the first time we have met since the recess to have it considered.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are still six weeks before the election is held and if one looks at the report, one sees on page 22 of the report, table 1, which gives you a clear indication of the number of electoral districts with altered

boundaries as recommended and the number of electoral districts with unaltered boundaries as recommended. In fact, the corporations that are affected are Port of Spain, Point Fortin, Arima, Chaguanas, Couva/Tabaquite, Mayaro, Princes Town—and that is it. The ones that are not affected—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** That is it? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—are Tunapuna/Piarco, Siparia, San Juan/Laventille, Sangre Grande, Penal/Debe, Diego Martin and San Fernando. Those are not affected. The others have changes in the boundaries. [*Crosstalk*]

What has happened, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that there are going to be changes in terms of the number of electoral districts in two regional corporations; one, Princes Town which goes from nine to 10, and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo which increases from 13 to 14 and, of course, the other boundary changes that have been recommended in the report. I am sure, with a little effort, we will all be able to come to terms with adjusting our campaign strategy and what we are putting in place for the elections by adhering to the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a very important point. This report comes from an institution which we have high regard and respect for. It comes from an institution, the Elections and Boundaries Commission, which we all regard as an independent commission, and which invariably in my own knowledge, I do not recall us changing any of these reports, but that we generally accept as a fair report, the reports that are presented by the commission. Because, when you read the pages of the report, you will see that there are certain established formula—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Thomas:** When?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—for dealing with how the seats are allocated and how the boundaries and so on are reorganized, and all of this is in the report.

So again, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to again apologize for the late presentation of this report to the Parliament, and I do not wish to go back in the history of the Parliament to show that it is not the first time this has happened by an administration. One remembers the sunset clause that had to deal with matters with the cricket—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Oh, come on.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—and which was then presented [*Crosstalk*] at the last minute by a former administration. And if my memory serves me right,

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

subject to correction, there was also a matter with regard to THA election that was also presented late in the House, but that is no excuse for the fact that this has come here late. And again, Madam Deputy Speaker, we crave the indulgence of our colleagues on the other side and I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question put.*

*The House divided: Ayes 22 Noes 13*

AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Mc Leod, Hon. E.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

Sharma, Hon. C.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Seemungal, Hon. J.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

Ramadharsingh, Hon. Dr. G.

De Coteau, Hon. C.

Khan, Hon. Dr. F.

Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Ramdial, Hon. R.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Partap, C.

*EBC (Local Gov't & THA) Order, 2013*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

NOES

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Cox, Miss D.

Hypolite, N.

Mc Intosh, Mrs. P.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Browne, Dr. A.

Thomas, Miss J.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

Volney, H.

Warner, J.

*Question agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the draft of the “Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and House of Assembly) Order, 2013” be approved.

**5.45 p.m.**

**MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL, 2013**

**Mr. Jack Warner** (*Chaguanas West*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have just seen an example of participatory democracy—[*Laughter*] 22 voted for, 13 against, and out of the 22, 20 did not read the Bill [*Laughter*]—document, but it is all right!

**Mr. Volney:** The Motion.

**Mr. J. Warner:** The Motion. Yeah, that is all right.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise here with some degree of pleasure because now more than ever I am concerned and appreciate the luxury of my fundamental rights and freedoms. Of course, how long I shall enjoy these [*Laughter*] fundamental rights and freedoms seem to be anybody’s guess.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

But this morning, Madam Deputy Speaker, we were regaled by the Member for Tabaquite with some of the lofty ideals of proportional representation. In fact, as the debate began, my friends on the other side, they were not sure who was the Minister of Local Government and they were looking around to—“is it me? Is it you? Is it me? Is it you?” Then finally, the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, for today, became the Minister of Local Government until tomorrow.

Then we have been given this whole history of proportional representation. I will not go into all the lofty ideals because some of them, from where I sit here, Madam Deputy Speaker, were meaningless. So I will touch a few and hopefully in doing so, I will demonstrate the hollowness of the argument put forward first, by the Member for Tabaquite and then by the Member for St. Augustine, and surprise of all surprises, the Member for Tunapuna.

**Hon. Member:** Imagine that!

**Mr. J. Warner:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite spoke about participatory democracy and I want to say here very early that for me, that was merely used here for purposes of convenience. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, nothing that particular Member for Tabaquite, in his other dispensation, nothing he has done, in my humble view, has demonstrated participatory democracy. Nothing the Government has done and in the last two months in particular, and particularly in Chaguanas West, has demonstrated democracy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if this Government and particularly the Member for Tabaquite, if they were so concerned about participatory democracy, why when there were 31 out of 31 party groups in Chaguanas West, they did not listen to the voice of the people? If this Government was so concerned about participatory democracy, when the Chaguanas West constituency council unanimously propose a candidate for Chaguanas West, why did they not listen to participatory democracy?

Madam Deputy Speaker, we just moved—we just got a Motion approved—22/13—and in that Motion, they have increased Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo from 13 seats to 14. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, since February 2012, that 13-seat corporation had 12 seats, because Annmarie Boodram, a councillor, resigned February 2012. To this day, they have never had an election for the district of Perseverance/Waterloo. Who is fooling whom? “What yuh talking about participatory democracy?” What has happened to the people of Perseverance/Waterloo for the last 16 months? But you come here today because



you have the numbers and you give them one more, but when they have 13—and they had 12, you were not concerned and that is their example of participatory democracy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the impression was given by the Mover of the Motion, he said this PR—and I quote:

“...signals the intention of the Government to engage in” constitutional “reform...”

And this was parroted by the Member for Tunapuna who I will come to later.

The Member for Tabaquite further said that this amendment deepens participatory democracy. I want to say it does not. What it does, Madam Deputy Speaker, is it attempts to steal and frustrate the wishes of the people of Chaguanas. That is all it does!

Madam Deputy Speaker, he talked about proper representation. He used words as true participation, and in fact the Member for Tabaquite went so far as to talk about the exercise in constitutional reform by the Member for St. Augustine and “what a wonderful work he is doing”. Well, all I know is an ad on the TV and radio saying “what a nice man he is”. [*Laughter*] That is all I know! Because ask the people of Tobago when he went there, what discussion took place on constitutional reform? Ask them! Ask different parts of Trinidad what took place. To compound it further, the Member for Tabaquite said, I quote:

“...listening to people has always been an objective of this Government.”

I say oh! [*Laughter*]

“...listening to people has always been an objective of this Government.”

Well, let me ask some questions. If that is the case, how come you did not listen to 31 out of 31 party groups? If that is the case, how come you did not listen to the Chaguanas West constituency council? If that is the case, even the morning of the election, when you brought in your 15 prados with—the Ministers—black-tinted glasses and so on, and 27 lawyers in their dark suits, all over the constituency, why did you not listen to the voices of the people then? If that is the case, when you went from house to house telling people why you should not vote for a man like me, why did you not listen to the people then? How come your Government, even up to now, has not listened to the voices of the people when they asked for the dismissal of the cabal of which you are a member? How come? And then you ask the question: “if not now, when?” I say, if not now under you, never! [*Laughter*] “That is what I say, Member for Tabaquite.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite further said that we are in Parliament to get the views of the PR election for aldermen, and what is painful is the so-called views which came a couple of days ago have not even been read by some nor understood by others, in spite of the explanation of the Member for Diego Martin North/East. In fact, what we had for over 15, 20 minutes was a lesson in PR but pure PR is not what is taking place or recommended for local government election. So what he was doing therefore in talking about PR and the virtues of PR was to compare apples with grapes. The main thing is, and continues to be, there has been no consultation with the stakeholders as far as this Bill is concerned.

Madam Deputy Speaker, a little more than three years, I sat across there and I would never try to disassociate myself from any of the things which took place when I was there. God has given me the wisdom that my eyes are now opened and the people of Chaguanas have given me the confidence and the faith to carry on. And as such, what I want to say, looking back now retrospectively, I want to say that I have learnt to become very suspicious of this Government when they bring gifts just before an election.

If I had not seen it in Chaguanas West, I may have had some reservations, but having seen it in Chaguanas West, you have no idea of the kind of gifts they bring before an election. You have no idea of the vulgarity that takes place with this Government before an election. Food cards that you cannot even imagine. I have some boxes still—

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. J. Warner:**—to carry to the garbage because I took some from the garbage, I showed it in Sangre Grande, and I have to send it back to the garbage bin. Thousands from Tobago that they could not have time to deliver and the same thing applied to Chaguanas West, and then to come here, the Member for Tabaquite then does the wonder of all things, he refers to the Member for Tunapuna, Mr. Dookeran, he refers to his new politics.

I want to tell the Member for Tabaquite, the new politics to which you have referred is a new politics of 2007. That new politics which the Member for Tunapuna espoused, he today does not even recognize it [*Laughter*] and does not know. The new politics that he has, that today is being espoused is totally from what was espoused in 2007, because today new politics is one of naked opportunism, greed, vulgarity and arrogance. And if that is the new politics that you are espousing, you could keep that because when I first met you and this was

a laudable initiative, I fell for it. And today I hear you talking about arithmetic, but I will come to you—[*Crosstalk*] I will come to you just now.

**Mr. Dookeran:** Why did you abandon it?

**Mr. J. Warner:** The Member for Tunapuna, [*Crosstalk*] I will come to you just now. “Doh worry, I will come to you, doh worry yuhself. I ent ready for you yet.” Right? [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I asked myself, the PNM in their wisdom or lack of it, I do not know, they built and completed the Chaguanas Borough Corporation headquarters. They give it up in December 2009. One of the best headquarters you could see anywhere in the country.

**Hon. Member:** Yes, yes! [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. J. Warner:** I was shocked when they built it in a UNC heartland.

**Miss Cox:** That is how we operate.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Well, I see that now. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] I was shocked!

Madam Deputy Speaker, to this day that building has remained closed. To this day, some four years later and has remained closed because of over-centralization by the Member for Tabaquite who at the time was the Minister of Local Government, who says that nobody is going there as long as he is Minister, and he is right; nobody has gone there. They may go now! It has remained closed because of corruption in terms of having to do over the same work, over and over, which there was no need to do.

I ask the question: how can this process for electing aldermen change that? How can this process—this convoluted voodoo, mathematical process which the Member for Tunapuna said that is irrelevant—a man who has made his career on sums and arithmetic today said that is not important. Father forgive them, sometimes they do not know what they say. I ask the question therefore: how the aldermen, the process that we have here today, as convoluted as it is, how could that process open that headquarters after four years?

Then, Madam Deputy Speaker, he says—the Member for Tabaquite spoke about national government, and said that how of course the Prime Minister made this gesture for national government. I want to tell this House here that while I was Minister of National Security, I gave the Prime Minister 95 anti-crime measures. I went to the National Security Council with them. Not even 10 per

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

cent of those measures were implemented. Simply to rent covert vehicles for the police officers, I was blocked, and why? Because the fact is they want to know who the contractors are who the police had for the last eight years, “if they PNM”! I say I could not care less.

**Hon. Member:** Hmhhh! Oh my God!

**Mr. J. Warner:** I could not care less! The fact is the police are happy with them and if the police are happy with them, give the police the right for the vehicles. When I left, Madam Deputy Speaker, the police did not get it yet and then I asked—so I said fine.

So when I saw this talk between the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, and I see both of them giggling and so on in the Prime Minister’s office, I say, well, they did not ask me, so I sent to the Prime Minister a copy again of the measures.

**6.00 p.m.**

I copied it to the Leader of the Opposition, I copied it to the Chamber of Commerce, I copied it to DOMA, I copied it to the Commissioner of Police, I sent it last week to the new Minister of National Security. I said, “Prime Minister, if you wish to get any help or advice from me on these measures, I am at your service”. Not even an acknowledgement. But you come now for the media because you make good optics because for them politics is about optics. That is why it is easy to climb a ladder in a jacket and tie to paint a room.

That is why it is easy one day to have two crutches to go into a meeting and the next day you marry in a jacket and tie and “yuh” walking properly because nothing wrong with “yuh” foot. You see, optics, it is all about optics. “So yuh say therefore, yuh make the point therefore that yuh want this national government, yuh want of course, PNM and ILP and Rowley and Warner” and so on.

**Hon. Member:** Who?

**Mr. J. Warner:** But the fact is I sent it to you. To this day you have not called me but it is good for the public to say that, good optics. Not even an acknowledgement, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And then, because of time I would go to the Member for St. Augustine, this paragon of virtue. He says the greatest journey begins with a first step. Well, I say okay, fine, but that first step must not come like a thief in the night. That is why I said, bring out the first step. Madam Deputy Speaker, then the Member for St.

Augustine, a seat thrust upon him by the UNC, reads a document. He said it is the COP document for, of course, what they will deliver, in which genome “I doh know”, in which world, which year, “I doh know” but he said with that document they will deliver. I hope they get the seven corporations they are fighting for because the ILP hustling to know which one it is quickly to start working. So he reads this document and I ask myself, when would these measures he is reading, when will they come into play? I say when will these measures take place?

The ILP has just barely given the COP a breath of life so they talking big now and making demands of the Prime Minister because you get a breath of life and suddenly now he has a document to read on measures he will carry out. Where, when, for whom? Down in Chaguanas West by-election at the height of their campaign, they came in Chaguanas West, they held two meetings, one in Felicity with 15 persons, [*Laughter*] massive public meeting, one in Montrose with 35 persons, take out the persons, put them close, close in a chair and put the TV towards them to fool people but I will come back to that just now in my contribution.

**Miss Mc Donald:** “He want to laugh.” Look, look. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. J. Warner:** You know something, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for St. Augustine that the days—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Roberts:** “All yuh leave me alone.”

**Mr. J. Warner:** Well I do not know if the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara is COP, a UNC or what.

**Hon. Member:** He is ILP.

**Mr. J. Warner:** I know there is room for him in the ILP. [*Laughter*] We are partners, “is” all right. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am saying, he says that days have long gone by because the country will now wake up and they will know who their aldermen are. What joke is this? I heard the Member for Diego Martin North/East say they “doh” even know sometimes who their mayors are.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they will wake up, “he say”, based on this process and know who their aldermen are. Madam Deputy Speaker, yesterday I did not know who the Minister of Tourism is today, and I wake up. Yesterday, I did not know who the Minister of Land and Marine Affairs is, I did not even know there is a ministry called that and I wake up but this process is so enlightening, it is the enlightenment, it is the renaissance for politics in the country, that we will wake up to know who the aldermen are.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

I did not even know yesterday who was our Minister of Justice. In fact, I did not even know that the Minister of Justice was not bound to be a lawyer because if that is the case, one day the Member for Fyzabad will also be Minister of Justice. [*Crosstalk and laughter*] It is as bad as that.

And then, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for St. Augustine, gave us a history of what he has been doing in constitutional reform and PR. Who asked that? What our concern is, we are saying that this process that we are discussing now came like a thief in the night. That is what we are saying. The process. We have not even reached yet to talk about PR. We have not even reached yet to talk about what he is doing or what he has failed to do but what has frightened me—and the Member for Diego Martin North/East has said it—what has frightened me, I quote him, he said “when the PR is unleashed on all yuh, all yuh will see”. “Geez, Lord.” When we unleash PR on “all yuh, all yuh will see”.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have some grandchildren here and I am begging him, “doh unleash it on dem please”. Me, I have one foot in, one foot out so I “doh” bother, but “dem” children of mine, please Member for St. Augustine, in a seat that has been given to you, do not unleash it on “dem”.

**Hon. Member:** Not for long.

**Mr. J. Warner:** And then he says, he gave it a reference to Patrick Manning and the smelter and he says of course, that would not happen under this new system. But this country says it does not want a cabal, “ent we have it?” Manning has nothing to do with that. This country says we do not want a large Cabinet, and we have it? The Chamber of Commerce begged for a small Cabinet. I wake up this morning and see Government changes, 35 Ministers, and four non-Cabinet Ministers; 1.3 million people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you would understand, you know. Madam Deputy Speaker, the public “doh” understand. Thirty-five Ministers. So you “doh” want a big Cabinet, well take it. [*Laughter*] What is the difference between this Government and Manning? “Yuh doh want a smelter?” Take three. Chamber of Commerce say please give us a smaller Cabinet and you know something, Madam Deputy Speaker, up to now some Cabinet Ministers “doh” even understand the Ministry they get. They do not understand it. Thirty-five! Right? Thirty-five!

And then the Member for St. Augustine, Madam Deputy Speaker, went so far—you know he is always giving the impression that he is God’s gift to virtue and honesty and so on. He is God’s gift. He is the COP leader and so on. He is

mister nice man, he cries and so on—and he says trust is when you give your word and you fulfil it. “Huh! Hmm!”

Well, I will tell you something. Before the election of 2010, the Member for Tabaquite now, the Prime Minister and I wanted to know how we will get somebody of stature to embellish the UNC, to make sure we win the election. Madam Deputy Speaker, we sat down in a meeting and we went to get Mr. Volney because we say if we get a man from the Bench like Justice Volney, it bound to lift our stature and we went for Volney. At the time, Madam Deputy Speaker, Volney’s salary was \$50,000 a month or thereabout.

**Mr. Volney:** Sixty. Tax free.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Sixty—well I did not—tax free. We convinced Volney that if he comes, Madam Deputy Speaker, he will of course be given a Ministry, Ministry of Justice and with the perks and “blah, blah, blah” and so and so on, you would be able to live comfortably. Madam Deputy Speaker, when section 34 came and the entire Cabinet should have taken the blame, suddenly a scapegoat was being looked for. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister called me to join her in a room—and you could say what you want to say, that is your business—joined her in a room with Minister Volney and asked why this happened. And we spoke and so and so on and she held his hand, as she held mine when I went to her to resign and so on, and held his hand and so on and “oh yuh nice”. Mr. Volney, how are you?

And the Prime Minister and Mr. Volney, with tears in his eyes, says, Madam Prime Minister, allow me to resign with my dignity. I want to resign with my dignity. She says Justice Minister, I will think about it. As he went through the door, she “say”, “Get me Lisa Ghany, please”. Volney is fired at six o’clock. Before he reached home, it was on the news. “What yuh talking ’bout trust? What yuh talking ’bout trust?”

**Hon. Members:** “Oh gor.”

**Mr. J. Warner:** This country must know. [*Crosstalk*] This country must know. “What yuh talking ’bout trust?” Trust, which trust? Which trust? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Members:** No!

**Mr. J. Warner:** That Member for Tabaquite and I and the PM sat down in a room and we spoke with him and drew him out from his Judiciary and when we are supposed to stand with him—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Hon. Member:** 36(5).

**Dr. Rambachan:** 36(5).

**Mr. J. Warner:** I am not giving way.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is misleading and incorrect.

**Mr. J. Warner:** I am not giving way.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I never sat down with Mr. Warner—

**Mr. J. Warner:** I am not giving way. Not to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:**—to deliberate about Mr—Justice [*Interruption*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** 36(5), it has to do with imputing improper motives and I want to ask you to link your debate on the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2013. You have really bordered on irrelevance. You may continue.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am talking here about the issue of trust. I quoted the Member for St. Augustine. I quote it again. He said, “Trust is when you give your word and you fulfil it.” I am on that.

**Hon. Member:** So he opened the debate.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Once he has talked about trust, I am free then to go further and to respond. That is what I am doing. Thank you. If we talk about trust—and I will leave Volney for the time being, he could talk for himself—when we came into Government, we said that we will not replicate what the Manning administration had done. We said we will not stand for corruption, for cronyism and nepotism. Today, we have gone beyond that and therefore that is trust. We said, at the time, that Manning’s large Cabinet of 20 persons was too big. We ridiculed him; I did. That is trust. And we said we will not do that. Today, we almost doubled it. That is trust.

Madam Deputy Speaker, trust goes further. When Sergeant Hayden Manwaring got killed in San Fernando, in the line of duty—let me say also too, of the thousand people arrested in the state of emergency, only one case was successful, the late Hayden Manwaring’s case—When he got killed, Madam Deputy Speaker, his wife came to me, as Minister of National Security and, with tears in her eyes, asked me to build a wall, give her some security, a wall around her house.



Madam Deputy Speaker, I gave her my word that this Government shall do it because trust is important. Trust is important. I went to the Cabinet, Madam Deputy Speaker, for \$350,000 to build the wall for Madam Manwaring. The Cabinet voted it down, especially the Member for St. Augustine, the Member for Tabaquite, and I gave the Member for Tabaquite three quotations to build the wall for her, he did not. Madam Deputy Speaker, as Minister of National Security, I built it from my pocket. I also put security cameras. “I also put a gate that you could slide and thing from inside” because they were not doing it.

You know something, Madam Deputy Speaker, trust—in the independence celebration, I see her getting a medal for her husband and she calls me and she says, “Mr. Warner you know these people give me a medal and they take away the food card they gave meh.” And why? Because she said that the Government did not help her with the fence. They took back the food card. That is trust. [Crosstalk] A food card. And what I say here, I will say outside, because anything I say outside, I can say inside and vice versa. I am not afraid of pre-action protocol letter because I say whenever that comes, put me in the box and let me put you too. That is all I ask. I am saying therefore that is trust and therefore, I am dismissive of when the Member talks about trust in this Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister was alderman of St. Patrick County Council from 1987—1991. That was her first political office. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite was alderman and mayor from 2003—2009. One would have thought, therefore, that having both the Prime Minister and the Minister, having experienced the office of aldermen, that they would have come here and say, well listen, being an alderman and the way we were elected was wrong because of a, b, c, d, e, f. Because they would have come here and given this House of their experiences. They were both aldermen. Not a word! Not a word!

### **6.15 p.m.**

Earlier on today, Madam Deputy Speaker, we pound our tables when we heard Jehue Gordon came first. You know why we did that Madam Deputy Speaker? It was because he came first. This convoluted process is to deny the party that comes first from getting the plums of office.

When Keshorn Walcott came first, he got—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** “He get ah half ah medal [*Inaudible*].”

**Mr. J. Warner:**—almost half of the Ministry and rightly so because he came first. But a political party that comes first—just three days before we reach here,

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Wednesday afternoon I got documents to come here Friday to discuss a process that is convoluted and cannot be understood.

So when a party comes first, we have a system of voodoo maths, voodoo arithmetic—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** “Is only arithmetic.”

**Mr. J. Warner:**—to elect aldermen. I ask: what logic is that? “And up to now ah only responding to what dey say, eh. I eh start meh debate yet.” What logic is that? And then the Member for Tunapuna, I was appalled.

**Mr. Imbert:** As was I.

**Mr. J. Warner:** You know, I sat here and I tried to follow the histrionics of the Member for Tunapuna. I tried to follow his style of debating and so on, what he was saying. I could not believe it. I could not believe it. And on the—not here, but on the platform in Gasparillo on September 17, in a public meeting, I will say what I think on the platform outside.

Madam Deputy Speaker, he said that this Parliament rises up against reform. How could he accuse us of being against reform? What we are against is the process. What we are against is the shortness of notice that we have not been able to internalize the document to see what, of course, is good, bad or otherwise. Who could be against reform? Who can be? But reform must not be thrust upon us. It must be something that we sit down and discuss and internalize before we, of course, take a position and I am hearing my Member for Tunapuna saying: “Take it, it is a little piece. That would be a catalyst for change”, and so on. He is not concerned whether it is good law or bad law. He says it is a catalyst—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Mc Donald:** Shame.

**Mr. J. Warner:**—to start the PR debate, he says and then he says the classic thing, PR is not about arithmetic. Well I said to myself it is a good thing he is not working in the Elections and Boundaries Commission because the very nature of politics is arithmetic.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not about arithmetic.

**Mr. J. Warner:** I beat you because I have more votes than you have. That is arithmetic. But what we are saying, therefore, is that we have to make sure that the process is correct and then it is time the “power of the people supersedes the power of the Parliament”. I want to say it again. It is time “the power of the

people supersedes the power of the Parliament”. Well if it is so, “whey yuh want throw out Volney for? De power ah de people have him here.” But the whole thing is to throw him out so if anybody even attempts to come across close to ILP will understand “yuh in trouble”, walk soft. It is held as a kind of threat over the heads of others.

**Mr. Imbert:** Hostages.

**Mr. J. Warner:** But, “say what, say what”. In Chaguanas West everybody “tell dem dey voting UNC and dey vote fuh ILP. They have nothing to do wit dat.”

**Miss Mc Donald:** “Hmm.”

**Mr. J. Warner:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the objection on this side, this side here—they could speak for themselves. They are very articulate. Our objection, Madam Deputy Speaker, is twofold. One is based on proportionality and I would tell you what I mean by that. If we go on the present system, it means that some votes in this country have more value than others.

In other words, under this convoluted system, it means that the people who voted, let us say in Mayaro/Rio Claro, where they have 4,000 votes, and so on, to get an alderman—they have fewer votes to get an alderman than Chaguanas, than San Juan/Laventille, than Siparia, but the same four aldermen. So to elect the four, let us say in Mayaro/Rio Claro, it takes you 27,000 votes. To elect the four in San Juan/Laventille, it takes you 161,000 votes, if anybody votes, in Chaguanas and so on. So, therefore, the value of the vote is more important. It has less value in these large districts as against the small ones.

The second thing is the process. Two factors: it has nothing to do with reform. “How you could tell me”—on Tuesday the ILP screened in Chaguanas. You were not even aware of this, but we screened on the old basis just passed, okay. On Wednesday, 33 persons for, of course, eight seats, because we knew there are eight seats and eight districts and we screened on the basis of those districts. Yesterday, in Sangre Grande, 39 persons for eight seats. Wednesday we were in Tunapuna, 57 persons for 14 seats on the same boundaries we know. And then—that being done now—Wednesday night I come home, after a long day, to hear about a system of voting that is new.

After you declared election date you changed the rules of the game? That is the issue. This has nothing to do with reform and that is why I said yesterday and I am saying again today: I ask the nation to wear black for nine days and let us be

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

in a state of mourning because of the death of democracy and that is why I left my green suit home and will do it so again for the next nine days. It cannot be right. It just cannot be right. And at the end of the day, I am saying it is unfair to go to bed one night and wake up the next morning and see that in the dead of night, the Government has gotten up and changed the laws of the land—how you vote, altering the parameters by which we engage in society and by which we shape our behaviour and by how we plan our daily activities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are almost mere days away from a national debate and we are bringing this now, at a time when we should be concentrating, at least the ILP, on analyzing what will be presented on reviewing the Government's performance for the last year and the last two years after that; on reviewing the Government expenditure and seeing if, of course, the expenditure can be accounted for—and we know it cannot be, but still we try. We shall spend the next days reviewing the programmes and policies of the Government. Monday is budget day and, therefore, one would have thought that any responsible government would have expected its parliamentarians to be engaged in that kind of activity. But when would we get time to do this? This Bill has become a distraction, almost.

I am saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, here for purposes of the *Hansard*, that this rushed approach is what has embarrassed this Government before. It was this rushed approach that caused the Resmi affair. It was this rushed approach that caused section 34. It was this rushed approach that had the soldier/police Bill here. It was this rushed approach to give Tobago self-government. And these things failed, and yet for all, though these things have failed, the Government has not learnt its lesson.

Madam Deputy Speaker, how in all honesty can we persuade in this country that we have seriously done our homework on this Bill? How can we? And, therefore, to debate this Bill is really a disservice to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We were given this Bill, I want to repeat, two days ago. The other place, I am advised, would have it on Tuesday, if it is passed here today and by numbers, of course, we know it will pass. In fact, sometimes I ask myself “what I am talking for? Who listening?” They have the numbers. This is a numbers game. So if it is passed here today—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Arithmetic.

**Mr. J. Warner:**—on Tuesday it goes to another place. Tuesday, some of those guys who have been made Senators would be sworn in on Tuesday morning

and on Tuesday those Senators, the new ones particularly, who will be sworn in will be asked to sit down and discuss a Bill which they have never seen, and which they have to vote on and that is participatory democracy. When will they get time to study the Bill? I am no lawyer, as I said. But if I want to get legal advice, when?

When will I discuss this Bill with my constituents?

**Dr. Browne:** After the fact.

**Mr. J. Warner:** After the fact, yes. When? Twelve thousand, six hundred and forty people have me here today. I owe it to them to go back to them to discuss this Bill and if the others do not want to do that because they “doh” go and see their constituents and when “dey see dem, plenty press” to show a pothole in Debe, and so on, or a river in central Trinidad; if they do not, that is their business. But I go back to them.

Whenever this Parliament finishes tonight, at 2.00 in the morning I am in Chaguanas West meeting over 300 people. When will I discuss it with my constituents? Because this proposed change will affect them. And I ask myself, if even I did not want to discuss it with them and I send it for them—Wednesday I got it, Thursday in Parliament here to debate—when will we discuss it? That is the kind of insulting behaviour that is unacceptable. When I say that there is a disconnect between the Government and the people that is what I am talking about. When will they get a chance to rationalize it, to form their own opinion, to give their views to their MP so I can bring them to this House and discuss them? Which MP on this side has had the time to discuss this Bill? Which one of them?

**Miss Mc Donald:** None!

**Mr. J. Warner:** Which one of them on this side has had the time to get feedback from their constituency executive. Which one of them?

**Miss Mc Donald:** None!

**Mr. J. Warner:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the COP, if rain falls in the country, the COP calls an executive committee meeting to discuss the rain. If sun shines in the country, they call a meeting to discuss how hot the sun is. But on Thursday, at the Cabinet, last Thursday, the Prime Minister put it before the Cabinet. Thursday afternoon the Prime Minister sits in a post-Cabinet press conference and discusses this with the media and one hour after, the Leader of the COP sends us a press release saying: “How great thou art. [*Laughter*] Fantastic. This Bill better than slice bread.”

**Mr. Imbert:** No meeting.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Never met his executive. What respect is that? But then again, I could say easily “dah is de COP business and if the COP want to live dat kinda life, dah is dem.” But I am saying I look at the level of hypocrisy because one would expect that a Bill like this must be discussed with your constituents.

**Dr. Browne:** “It shouda rain.”

**Mr. Imbert:** “It shouda rain.”

**Mr. J. Warner:** And then the mantra is: serve the people, serve the people, serve the people. If that is the case, why do you not give the people a chance to express their opinion on this Bill because this Bill affects them?

And I put to this House this evening that there has been no consultation. I say this evening that there has been no consultation between the MPs and their executive and their constituencies because they just could not, but “we come here to vote” and we call it participatory democracy. We come to represent them. No, we came here to represent ourselves.

**6.30 p.m.**

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Chaguanas West has expired.

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. H. Volney*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** You may continue, Member.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I put here the Government’s booklet titled: *Policy on Local Government Transformation and Modernisation*. [*Mr. Warner displays a booklet*] This booklet came into being after extensive consultation all over the country by the very same Minister of Local Government, the Member for Tabaquite. On page 28 is the section that deals with aldermen; page 28. On page 28 it says—He proposes a new section to the Municipal Corporations Act. He says in this document here—after extensive consultation with the people at all levels at tremendous cost, this document is then put forward, and the Minister says in that document: he says he proposes to amend the Municipal Corporations Act to add to—

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

“...each council three special Aldermen, one representing youth male, one youth female and one”—for—“women and children”.

Here, it is here, here, [*Mr. Warner holds up a booklet*] after extensive discussion. [*Crosstalk*]

I am saying, therefore, if this is your plan after extensive consultation, why then do we have this amendment about proportional representation? It was never discussed here, and all the fancy talk, it is nowhere in the PP manifesto. I too helped to write that. It is nowhere there. All the glib language and fancy language and tap dancing and so on, it is not there. [*Laughter*] I helped to write that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So I ask the question, therefore, where did this PR thing come from? Where did this formula come from? I ask the question, are we saying therefore that the Government has abandoned its policy document after all the money and time spent on this? Or is it that the Government for another time has decided to abandon the voice of the people?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask the question: How can one vote for a Bill that one knows nothing about? There are some Ministers here—at least one sitting in this honourable Chamber—who have not yet seen inside of the Cabinet conference. You have one in South Africa, and you have one here, and they have not gone to Cabinet as yet. How do they know what is the Cabinet’s position on this? Is that how we run of course our business? Monkey say, monkey do? Monkey see, monkey do? [*Crosstalk*] Is that how we do it, Madam Deputy Speaker? And you come here to toe the Government line and to bulldoze this Bill as if it has been read.

Sad, sad. Because what we are seeing here is the fact that the Government is drifting from its own moorings and for the next year and a half repeatedly I will come here and say that. And each time I come here I will apologize to this country for having played a critical role for foisting this Government on the nation. [*Desk thumping*] I am sorry. I am sorry. I go to mass every Sunday on my knees I pray. I am sorry. I do not have to pretend. I am not perfect. I thought we had the ideal situation. Aha, aha, I did not imagine, I could not contemplate it was an institution called a cabal.

In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, many citizens are asking, how did the Government arrive at this formula of four aldermen? How? Four aldermen per corporation? How did the Government arrive at this formula and the method for allotment? Let me ask the question. They said four aldermen, why not five? Why

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

not six? Why not eight? “Tell meh nah?” Why not 10? Is it they get the four from a hat? Or they say east, west, north, south, that is four, so take four aldermen? Why four? Nobody has told me so far, why four? Why four?

And as you were shown just now, four from Mayaro with 27,000 electors, and four for San Juan/Laventille with 161,000 and four for Port of Spain, and four for Tunapuna with over 150,000; and four for Chaguanas with over 60,000—four. I ask the question again, where did this formula come from? I ask the question, Madam Deputy Speaker, where is the research that would educate us on this formula?

We have a very good former lecturer in the Member for Tunapuna. What studies have been done, Member, for this situation? What records can you show? What research has been done either here or abroad to justify this formula? Why four and not five, and not six or seven? If I were a “Play Whe man, ah play four in de morning”. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** Heh, heh dead man.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Dead man.

**Hon. Member:** Dead what?

**Mr. J. Warner:** Because I will tell you something, you know, whatever happens it will pass today, but I tell you, down the road, this will be dead in the water.

**Hon. Member:** “All yuh passing it.”

**Mr. J. Warner:** And then again the impression is given as if this is the first time attempts are made at trying to build reform.

Member for Tunapuna, reform is nothing new for this Bill, you know. You were in the NAR. In 1990 the NAR brought 11 pieces of reform; that was your Government then. “Doh” come here today and regale us as if reform is something new that this Government invented. “Doh do us dat!” Since 1965 a report was commissioned by Dr. Williams and that committee was chaired by Mitra Sinanan, that was reform; ’74, Hugh Wooding, that was reform; ’83, the Chambers administration draft policy on community development and local government, that was reform; ’89, ANR Robinson, that was reform; 2006, with all its faults, 2006 the Manning’s administration, White Paper on local government reform, that was reform. So there have been 11 amendments to date.



Madam Deputy Speaker, because I am not used to watching the clock from this side, until I get used to it, could you tell me when I am on my last 10 minutes, please? I thank you. You see, it is a better view, but I am not used to it.

So I am saying, therefore, that what we are looking at is legislation that is 23 years old, and that was passed under the Member for Tunapuna. But he comes today, reform, research, and this and that, and a catalyst—“oh no, doh do us dat nah. Doh do us dat”. We deserve better than that, Member, better than that, right?

And I will tell you something too; in 2009 the former PNM administration published its White Paper on local government reform and brought to Parliament a more comprehensive piece of legislation than the one we have before us today.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “No, Jack yuh wrong.”

**Mr. J. Warner:** You have the time? You will talk about that then.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, “yuh wrong”.

**Mr. J. Warner:** That document, Madam Deputy Speaker, was sent before a joint select committee, you hear and, of course, at that committee it died. Yes, it died. It went there because the very Members now who are proposing this reform were the ones in Parliament who opposed it then, and Manning said carry it before a joint select committee.

**Mr. Imbert:** Uh-hmm.

**Mr. J. Warner:** But today they come here—and that document was more far reaching than the one we have here today because that document proposed a straightforward system where the councillors of the winning party, the council, would elect four aldermen, and the councillors from the losing parties would elect one; that was it.

**Hon. Member:** Straightforward.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Member for Tunapuna, that is research.

**Mr. Dookeran:** That is your report.

**Mr. J. Warner:** And I am saying to you, therefore, come here and say, look, 2009, you have this here. This is it. [*Crosstalk*] How can we come here and amend this?

**Mr. Dookeran:** That is exactly—[*Inaudible*]

**Mr. J. Warner:** So, therefore, if we had taken Manning’s document, [*Crosstalk*] Madam Deputy Speaker, we would have had five aldermen since

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

2009; five. Then again in any event five, six, 10. I ask the question: would more aldermen make a difference to the corporations and how they are being run? You have four, five, six, would more aldermen improve the delivery of goods and services? Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not always believe that more is better. I ask myself sometimes: is it better if we abolished aldermen altogether? Is it better? Because I know there have been aldermen who have done nothing. Nothing.

**Hon. Member:** Nothing. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. J. Warner:** They have no electoral district to represent. They have no burgesses whose problems they have to listen to. All they have to do is sit and—

**Mr. Volney:** They are like Senators.

**Mr. J. Warner:**—huh, yes, like Senators, sit and draw a salary and committee fees and they do nothing.

**Hon. Member:** “It have some Ministers like dat.”

**Mr. J. Warner:** So I am saying, therefore, whether two aldermen or four aldermen, right, the difference will be the same, because, Madam Deputy Speaker, all the municipalities are in a sorry state of neglect today and it has nothing to do with aldermen.

So, therefore, though I had these doubts, let me say quickly there is a purpose for having aldermen. “Ah doh” want it to be misunderstood, there is a purpose for having aldermen, but then you must give these people functions to perform. You have to review and redefine the responsibilities and the parameters of the aldermen. What must they do? They do not know.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what I am saying here is that we have to be more detailed in the job description we give the aldermen. Is that fair enough? Fair enough. That is done, okay. And, therefore, put measures in place to hold them accountable—

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

**Mr. J. Warner:**—to someone especially to the burgesses, that is what we are saying; that is reform. Not this hodgepodge piecemeal “kinda ting” that you come here mumbo jumbo in 72 hours. Therefore, I am saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, before we create aldermen, before we create those positions, put measures in place to get value and performance because otherwise all you are doing is putting more burdens on the taxpayers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to repeat, hiring more people does not equate with more productivity.

**Hon. Member:** “Like de Cabinet.”

**Mr. J. Warner:** It does not, because if the right things are not done, more hirings would just mean more wastage. Does more Ministers mean more performance? Does more Ministers mean better performance? Does a bigger Cabinet mean that there will be less disenchantment in the society? Does it mean that people will be better served? Does it mean that the people up in John John on the basketball court who want food cards will get them? Does it mean that the old lady who, of course, from Siparia and who came to the office last Saturday and spent four hours to see me will get her food card? Does it mean that? Does it mean that the people whose drains were dug in Caroni Central, and the Minister left five minutes after, that the drains would be completed? Does it mean that? And the list can go on and on. Does it mean that? It does not mean that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So I am saying, therefore, that more Ministers does not mean more performance or better performance. In fact, we just saw at the recent reshuffle one Minister in three years went to three different Ministries. A Senator was given four—in three years, four ministerial postings. One Senator, and then he says what a good Senator he is. That is not for me to say, it is for you all to tell me. I am saying, therefore, if one person is moved so regularly it must say it is because of a lack of performance, because if they were doing a good job they would have stayed where they were.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, what is important is that this Government in its desperation to stay in power especially in Chaguanas West, in Chaguanas particular, that is why this Bill is here today. You could say what you want, if the result in Chaguanas were different, we would not be here today. We would not be here today.

**6.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Imbert:** It is winner take all.

**Hon. J. Warner:** It had been very good, but Chaguanas West gave a rude awakening—51 out of 51 polling stations. [*Laughter*] If you see the shock on their faces. If you see the shock.

**Hon. Member:** “Dey cry?”

**Hon. J. Warner:** In one polling station, not a single vote for them.

**Hon. Members:** Owee!

**Mr. Imbert:** A-A.

**Hon. J. Warner:** Never happened before! Every allegation in the book, they hurled at Jack Warner—

**Hon. Member:** “Not a damn vote for dem.”

**Hon. J. Warner:**—but the tide did not turn.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Dat is pressure, boy.”

**Hon. J. Warner:** It did not turn.

The Saturday before the election in Chaguanas, every single good you could think about from a health centre was put forward to them. Cane farmers got their money; land was distributed; food grant, house grant; you name it, they did it; hampers left, right and centre; more Prados than you could see ever in any Prado store.

**Mr. Imbert:** They had a dealership.

**Mr. Volney:** And the candidate did not even engage.

**Dr. Browne:** Bouncing down people.

**Hon. J. Warner:** And what? And what?

**Hon. Member:** Hampers and Pampers.

**Hon. J. Warner:** And today, because that has happened in Chaguanas West, they have come here to bulldoze their way in this Parliament.

Let me tell you something. I made the point that I left this Parliament and went back for validation. One of the things this Government said was the right to recall. How far have you reached with that as a reform?

**Mr. Volney:** Nowhere.

**Hon. J. Warner:** Because if some Ministers do what I do, they could not come back here. They are not coming back here, but that is another story.

**Hon. Member:** Warner seat?

**Mr. J. Warner:** Madam Deputy Speaker, this morning at 7.30, I sent you a petition. The people of Chaguanas West have petitioned this House to ask the

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Government to withdraw this Bill. The people of Chaguanas West have petitioned this House to ask the Government to withdraw the Bill.

This is one constituency, one MP, calling on the Government, which has the majority, 27, asking them to withdraw the Bill; but will the Government listen to the minority?

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** No.

**Hon. J. Warner:** If they do, it will be a first for them—

**Dr. Browne:** Then we will have proportional representation.

**Hon. J. Warner:**—and is that not proportional representation?

Madam Deputy Speaker, the leader of the COP, speaking on the results of the Chaguanas by-election, he said in the *Express* of July 30, 2013—I will quote what he is saying, this paragon of virtue who is resting on a seat that does not belong to him—[*Laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** “They len him. They len him.”

**Hon. J. Warner:**—speaking after the election in Chaguanas West, in the *Express* of July 30. He said, and I quote:

“This victory represents a most dangerous development in the politics of our country. We have witnessed the emergence of a new vulgar concept of the politics of money based on the personal wealth of an individual versus politics of addressing of the issues as in 2010.”

Prakash Ramadar, Member for St. Augustine.

**Mr. Volney:** “Cyar stay in the House.”

**Hon. J. Warner:** What the Member has said here, Madam Deputy Speaker, he has spit in the face of the people of Chaguanas West. What happened in Chaguanas West was the voice of the majority. They were speaking, Madam Deputy Speaker, and they were not prepared to even listen to the voice of the majority. They were not prepared to even listen to the voice of the majority. How then can we believe that they are sincere about wanting to empower the voices of the minority? How come?

You see, today it is convenient for the minorities to have a greater say because they predict that come October 21, they will move from a majority to an almost non-existent minority and that is what this Bill is about.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. WARNER]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Madam Deputy Speaker, today as we speak, the ILP, the Independent Liberal Party, is the largest political force in the country and we are growing by leaps and bounds. The People's Partnership and the PNM, they know this is true. They may say openly it is not, but it is true. I told you just now about our screening numbers in the various constituencies, but do you believe that because of this there is no victimization? Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes, there is. There is victimization. There is discrimination. There is underfunding, under-delivery, and that is the problem because all this comes from the central government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they fire URP workers because they wear green stripe in their blouses; because a woman has green eye shadow, she is fired. That is victimization.

**Mr. Imbert:** "Is so?"

**Hon. J. Warner:** They fire hard-working CEPEP contractors. I wait for the day of reckoning. Hard-working CEPEP contractors, who—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Green eye shadow?

**Hon. J. Warner:** Eye shadow; green eye shadow.

**Mr. Imbert:** What?

**Hon. J. Warner:** Fired!

**Mr. Imbert:** No boy.

**Hon. J. Warner:** And what they do? It is because the contractors were wicked. They were trying, of course, to support Jack Warner.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know I have eight more minutes, I will tell you. This election—after this local government election, we shall have general election. I say again: "Who doh hear will feel". If somebody had told me in May 2010 that I was part of a one-term Government, I would say you are crazy. I would say you are crazy. There is no way anybody could have told me that in May 2010.

**Miss Mc Donald:** "We tried to tell yuh that."

**Hon. J. Warner:** "Stick break in meh ears". [*Laughter*] But I will tell you something, come 2015—so let them victimize people. "A Minister want back he bus pass that Jack Warner give. Take it nah; take it and so on. It is all right. No problem."

Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask the question, before I conclude: Who did the Government consult on this Bill besides the cabal? Who did the Prime Minister consult on this Bill? I ask the question.

The Member for Tabaquite, I did not get the impression that he was consulted. Of course, I said before on the platform outside, I am quoted as saying that he is consumed with vengeance. I say it here again in the House. The Member for Oropouche East is eyeing the leadership. He wants to be the Leader of the Opposition in 2015.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is the only post he could get.

**Mr. J. Warner:** And, of course, they want to carve up the kingdom and the question is, which one of them would be Brutus?

The Member for Fyzabad, he could not care less. The Member for St. Augustine wants to be AG and the list goes on and on; but this is not what this Bill is about. This Bill is a piecemeal bit of reform. It is not compensatory reform and therefore I am saying that this Bill is a sham. After three years in Government, this is the only local government reform that this Government could seek to bring forward here—three years—and the public did not vote for public relations. They did not vote for that. They voted for delivery.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this picture here—[*Holds up a newspaper*—this paper is the *Sunshine*, the best paper in town. This picture here shows, on the first page, a \$45 million WASA deal given illegally to SIS, Krishna Lalla.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Oh God, again?

**Hon. J. Warner:** Again, again, again! On the inside is a picture of 200,000 jerseys in a warehouse by SIS for the elections. This took three months to bring in from China. So for three months, they bring in jerseys, but in three days we must come here to discuss this Bill. Nonsense!

**Hon. Members:** Wooooo!

**Hon. J. Warner:** Nonsense! Nonsense! And Madam Deputy Speaker, on that, I rest my case. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. NiLeung Hypolite** (*Laventille West*): Thank you kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was hoping to see someone from the other side respond, but it seems as if they are all afraid of responding.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You will do a good job.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:** Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Dr. Moonilal:** We have faith in you.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:**—the whistle has been blown. The game has started and here comes the change of the rules of the game.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill before us today should not be here today. You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, the UNC-led Government came into being in 2010 with the promise of reform, constitutional reform as well as local government reform, but the thing about it is that they never spoke about proportional representation under local government. Again, this Government never spoke about proportional representation before now, especially based on that of local government reform.

I looked at their manifesto and in their manifesto it has absolutely nothing about proportional representation under local government. I looked at their 120 days of immediate action plan—nothing, absolutely nothing about proportional representation.

I have heard of lot, Madam Deputy Speaker, about trust as well as disgrace and you ask yourself the question whether or not the people of Trinidad and Tobago are to continue to trust in this Government leading them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the local government Minister and the Ministry went throughout this entire country having consultations for local government reform and when they got the response from the people and they put together that nice booklet—that booklet, again, had absolutely nothing about local government reform.

**Hon. Member:** Proportional representation.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:** Proportional representation. In fact, they had something called the UNC local government plans and, under the local government transformation, listed things such as devolution of authority and resources within national policy guidelines from central government Ministries such as community development, housing, social welfare, sports, planning, environment, et cetera.

It had equitable financial allocation to regions; adoption of a much more decentralized model for regional development planning. It had collaborative governance procedures, regional coordination of the delivery of water, electricity, telephones and other basic infrastructure and services; community-based security



and rehabilitation arrangements; expanded responsibilities and increased compensation for local representatives; established mechanisms to ensure high performance and accountability; and those, Madam Deputy Speaker, were the actions that the Government intended to take. As they put it, local government transformation—actions the Government will take. It had nothing about proportional representation in that.

**7.00 p.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, the People's National Movement believes in local government transformation. In fact, we believe that the local government system needs to be modernized. In 2009, under the then Minister of Local Government, Mrs. Hazel Manning, we laid in the Parliament the draft Local Government Bill. In that document, Madam Deputy Speaker, we had a number—she listed a number of reasons why we needed to modernize and have local government transformation take place.

In fact, she listed that our reform programme has been guided by the following: so we were guided by that of the Vision 2020 mandate of good governance; the Commonwealth principle on good practices for local democracy and good governance, local and regional area planning, and development as a platform for promoting sustainable local communities—I am going through this document, Madam Deputy Speaker, because it was the Member for St. Augustine who indicated that we had no intention of having local government reform take place. He said that. I just want to remind him, as well as the people of Trinidad and Tobago, that local government transformation—a draft Bill was laid in this House in 2009.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Dey say no.”

**Mr. N. Hypolite:** And I continue. She indicated that we needed to look at robust participatory local democracy, and then she went into some of the challenges and she identified two: one; what should be the roles and responsibilities of local government bodies in effectively promoting the development of local sustainable communities within the framework where central government formulates national policies for the entire country; and two; what were the form and nature of political and management structures to be established to facilitate decentralized operations, local democracy and good governance.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the People's National Movement stands for local government reform. What we do not stand for is a Bill similar to that of the

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. HYPOLITE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Tobago Bill, the Bill that was brought a couple hours before the Tobago House of Assembly election. That, Madam Deputy Speaker, is something that we would not stand for. We stand against this Bill at this point in time. You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, instead of looking at just that one piece of local government transformation, the Government should have looked at the entire document that they would have gone outside there and had consultations on.

Madam Deputy Speaker, right now, at the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, as you know, throughout the east Port of Spain development, throughout the east Port of Spain communities, there is a lot of crime and criminal activities taking place, and in that corporation they have 10 police officers, 10 municipal police officers presently at that corporation. One would have hoped that the local government transformation that we should have been debating today is to see an increase in the police service at that corporation, and the other corporations where there are no police officers or minimal at those corporations.

I have to agree with one of the speakers earlier on who indicated that some of the services that are right now being dealt with from central government can be dealt with from local government bodies, for instance, that of maintenance of schools. You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, a school such as St. Barbs Government Primary School which, at this point in time, is requesting a water pump so that water can go through the pipes of the school so that the students, principal and staff can have a flow of water in the pipes. They do not have a pump, and they would have requested that from the Ministry through EFCL, and they cannot get that pump. [*Interruption*] And they ask: how much for a pump? That is not the point. The point is, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is the responsibility of the Government, and by extension their service providers, to make sure that schools are outfitted properly.

Let us look at another school, the Laventille Girls Primary School, a school that, before they closed for the August vacation, had a lot of issues on which they would have written the Ministry, and to date none of those issues would have been dealt with. One such issue would have been the infestation of pigeons and the school is still faced with that situation. Maybe if scenarios like that, if issues like that were handled under the regional corporations, maybe some of those schools would not have been faced with those matters at this point in time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are looking at local government, and I am looking at a document which was presented by the Minister of Local Government to a number of Members of Parliament. It was the Pavilion Project Proposal. This document was passed on and it had some very nice drawings and typical sections:

type A, B and C of what a pavilion should look like and all of those different things. We all got. They asked for us to identify five, five such projects. Madam Deputy Speaker; that would have been about two years ago. I still have the document in my hands waiting for the Minister and the Ministry of Local Government through whichever, whatever, whoever, wherever service provider, financial outlay, to get these pavilions.

**Mr. Warner:** They better call a by-election.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:** I am advised, maybe you need to call a by-election to get action like that taking place, but I do not think that we should be debating proportional representation when we have situations like this. Not one pavilion and, as such, maybe we are supposed to be debating ways and means on how the Ministry of Local Government can be a bit more efficient in delivering to the people within the various constituencies. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a case of hopelessness coming from this Government; a case of hopelessness sitting down here debating proportional representation.

The Prime Minister—I wish to quote from the *Guardian* dated March 17, 2011—spoke about—she made a promise to energize local government through several reforms and projects and she said:

“I intend to achieve this by giving constitutional protection to local government, increasing financial resources available to local government authorities...”

Increasing financial resources? Madam Deputy Speaker, the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation lost \$5 million in the last budget. Their allocation went from \$19 million to \$14 million and here it is the Prime Minister in 2011 speaking about increasing financial resources available to local government authorities.

“...giving constituents the power to recall local representatives...”

Maybe that is what we are supposed to be debating.

“...construction of town halls in every district...”

The Member for Chaguanas West spoke about a beautiful building. I saw it myself in Chaguanas; not a single person would have entered that building to date.

“...electing three ‘special representatives’ in each local authority.”

I want to repeat that one, Madam Deputy Speaker:

“...electing three ‘special representatives’ in each local authority.”

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. HYPOLITE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

The Member for Chaguanas West made mention of that within the booklet he spoke from. This is the Prime Minister stating just that, somewhere around March 16, 2011. She said those special representatives would include a male and a female youth representative and one representing women and children. So it came out of the mouth of the Prime Minister. Madam Deputy Speaker, nothing was made mention of when it came to proportional representation for local government.

She went on:

“I am of the view that in my country these are changes that will bring about a more empowered local government authority which will also be more responsive to current issues and create wider participation of young people in public governance...”

Madam Deputy Speaker, absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing, with respect to proportional representation for local government.

Maybe I have to agree with speakers before that instead of the Ministry of the People and Social Development giving out food cards, maybe some of their services should be placed under the Ministry of Local Government, and if that may happen, my dear little old lady who is 105 years old from Chinapoo, whose house is still in a dilapidated state after the Minister of the People—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Hospedales:** “How long yuh ask?”

**Mr. N. Hypolite:**—and Social Development went up there with cameras and promised my little dear old lady who is 105—and come January 25, she will be 106—her house is still not fixed.

**7.15 p.m.**

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “He ent fix de house yet?”

**Dr. Ramadharsingh:** “You eh know why?”

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** *[Inaudible]* he promising.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:**—and he instructed the people to demolish the woman’s room—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** What!

**Mr. N. Hypolite:**—and the room was demolished with a promise to have it fixed in three fortnights. Madam Deputy Speaker, local government transformation might be able to see a much more caring government, not what is taking place here at this point in time.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, we also need to look at not just only what is before us, but we also need to look at corruption at local government. And I look at this story in the *Mirror*, dated April 14, 2013, [*Crosstalk*] and it states:

“Employees of a municipal corporation in the central Chaguanas district are accusing an official in one of the corporation’s highest positions of corruption and victimization.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are debating proportional representation, why are we not debating the whole issue of corruption and getting rid of corruption? The article continues:

“The employees made the allegation after the official ordered the transfer of an employee whose job it was to scrutinize tenders.”

Which brings about the whole question of the tendering processes at the various Ministries. Madam Deputy Speaker, we are actually wasting time here this evening debating proportional representation while we are supposed to be debating certain measures to deal with corruption, to deal with tendering and how you get your tendering processes out. That, Madam Deputy Speaker, is what we are supposed to be looking at—proportional representation. Madam Deputy Speaker, proportional representation was never about local government, it was never about local government. Somebody came up with this grand idea of having proportional representation as part of the whole local government process just about two or three weeks ago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, proportional representation came out of the Principles of Fairness Group that sat and looked at proportional representation for general election—for general election, not local election. It had absolutely nothing—proportional representation had absolutely nothing to do with local elections. It is somebody who felt that they should have postponed local elections because they would have lost. The Government would have lost the local elections, and with the toing and froing and toing and froing decided, “Hear what nah, there might be the great possibility of us not winning the local elections so we still want to have a voice inside the corporation, so what we will do, we will put this whole question of proportional representation in the scheme of things. We will rush it to the Parliament, we have the majority, it would get passed at the Lower House”. And what next? Proportional representation in the face of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at no point in time throughout the consultations that would have taken place throughout Trinidad and Tobago was the question of

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. HYPOLITE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

proportional representation for local government raised. It is the Principles of Fairness Group that looked at the proportional representation, and it is this Government who has decided to take that and put it as part of the local government reform.

I say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when you look at the figures, when you look at the electorate versus a number of electoral districts, versus the four new aldermen that are supposed to join these corporations, you ask yourself the question: “What madness, or how did they come up with these figures?”

Let us look, Madam Deputy Speaker, at the borough of Point Fortin. The borough of Point Fortin has 35 polling divisions; 16,244—that is electorate, that is the figure, yeah—number of electoral districts, six; electorate, 16,244; number of electoral districts, six; so it means therefore you will have six councillors, and with this new proposal before us it means therefore that the borough of Point Fortin will get four aldermen—four aldermen, six councillors, 16,244 electorate.

But let us look at San Juan/Laventille. I will speak about San Juan/Laventille because Laventille West falls within the San Juan/Laventille Corporation: number of polling divisions, 175; electorate, 133,521; number of polling divisions—sorry, the proposed number of electoral districts, 13. I am trying to identify or I am trying to understand, I should say, I am trying to understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, the formula how they would have come up, how they would have arrived with four aldermen. I go back: Point Fortin, 16,244; San Juan/Laventille, 133,521; four aldermen. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would expect that Point Fortin might have gotten four, but San Juan/Laventille might have gotten 40.

So, hopefully, somebody on that side will answer the question, because the city of Port of Spain has an electorate figure of 38,336, four aldermen; the city of San Fernando, 49,874, four aldermen; the borough of Arima, 26,910, four aldermen; the borough of Chaguanas, 61,000, four aldermen, but you have San Juan/Laventille with 133,521 with the same four aldermen, and Tunapuna/Piarco with 162,652, four aldermen; Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite, 137,756, four aldermen.

Madam Deputy Speaker, something is definitely wrong with the method, the approach in coming up with that four aldermen per regional body. Sorry to say, my dear friend from Tunapuna, but the arithmetic must be taken into consideration because that is what election is all about. Sorry, I have to agree with my colleagues, that is what it is all about.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to go back to the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, who is not certain whether he is the Minister of Works and

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Infrastructure or the Minister of Local Government, who would have indicated that the local government—in fact, I want to quote what he said. This is an article that would have come from one of the newspapers, and dealt with, “Gov’t aiming to reform local govt system before elections”. The story was created on April 20, 2013, and it states that the:

“Local Government Minister Suruj Rambachan said it was Government’s intention to complete its work with respect to the consultations and preparation of relevant papers within three months.”

That is April, May, June, July, so one would have expected that instead of debating one piece of the reform for local government Bill, we would have been debating an entire document. This reminds me of the section 34 scenario. It also reminds me of earlier on today, whereby the Report with respect to the corporations would have been in the hands of the Government since 2011, and only last night we would have received it. Here it is, three months after April 20, we still have not received the full document so as to debate in this House, local government reform.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to continue with what he said. He said:

“...the life of the...corporations” would “come to an end...”

Another issue, he said, was whether local government councillors should work full-time or part-time as it currently stands.”

He also continued:

“...another proposal put forward was whether the people should have the right to recall local government councillors and, if so, what would be the formula to effect this.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, again it just shows that you cannot trust anything that the Government says, simply because this shows that what we are debating here today was never in the minds of the Members of the Government. And I ask myself, what really and truly is behind bringing this piece of legislation at this point in time? Madam Deputy Speaker, what is the true intent by this Government bringing this piece of legislation before us?

**7.30 p.m.**

When we look at the Bill itself you would hear a lot about party and the party and the party and the party. The party must put forward a list of these aldermen. I ask myself the question—and if we look at clause 6—because we went through

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. HYPOLITE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

the entire afternoon into evening debating this Bill, and not one Member on that side made any reference to the Bill itself. If we look at clause 6 of the Bill it does not cater for independent candidates. It speaks strictly of party. This is a question I hope I will get answered: what if two or three individuals go up as independent candidates for the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Borough and they win? What happens next with respect to the choosing of aldermen? This does not take into consideration independents at all; it looks strictly at party.

What if you have three persons going up for Princes Town and they win, how will they choose the aldermen at that point in time?

**Dr. Browne:** Independent councillors.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:** Yes, they are independent councillors. So you have the PNM with two seats and you have the ILP with one seat and you have three independent councillors. How will you go about choosing the aldermen with respect to those independent councillors? That has not been answered. It is not in this Bill. It means therefore that the Government is rushing this Bill without carefully going through, without carefully reading and understanding that this is more than just about party and party politics. There are independent persons outside there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if we look at clause 7, especially sections 12 and 13, it says: [*Crosstalk*]

“13(1) Upon the election of Councillors under section 11, the Elections and Boundaries Commission shall, in accordance with subsection (2), allocate the number of Aldermen for each party contesting such election.”—“each party contesting such election.”

Where is the individual? There is a possibility that there could be an individual inside there.

“(2) The Elections and Boundaries Commission shall allocate the number of Aldermen for each party contesting such election as follows:

- (a) a quota of votes per seat shall first be determined by dividing the total number of valid votes cast at an election under section 11 by the number of seats in each Council designated for Aldermen;”

The Member for Diego Martin North/East went through the “arithmetics”. I will not go over the “arithmetics”, but what I am going to ask is again: where will the individual councillors fit in the whole thing?



What if one of the members of the council decides to cross the floor? What if someone is elected as a councillor for the United National Congress and decides to cross over to the People's National Movement, the ILP, whichever, or even go independent? What is the next step? The Member for Oropouche East is indicating that the councillor must write the Speaker. He sits as the Leader of Government Business and he does not know that councillors have absolutely nothing to do with the Speaker. He is indicating to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the councillor must write the Speaker. Again I ask the question: what happens? [*Crosstalk*]

In the Lower House if a Member of Parliament resigns from one party, you have to have a by-election. That is what they are saying. What happens if the councillor crosses the floor? What happens if the alderman decides that he no longer wants to be in party A, he wants to go across to party B? What happens next? It is not inside here. They would have to cut him in half, and no Member across there would have indicated exactly.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they spoke about all kinds of things. They have not spoken about anything written in this document. They spoke about nothing inside here.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Only philosophizing.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:** They did a lot of consultations. I want to go back to the point that consultations would have been held, and nobody would have spoken about proportional representation, but all of a sudden it came up. I want to go through a summary of the main local government transformation and modernization programmes that would have come out of that consultation. Here goes:

“Constitutional Reform Agenda for incorporating Local Government in the Constitution;”—nothing about PR.

“Public consultations on the Local Government reform policy;”—nothing about PR.

“Reviewing the Local Government legislative framework;”—nothing about PR.

“Strengthening the representation and good governance systems for Local Government representatives;”—nothing about PR.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. HYPOLITE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

“Full implementation of the...(Municipal Corporations Act) 1990, as amended, subject to appropriate amendments; Defining and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of institutional stakeholders...”—nothing about PR.

“Local Government boundary realignment; Organizational restructuring, redesigning and development;”—nothing about PR.

“Reviewing human-resource policies and systems; Capacity building and institutional strengthening; Reviewing service delivery modalities and systems;”—nothing about PR.

“Establishing a robust information communication technology...platform;”—nothing about PR.

“Strengthening the regional coordination mechanisms; Establishing mechanisms for sustained and effective participatory democracy;”—nothing about PR.

“Establishing mechanisms for strengthening the local revenue base, as well as equity in the allocation of national revenue;”—nothing about PR.

“Strengthening and modernising accounting systems;”—nothing about PR.

“Developing mechanisms to improve project management and boost productivity;”—nothing about PR. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Laventille West has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. N. Hypolite:** Thank you kindly, Madam Deputy Speaker, Madam Chief Whip and Members all. I will continue.

“Modernisation of waste-resource management systems;”—nothing about PR.

“Strengthening of Disaster Management;”—nothing about PR.

“Expansion of the role of the Municipal Police in community safety and security;”—nothing about PR.

But you know what, Madam Deputy Speaker? Ten municipal police officers up at the San Juan/Laventille corporation—10 officers—to service 133,000 electorate—10. And instead of us meeting here to discuss and debate ways and

means of improving that to make the lives of the people of Laventille, east Port of Spain safer, we come here to see if we can get one alderman inside there to represent the Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, disgraceful? Yes:

“Strengthening technical cooperation and partnership arrangements for promoting local democracy, and governance...”—nothing about PR.

“Local economic development with regional (Caricom) and international Local Government bodies...”—nothing about PR.

“Strengthening the Local Government Authorities Association;”—nothing about PR.

There is an association for local government bodies: the Association of Local Government bodies. I ask the question whether or not the Government would have consulted with that body with respect to proportional representation. As far as I know, that never took place. They never met with that body so as to have a conversation with them with respect to proportional representation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this whole question of proportional representation is something that we the people of Trinidad and Tobago need to look at very, very closely, because as I said there is more behind it. As I close, I want to reassure the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the People’s National Movement is about local government reform. The same way we are about constitutional reform, we are about reforming, modernizing the local government system. As it is now, the local government system is like a patient in a hospital, it is sick—sick.

**Mr. Volney:** The morgue.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:** Garbage collection, problems; recreation grounds and maintenance, problems; delivery of services coming out of the various local government bodies is problematic. Yes we need local government reform and modernization. What we do not need is a piece of legislation to try to hoodwink the people of Trinidad and Tobago in identifying with four aldermen, whereby at the end of the day, really and truly, is to fight for one alderman to sit in council to carry about the business of the Government, because they know that they are going to be losing the local government election.

**7.45 p.m.**

The People’s National Movement 2010 manifesto spoke of local government reform, and in our manifesto we stated that we have taken cognizance of international best practices; international best practices.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. HYPOLITE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

I looked at the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom does not have the whole question of proportional representation and the voting of aldermen; New Zealand the same thing; Canada the same thing; Australia they all believe in the democratic method of having aldermen in council, but not by way of proportional representation.

So we have taken cognizance of international best practices. These include those accords and benchmarks arising out of recent Commonwealth local government forum meetings, where strategic planning for the development of sustainable communities and good practices for local democracy were widely discussed and agreed upon. Sorry—for local democracy were widely discussed and agreed upon.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again the local government reform piece of legislation that is before us right now, should not be. I say that the Government should take that piece of legislation, put it in their briefcases, go home, go home—they may want to—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Cox:** And burn it.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:**—read it—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:**—at home. *[Interruption]*

**Miss Cox:** And burn it.

**Mr. N. Hypolite:**—understand what they are asking for and come back to the Parliament and bring a piece of document, pass it to the Speaker and announce the date of the next general election. *[Desk thumping]* That is what needs to take place. Announce the date for the next general election.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I end by saying that this Government is bringing this piece of legislation because they know for a fact that they will lose the election, the next local election. Right. They will lose the next local election and as such they are trying to get one person inside there to continue whatever nonsense they are doing, and as such we will not be supporting this piece of legislation at this point in time. I thank you.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for San Fernando West. *[Desk thumping]*

**The Minister of Public Administration (Hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in the debate on this Bill this evening, at this hour, the amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act.

## PROCEDURAL MOTION

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 10 (11), I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the completion of the Bill under consideration.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Before we proceed it is a good time for us to have some dinner. So this sitting is now suspended until 8.15 p.m.

**7.49 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**8.15 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

## MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL, 2013

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for San Fernando West. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister for Public Administration (Hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. for the opportunity to participate in this evening's contribution on the amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act, 2013.

I am rather disappointed with the Members on the other side of this Parliament in this House. Let me start by saying it is amazing how much we speak about change in this country and we sit in this august Chamber to talk about change and everybody sits here to defend status quo all because they are so afraid of change. I really wonder why the Members opposite are so afraid of this change.

Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] I want to join with the Members for St. Augustine and Tunapuna and indicate that today this Bill, this amendment, starts by signalling the start of electoral reform in Trinidad and Tobago as we seek this evening to start the whole process of the introduction of proportional representation.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well said!

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** I also want to respond to the Chaguanas West MP and indicate to him, unlike him who may not consulted with his party, I would like to indicate to the national public that the Congress of the People consulted with its members through its national council meeting, a special national council meeting, which was held on Wednesday evening of this week [*Crosstalk*] yes, where we brought [*Crosstalk*]—because we circulated this Bill—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** They were not aware of it.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—a week ago [*Crosstalk*] and many of our members submitted their contributions and it was discussed—Members, please—and it was discussed at our meeting on Wednesday evening, and in fact some of those suggestions, Madam Deputy Speaker, have found their way into the amendments that we are proposing for this evening. So therefore—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—I want to tell all those the Congress of the People continues to be strong and it continues to be a party [*Crosstalk*] that consults with its membership because we believe in consultation, we believe in participatory democracy at all levels, of our party because that is the model of governance we want for this country, Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I first want to start with the issue that was raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East because everybody has been talking about the Bill. I wondered if the Members understood the clauses in the Bill.

**Hon. Member:** “Ah ent think dey understand nutten.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** I just want to start with the issue of the Eleventh Schedule. I want to take the hypothetical example put forward here today by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East indicated that if we had 24,000 votes—he used this hypothetical example, that if there was a total of 24,000 votes cast—and he said 25 per cent would be 6,000 and that is correct. So we got the first part right. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, that is correct. But then he starts telling me about anybody could get a seat, would get an alderman position—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Uh-hmm.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—if they have 6 per cent of the votes. [*Crosstalk*] So I “doh” know how you are going to get a seat with 6 per cent. [*Crosstalk*] You cannot get a seat. Your minimum must be 25 per cent.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Your arithmetic wrong.”

**Mr. Imbert:** That is totally wrong.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** What is totally wrong? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Imbert:** What you just said.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** You must have a minimum. If you have four aldermen positions—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Imagine you all cannot get it right. *[Crosstalk]*

**Hon. Member:** You wrong.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Can I, please—Member for Diego Martin North/East, if I take the example that has been put here on the Eleventh Schedule *[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Totally wrong!

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—you must have a minimum of 25 per cent—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** No!

**Hon. Member:** Not true!

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—of the votes cast.

**Hon. Member:** No!

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The political party, each political party that puts up the list must have a minimum of 25 per cent of the votes.

**Hon. Member:** No! No!

**Mr. Imbert:** It is the largest remainder.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** No. *[Crosstalk]* Can I go through the example? Let me go through with the Eleventh Schedule because *[Crosstalk]*—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members! Members! Please, please. I want to ask you kindly to allow the Member for San Fernando West to speak in silence. I want to hear what the Member is saying. You may continue, Member.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Give him. Give him. “Allyuh listen nah.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I will go to the example that is given in the Eleventh Schedule. *[Crosstalk]*

You have in the case here three parties contesting this selection, A, B and C. What you have is that total votes cast was 25,916. In the case of the Member for Diego Martin North/East’s hypothetical it would have been 24,000. If you take

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

that and you divide it by four—because every corporation or city corporation or regional corporation will now have four aldermen—you divide the total number of votes cast in the corporation by four. You will end up with something called a quota and that quota is 6,479 votes.

If the total valid votes for party A out of 25,916 cast, the total, party A got 11,420, [*Crosstalk*] when you divide 11,420 by 6,479 you get 1.76. So immediately you are entitled to one alderman.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The next one, party B, you have 8,013.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Yuh get one.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** If you divide that by your quota 6,000, you will get 1.23. So you got a second alderman there already allocated. In the case of the third party you have 6,483 and they divide [*Crosstalk*] yes, and it ends up with one, they will get one.

Now, if it is that you do not have—if it is less than 6,479 it is less than one. You are not going to be allocated a seat. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Imbert:** “Look at de example.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** No!

**Mr. Imbert:** You are getting the fourth one.

**Hon. Member:** It is you who are not understanding.

**Mr. Imbert:** “You cyar do the maths.”

**Hon. Member:** Keep quiet.

**Hon. Member:** It has nothing to do with maths. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** It all has to add back to four. In the case here if I add up the figure—let us just take [*Crosstalk*] hold on. Let me just add on it extra votes—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Ridiculous!

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—to party B.

**Mr. Imbert:** It right there in black and white. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** If you had added on more votes to party B and party C ended up with less votes, would you get a seat? No. The answer is no.



You will not get a seat. And the reason for having that quota is that if you get less than your quota it will stop the nuisance type parties because many people speak in proportional representation, that because of the large number of parties for you to be able to be entitled to an alderman [*Crosstalk*] right. So if somebody gets 15 votes or 20 votes you will not be able to get a seat and you are not entitled to an alderman. You may get less than 25 per cent of the votes. [*Crosstalk*] All right, so you are telling me that I am wrong. Let me give you an example and I will quote you for San Fernando. [*Crosstalk*] Let us take the example because I have done the calculations for the various parties and I do not think you all understand. All right—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** “He build a stadium that fall down, you know.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—which is the problem here. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have here—I will give you an example because, you know, everybody is so fearful of this proportional representation—from the other side—and I do not know why it is that everything we have to treat as if there is a sinister motive or some sort of surreptitious motive, but let us go. Let us understand and I will take the first one which is San Fernando, the City of San Fernando. I am going to use the 2010; let us use the 2010.

**Mr. Sharma:** Listen well.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Okay. So for example—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Douglas:** Listen. “Somebody explain yuh. Yuh want details. You getting details now.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Okay.

**Hon. Member:** Listen and learn.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Let us take San Fernando. In San Fernando of 2010 [*Crosstalk*] the total votes cast in that corporation was 21,996.

**Hon. Member:** Correct.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The total number of votes cast for the United National Congress was 6,439.

**Hon. Member:** Write it down.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Because of the seats you have nine councillor positions and they won four of those seats with 6,439 votes. COP got 5,363 votes. They contested five seats and they won three seats.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

**8.25 p.m.**

In the case of PNM, they won 10,194 votes. They contested all nine seats, and they won how many seats? They won two. If I now go to the quota, because 21,996 votes were cast, divide that by four, I will get 5,499 votes as my quota. If I take the total votes cast by the PNM and divide it by 5—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Listen, “nah”.

**Mr. Imbert:** Handle the clauses.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Member for Diego Martin North/East—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Oh God, listen!

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—divide it by 5,499 you will get a figure of 1.85, which means the PNM now is automatically entitled to an alderman position.

**Mr. Imbert:** You wrong!

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Recall—remember, that what happened in San Fernando is that because the UNC and the COP in the coalition ended up with the majority of seats. What actually happened is that all the aldermen, the three aldermen positions went to the COP/UNC. In this particular case, because the PNM was able to gain 10,194 votes across the corporation when you divide it by that quota you will have 1.85.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So they benefited.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** They benefited so they would have been allocated one seat as an alderman—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And they would not have gotten any.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Exactly, under the old system in the first past the post without any proportional representation you will not be entitled to any. It is the winner take all. The winner will appoint all of the aldermen. [*Crosstalk*] The COP—Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin North/East, please!

**Mr. Imbert:** You could put me out, you know.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Please, no I would not put you out.

**Hon. Members:** Yeah, go, go, go!

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I know you want me to put you out, but I would not put you out. You belong to this House. [*Crosstalk*] Please, allow the Member to speak in silence. I would not put you out, you belong to this House and I would not put you out. Member for San Fernando West.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** Oh God, I wanted to be put out.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** If you take the UNC, 6,439 votes, divided by the quota of 5,499 you will end up with 1.17. That will again allocate one alderman position to the UNC. COP on the other hand, 5,363 votes over 5,499; 5,363 is less than the quota—you have 0.97. The COP is not entitled to any seat, any alderman's position. So what happens now is that when you go to the second round you take the remainders. So the PNM had already been allocated one such seat, so they have 5,499. If I subtract 5,499 from 10,194 their remainder is 4,695. If I subtract 5,499 from the UNC's 6,489 I end up with 990 votes. But the COP is out, they get no alderman.

**Mr. Imbert:** You wrong, you wrong, you wrong.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** So your third position goes to the PNM because they have the highest remainder and then the fourth position goes to the UNC. So therefore—please Member for Diego Martin North/East—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** You are incorrect.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—under the existing system the UNC will get four councillors—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** The remainder.

**Hon. Member:** UNC/COP.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Right, UNC/COP ended up with four councillors and three, which is seven and you ended up with all of the three or in this case you will end up with all four of the aldermen. The PNM ended up with two councillors and they will have none. In the new system, the revised system, the UNC will end up with four councillors and two aldermen. The COP, three councillors, no aldermen. The PNM, two councillors and two aldermen.

**Hon. Member:** Exactly.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** And the reason for that is because of the large number of votes the PNM was able to get.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is right.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The 10,000 votes. So you want these votes to count. You want to be able to represent, and that is what representation is all about. [*Desk thumping*] Let me take another one because it does not seem— [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Seemungal:** “He eh understand.” [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Arima—that is the way it is structured.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are wrong.

**Hon. Member:** When the stadium fall down—

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** If you notice, when you were quoting, Member for Diego Martin North/East, when I was trying to add back up the figures, you were ending up with allocating five seats, five aldermen seats; it is four, because that is what I was trying to explain to you because your math was wrong. Your math was wrong, because you were rounding up the numbers. You cannot round it up, you have to round down, and if you have less, what is really happening here is that the reason why you were able to pick up that extra seat as the PNM is because of the 0.97, the less than the 25 per cent of the votes which the COP got was not counted, you could not be represented.

There is a reason for that and I want to come to that reason, because everyone is talking about why this mixed system. Why not elect all the councillors by proportional representation? The issue here is that you want to keep a mixed system. There are advantages and disadvantages of the PR and of the first-past-the-post system. Your councillors you are keeping by the first-past-the-post system. But what really happens is that when you go to vote for your councillor you are actually voting for a representative for that local electoral district. After that, when you pool all the votes for the political party, for the whole corporation, you now want to give recognition to people who have cast their votes.

How many times have you heard, right here in this Chamber, that people who have voted, you do not want someone going out and saying you know what, it does not make sense I vote in this area of Mon Repos, or Pleasantville, because you know what, this is a strong PNM area and they will win in any case. You want to encourage everyone to come out to vote. You want to provide that incentive, that inducement for everyone to exercise that right. And if they know that by casting that vote, as I am a COP Member, or if I am a UNC Member, by casting that

vote my vote is not going to be wasted. I may not win the electoral district, my party may not win the electoral district but I will have a say in who comes up as an alderman.

**Hon. Member:** “Do ah next example.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** It takes away and—yeah, okay, you want me to do another example?

**Hon. Member:** Yeah, yeah. Give him another example.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** If I take Arima Borough Council, total valid votes cast were 10,817 votes.

**Hon. Member:** Where did you get this proposal?

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The total COP votes were 6,520 and they contested seven seats.

**Hon. Member:** Last week Wednesday.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The total PNM votes were 4,002 votes and they contested seven seats. The seat allocation that you ended up with, you would recall COP won six seats and the PNM won one. Of course, the two aldermen positions all went to the COP because they had the majority on the council, and on top of that you were able to bring in two aldermen that nobody heard of before. If I take what is in the revised system, 10,817 votes cast, divide by four, it will give me 2,704 votes. Okay, so that is the quota, 2,704. If I take the 6,520 votes cast for the COP across the corporation and divide it by 2,704 I will end up with 2.41 seats. Immediately you are entitled to two out of the four seats. The PNM 4,002 divided by 2,704 will give you 1.48. So immediately you are entitled to one seat.

If I go now to look at the remainders, because two seats have already been allocated to the COP, I multiply the 2,704, the quota, by two, I will get 5,408. The PNM has already gotten one alderman position so I multiply that by one it is 2,704. I subtract from 6,520 votes cast for the COP, 5,408 and you have 1,112 votes. The PNM, total votes 4,002, subtract from that the 2,704 you get 1,298. Guess who gets the fourth alderman, the one that has the largest remainder and that is the PNM with 1,298 in your remainder.

So in this particular case, in the revised system, the COP will end up with six councillors, two aldermen and the PNM one councillor. Imagine that, you were able to win only one councillor but you end up with two aldermen because of the large number of votes that you got. What you are discounting is that in every one

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

of those cases, the electoral districts, there were small margins; you would recall from that election. So you do not want to discount the mass of votes that came in an electoral district for a particular party but because another party won by a very small margin, those votes are discounted. That is the purpose of this.

I hope you all understand now. I can go through more if you would like me to as the Hare method, but you would see—and you know this is what I did not understand. Why it is they are so against this system? But the system is to ensure that true proportionality and the total votes cast for a party, that you will be able at the end of the day to get that representation as aldermen. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope that clears up the issues that they are talking about.

Now, I just want to go to the issue of—because there were several other issues raised, and I want to tell you the one that our party had a problem with and it was this, but the Member for Diego Martin North/East argued against it. I tried to raise it. We tried to raise it with the Members here, but by putting four aldermen and having 25 per cent as your quota, the 25 per cent of the total votes cast, what is happening is that when you disregard anybody who falls under that 25 per cent, as in the case of the San Fernando City Corporation, you ended up with the COP not getting an alderman position. So their votes were not taken into consideration. Some feel that is a very high threshold and that they should have been able to be included in the remainder. But when you listen to those who are the proponents of this particular system, the Hare method, it is that you want to ensure that if we are giving an alderman's position, you want to ensure that it is of significant value. Because you could end up with a situation where somebody with 15 votes and that person because they sequence in the remainder you will end up with—you know, well okay I end up with only 15 votes or 20 votes and I end up with an alderman's position.

The reason why, the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke a bit about this whole issue about why four. Many asked about four and we could take this into the committee stage by the way and we can adjust if we feel that we need to alter the numbers because you feel that some Corporations should have more than four or others. But the thinking behind the four, and let me explain this—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** But we are here to discuss, Member for Point Fortin, we are here to debate. But let me just tell you why—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Seemungal:** If they stay quiet they will learn.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—why the four. The issue is—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Browne:** We are here to discuss, not to be quiet.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The debate, let us debate, please.

**Mr. Seemungal:** Debate.

**Dr. Browne:** Exactly, talk to your colleague.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Members opposite, one of the issues that you do not want, you want to be able to still encourage representation. When you send up someone at a local level in your electoral district, that person is responsible for representing you. So as you know in the council, when you are in the council the representatives are interested in how they deal with their local district, how their drains are fixed and how they deliver to that local—and that should continue to be their responsibility, their duties and functions. However, you must have somebody else on the council which is where one always envisaged the mayor or the aldermen will be taking a wider view of the corporation. Meaning for example, you are taking that holistic view of the corporation. What is the economic development plan? What is the development plan? Should this be, this area, this region, should we make it into an industrial estate? Okay, right, and that is it.

So therefore, the four aldermen are not there to go in to represent at the local level because you see, you do not want them to compete with the councillors but at the end of the day you want them to stay at a policy level.

**Hon. Member:** Same as now.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Same as now. All they are saying is that if in every corporation you provide four people who will take that perspective, stay at a policy level, stay more at a holistic level for the corporation and deal with those issues and you know they themselves will be looking at the overall—because if I am representing as you know, Mon Repos, or I am representing Vistabella, I will tend to want to focus only in my area and focus development only in my area in my local—so you want that holistic view. You want that integrated approach. And what is really happening is that by providing the four, you are saying that four individuals should be adequate to provide that function to the corporation. So their job is really to take that panoramic view, take that holistic approach, that integrated approach as we move forward. Because there were those who when we discussed it, when we consulted it, even in our own party, the COP, mentioned why is it that we did not put on for example, we could have used a formula for

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

every three councillors or for every so many votes, that you should have an alderman. But then you will get into the situation when you are talking about will this really—how many votes cast. It is not the total electorate. But I think there are many who have pros and cons on one side or the other, but having this fixed number is really to define that role and function.

Now, the Member for Chaguanas West mentioned, why did we not say what is the role and function of these aldermen? The issue here is now today, instead of those aldermen becoming surprises to you or whoever—and I wanted to read here an email that I got from a member from our party and what they found was so important.

**8.40 p.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the views that is coming across in this whole thing is that we do not want the surprises. By putting up this list—at least you know, the day you put up your councillor for nomination, you have to put up your list. So now you know who are the people who must serve as aldermen. There would be no surprises when that day comes. What do we have today? You elect your councillors and the day after you elect councillors, then you get the surprises, “Well, if so and so, so and so will be the mayor.” In particular, many have a problem, for example, in Chaguanas West—Dr. Rambachan will remember the days when we were given the surprise and Miss Navas, I think was her name, who ended up as the Mayor of Chaguanas.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Who was that?

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** In Chaguanas, in the corporation.

Therefore, I want to come now to the issue of what is the closed list and what is the open list because the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke a lot to that issue.

One of the issues, as I was saying, that was brought up considerably is that they have said there are many advantages and disadvantages of both systems. This is why most countries have gone with the combination of first-past-the-post system and the proportional representation system. So, where you want to elect your representatives you are able to move forward and elect your representatives by the first past the post, and elect the aldermen who would stay at the policy issues and across the board by the proportional representation.

I think one of the things they are saying is happening now is the fact that, in overwhelming numbers we have all these expectations et cetera. Therefore, when



we get to that point, and we talk about aldermen and councillors et cetera, parties should not be able—political parties should not surprise the people who elected, who voted—to impose onto them individuals you never heard of before, and who may bring a certain influence, as you would know happens sometimes in corporations.

It is the same thing here: you elect people in the House of Representatives and when you go to the Senate, when do you know who are Senators? The day after you elect. Do you know it before the election? No, you do not.

**Dr. Browne:** Thank you, Member for San Fernando West, for giving way. But, you are making a point that really has driven me to my feet. Because, you are talking, basically, about avoiding an ambush of the electorate by persons they may have never heard of or understood anything about, but I see that is exactly what is happening with this Bill. Because many persons—you, for the first time, are trying to, at least, explain the Hare formula. Many of our citizens would be hearing such an attempted explanation—I do not agree with all of it and I will respond later—for the very first time today. So, just like you are afraid of sandbagging the electorate with aldermen they would not have heard of, people are now hearing explanations they have never heard of and we are voting on it today. So, they will have no opportunity—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** It is in the Bill.

**Dr. Browne:** No, no, no, do not try that, you never gave the explanation. So, they will have no opportunity to communicate with their parliamentarians, ask questions, seek clarification before this becomes the law of the land and voted on.

So, that is my concern. While you are reflecting the need for transparency with regard to identification of aldermen, there is no real transparency in terms of consultation on this Bill.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Okay, Member, what I find very strange is this Bill came out: as soon as this Bill came out—we did not take it before it was tabled, we circulated it to our membership in the Congress of the People. *[Interruption]* No, over the weekend. They looked at it; we told them it is something we are trying to move forward with; they were very excited by it and I heard somebody talking about a press release. They were very happy.

As you know, we have always asked for proportional representation and they took the time out. Now, there are issues that they raised with us which we tried to explain to them and we went through the process. In fact, today there is an

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

amendment on something which we did not pick up, which I will discuss later. But all I am saying—*[Interruption]*—yes, there is an amendment, but I want to say you mentioned the issue of open list and closed list—gentlemen and ladies on the other side, you all talk about a party as the PNM and, as the PNM, you need to take a progressive approach if you really want—*[Interruption]* Because you are talking about young people. I am answering you. You are talking about young people. The people of this country are ready for change.

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The people of this country are ready for change. *[Desk thumping]* As the member for Tunapuna said, they are fed up with us sitting inside here and doing nothing about making significant change. Do you know why? The rest of the world is moving and we are not moving forward. This is why we have to be progressive.

Let us go back to the issues of open and closed lists. The member talked about the list issue and how the list is; and, you know, sometimes we are being unable to cast a vote. Remember, we are introducing proportional representation. One of the things that we have to do is—not to say that in years to come, we will continue to refine and enhance this system, as has happened in all other countries—we must first start off simple if you want the population to understand. So the Member talked about how you transfer votes and how many times you go back to the polls, et cetera, et cetera. Those systems are mature systems. If you try to implement that now in Trinidad and Tobago, it is going to be so complex because you cannot expect voters to be going to the polls more than once.

The issue with the list, Members, is that when you cast your vote you are actually casting your vote for a councillor, but when you count it, when you add it up, you are using it to determine the support for a political party, and the support for that particular party will be represented on a list. We can have two types of lists: the open list and the closed list.

In the closed list, what happens is that you sequence the aldermen, for example, you can put up say 12 aldermen, and there is a reason for putting up more than four, which I will explain. Let us say you put up 12, the number equal to the councillors—as we just said here, when the PNM got its first aldermen position you are required to take the first person off the list.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** If you get a second alderman, you have to take the second person.

**Mr. Imbert:** The Bill does not say that.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Hold on, that is not here.

**Hon. Member:** The Bill does not say that.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** That is a closed list. I am saying what happened is, when we had the discussions, we decided that we would go with the open list.

**Hon. Member:** She is explaining it differently to you.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** We are going with the open list and in an open list you are able now to put your 12 candidates. People know who they are so, therefore, when you are casting your vote as the elector, you are voting for a representative and you are saying “Okay, you see these 12 people on this list, I have no problems with them representing me as an alderman.”

When the elections are finished and the votes are counted—the EBC will do the computations and when they are finished with the computations they will now turn to the party and say, “All right, tell us from these 12 people that you have here, who are the two people, or one person or how many positions you are entitled to, how many aldermen, tell us the two or three from this list.”

The reason why it was done that way, and why the list has more names than the four, is because in the event of anything—someone passes away; someone resigns—the party cannot nominate a new alderman; the council will not be allowed to elect an alderman. What happens is you have to go back to that very same list and use a person off that list. So, at no point in time, during the life of the council would you be able to surprise anybody with a Miss Navas—Natasha Navas was her name? Miss Navas would never come on as a mayor because that name would have had to be on that list. So, I just thought I would explain that and this is why you have—the system that is described in the Bill is the open list.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the issues here—this is why when the Member for Chaguanas West was saying, “Why not, why did we not define?” I think it is important for the political party in the campaign, when you are campaigning with your local government councillors, the aldermen would also be campaigning, explaining to them what their intentions are. What are their plans for the corporation from a policy perspective, from a development perspective. Therefore, that is the reason for being able to say, “Okay, let us define.” That is part of your campaign.

In this process, it is a recognition of the political parties in the system because too many times we have political parties; let us understand what the political

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

parties are about. What is the value system of that political party? What is the governance of that political party? What is the code of ethics that political party adheres to? That is the importance because political parties hide behind the representatives. That is why we need to ensure that the political party understands, when they put up a representative, what the representative would be doing and when they put up the aldermen, how the aldermen themselves, will be promoting in the interest of that corporation?

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the other issues that was—I think I have made the point that we do not want to be conflicting between the councillors and the aldermen but, very important in the process—I just wanted to, very quickly—because I was very surprised how many people spoke and you could swear that proportional representation is something that was that so alien—

**Hon. Member:** So new.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—and so new. I could not believe it. So, I just thought that, probably, I better repeat what is the proportional representation because the nation at large may be wondering what is it that we are introducing.

I want to say this because the political leader of the Congress of the People, the Minister of Legal Affairs and the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine, took the time out to read from the manifesto documents of 2007 and 2010 and there is a reason for that. The COP has spoken to community-based governance; we have spoken to participatory governance; we have spoken to deepening that participatory process and there are reasons for that.

If people feel, at any time, they are alienated, they are fragmented, they are not going to be interested in participating. You will find that when we go out in consultations—it is amazing how much work has to be done to bring people out to consultations because they feel that their views will not be taken on board.

They feel somehow they have no role to play and it is that new era for our country for people to start understanding that there is something called citizen-based governance as well. Citizens can participate in this governance process.

In this particular method that is being proposed for this election—and I want to say the reason why you all are saying it is rushed et cetera—I am telling you if you tried to bring this electoral reform after the local government elections there will be no incentive for this Parliament to move that programme forward if you do not do it now. And, if you do it after, there is no purpose because you have already elected and you would have elected on an older system.

So, if you set the new paradigm there will be expectations of our councillors, our representatives, and expectations of our aldermen in terms of their performance and that is why we cannot make it retroactive in any way. More than that, it is a simple system; the system is one that would allow us, using the Hare method, the formula, that you would still be able to cast your votes; people would go to cast their votes as it was before and they will vote for their councillors and, really and truly, they are not doing anything more other than knowing who the aldermen are. If they do not like that person and say, “Well, you know what, I am not casting my vote for that councillor or for that party because I do not like that person that they have on their list.”

But, the bottom line is that the computation would be a simple computation and it will be done by the EBC. After all the votes are counted and they are submitted, what you would be really trying to determine would be the total number of votes cast for each political party. The computation is a simple computation that can be done on an Excel spreadsheet. You can do it even from the night of the election and you would know how many aldermen you are allocated as a political party.

So, there is no need to alter the current method of voting or counting the vote; the same electoral voting districts would be utilized in accordance with the Elections and Boundaries Commission. The proportional representation system represents a more democratic system as it results in winners being more representative of the wishes of the voters themselves. It is important as well that you know we have different viewpoints even in local areas and people feel that they are not represented in those areas.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another issue that people have in this whole thing with the first past the post—you know, it amazes me because I think the PNM, for the last 40 years, thrived on this system of first past the post. So, there is no secret about that so I could understand why they would oppose this today because they are accustomed with these small marginal votes; they come to the East-West Corridor and they focus there so parties actually focus on particular parts of this country and you find that as political parties you do not take that national view of Trinidad and Tobago for development purposes. I am sorry that has always been the case.

**Hon. Member:** That is correct.

**8.55 p.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard today this whole issue of local government reform—before I go to the local government reform, I mentioned that we would be doing an amendment as well. One of the areas that was missing from the Bill, and it was one that was picked up while we were discussing it on Wednesday evening at the COP national council meeting, and that is, if there is no party that makes the minimum quota—let us assume that seven parties contested the election and no one got 25 per cent of the votes; some may have gotten 10 per cent, 15 per cent et cetera, what would have happened is that you would have found that nobody would have been able to make the minimum quota. The way the measure is designed is that if you do not make that minimum quota, you cannot be considered for an alderman position.

So what happens here is that we are moving an amendment to this Bill this evening and what it will do is that it will look at, in the case of where no party gets the minimum quota, you will now look only—you will now rank the parties by the number of votes and based on the highest number, the highest number will get the first alderman; the second highest will get the second alderman; the third highest, et cetera—fourth highest.

If it is that you ended up in a situation with two parties not being able, or three parties, in that case you would just revert and go back up to the highest. So, therefore, if in this particular case the two parties just could not, even though the total votes—one party alone, or two parties did not; none of them were able to get to the minimum quota, or the three parties could not get to the minimum quota, what will actually happen is that you will go back, one, two, three, and then you will revert to the top for the next one.

So that is here. We can discuss this more at that stage of the—during the committee stage, and I am sure the Member for Diego Martin North/East will have a lot to say then with the arithmetic.

**Mr. Imbert:** I have nothing to say. It is wrong.

**Hon. Member:** “Doh worry wit he.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Opposition this evening carrying on—and many Members on that side talking about the local government reform paper and what was discussed in local government reform. And all of you were able to show—you know, Green Paper, Green Paper, because it was tabled here. We had a local government reform paper

called the Green Paper. And, you know, what is interesting in that, for a [*Inaudible*] government, do you recall how many times we postponed local government election? Two thousand and—what—six? 2007, 2008, 2009, waiting on local government reform.

Well, let me tell you something. This Government—because all our parties were very clear—we were not going to postpone local government elections. [*Desk thumping*] And, yes, this is why we may be rushed. Because we want to keep to the time frame, we are not postponing local government election.

**Miss Hospedales:** This is not necessary.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** And I want to say—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** But the Prime Minister said that people were advising her not to have the local government election.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Because people wanted us to be able to implement the whole of the local government reform before we go to local government election. And I want to tell you this evening—[*Interruption*—this is important before you go to election. If you do not implement the proportional representation now, you cannot go—the elections—[*Interruption*—there is no purpose in doing it after.

**Hon. Member:** And “we doing it to help PNM, yuh know”.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** So if you pass this electoral reform after local government election, what is the purpose of it?

**Dr. Browne:** For the next elections.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** For the next elections? So then what is the purpose of that? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** “Is to help PNM.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Well, if you all “doh” consider this electoral reform, I do not know what is reform.

**Hon. Member:** “We doing this to help PNM.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Anyhow, if this is not electoral reform, I wonder what is reform for you guys. What is reform?

**Hon. Member:** Tell them this is to help them. This is to help them.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** But you know what is interesting? The Minister this evening—was this not tabled here this evening? Or am I the only one who gets very confused here? Was a White Paper not tabled here this evening, Minister? The White Paper was tabled this evening—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Today.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Today. And the White Paper—

**Hon. Member:** “You proud ah dat.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** I heard everybody on that side talk about—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Hospedales:** Another example of incompetence.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—how many things not—you know, local government is supposed to be managed. I heard the Leader of the Opposition. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Why the fish market behaviour?

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Opposition carrying on to an extent—let me quote his words: “I thought they were going to manage schools and maintain schools and public buildings”, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then I opened the first page of the White Paper—first page. Not even first—second page.

**Hon. Member:** Page 3.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Page 3, and they have about—how many?—31 measures in here in this local government reform paper.

**Hon. Member:** But you just laid it today.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Let me say, 22. Let me—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Today! [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—point it—22 local government—local government, let me say, recommendations.

**Hon. Member:** Read them out.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** I should read out all 31, but “ah” want to read out the relevant ones: Provision of constitution—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Peters:** You sound like a fish market, man.



**Hon. Member:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members, you are carrying on in a fish market style that is not fitting for the Parliament, and I want to ask you to contain yourselves. You will have your chance to speak.

Hon. Members, the speaking time for the hon. Member for San Fernando West has expired.

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. W. Peters*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope my contribution will help the other side not just understand—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Seemungal:** It will give them a voice on the council.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** But through you, I hope that by this we will not be misleading the country as the way you all have been misleading the country for the whole evening, as the PNM, [*Desk thumping*] and I find that is so dishonest and—[*Interruption*] No, no, no, the COP national council. Let me explain to you. The COP national council—[*Crosstalk*] Well, it is your job as a political party to consult. It is our job to consult with our—we have done our job, and when we consulted, we consulted with all our chairmen and executives of all the constituencies, all 41. So that is what our national council comprises, the constituency executives. [*Crosstalk*]

But I want to say, Members opposite—let me just quote. Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to quote. You know, the Leader of the Opposition went to town and, you know, all the public buildings—and local government is supposed to be managing public buildings and schools and whatever. Let me just read two parts.

The local government would be responsible for the maintenance of all public buildings and facilities, example, schools and health centres.

Does that answer the question, Members opposite?

**Hon. Member:** “All yuh go and read it”—

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** The local government council will also be responsible for the establishment of a local disaster fund; will also be responsible for the establishment of a local economic development unit within their municipal corporation led by economists and management specialists.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

That is the role of your aldermen. But you see, what you all fail to understand in this whole thing is that no amount of legislation and implementation of this local government reform could take place unless you have proper representation at the local government level, [*Desk thumping*] and that is why we are moving this Bill here this afternoon. If we do not select representatives—if the parties do not put up quality aldermen, you cannot have any of this reform.

**Hon. Member:** That is correct.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** And that is the issue.

**Hon. Member:** That is correct.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** So we could have the best in here and all of this—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** The system is as good as its people.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** This is it. The system is as good as the people that you put on your council and this is why you want to give the electors the right to select the best and make sure—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Quality.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—we bring out the best and the quality in our people, and that is what we want in terms of management and leadership at our local government level.

You know, Members, let me say, Madam Deputy Speaker—because all of this can be implemented after, because the councils could be charged, but for the election we have to make sure we are able to elect, that we ensure that every citizen participates and we incentivize this country, that they must come out and make sure and contribute, elect; make sure their voices are heard, so that the best people can be elected.

And that is what the People's Partnership Government is all about, [*Desk thumping*] about bringing out the best representation possible.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so therefore, as much as we would like, we could have the best local government reform White Paper, but for the implementation we have to have the best councils in place with the best representatives. And yes, Member for Diego Martin Central, I am not worried and I am not fearful of anything. You know, this business is not about winning.

**Dr. Browne:** I did not suggest that you were.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** It is not about winning and who will lose and who will not win. This is about doing what is right for Trinidad and Tobago. That is what it is all about! [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** “Tell dem! Tell dem!”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** You know, we get such a distorted view. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Diego Martin— [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** West.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—Diego Martin West, and you know he spoke at length about, you know, this—what?—the constituency fund. You brought back up this issue about the constituency fund. Let me tell you something. I am a strong advocate for the constituency fund. Once you put proper governance in place and you tell every constituency, whether it is PNM, UNC or COP, that each constituency has \$10 million for development work, as a Member of Parliament, you will be judged. Let them judge you by this finger. Let them see how best you could spend that \$10 million; how many projects you can do. But when is it— [*Interruption*] You see, but, no, you see, I will recall—because the Member for Diego Martin North/East—“I doh know where he run away and he gone to”— [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** “He gone to play golf.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** “He gone to play golf?” The Member for Diego Martin North/East, I always recall the Member for Diego Martin North/East, you know; when they had flooding down in Barrackpore. Member, you would remember this—Member for St. Augustine—when they had flooding down there and the people were real upset with all the roads and all the bad situations down there and they were burning tyres, the Member for Diego Martin North/East said: “But that is Barrackpore.” And I had to turn around and tell him— [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Who going down there? Who going down there?

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** I remember telling him, “Listen, you are a Minister of Works for Trinidad and Tobago, every part of this country. Not because you are north-based you are only concerned with roads for the north of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** “Nutting over de Caroni River.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** And that is the problem— [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** “Nutting over de Caroni bridge.”

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** If we want equitable distribution of the wealth of this country, we must talk about total national development, and there must be equitable distribution of goods and services throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** That is correct. And we have been doing that. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** And that is why—but if you feel that is not what is happening—[*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** And we have been doing that.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Member for Point Fortin, let me tell you something. If it is possible that you feel that you are not, then why are you not advocating for a constituency fund? So therefore Members on the opposite—it could be here today, tomorrow, then every Member is entitled to say, “I want \$10 million of goods and services in my constituency. I doh have to come and beg every Minister.” I am entitled to that, and that is one of the issues, I feel, that we need to move forward with, and this Government—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** It is empowerment—

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** That is right. It is how you empower. Because as representatives, we represent people; we want to be able to say what should be part of development of this country. We must be able to have that say as Members of Parliament. We must be able to say we know what the priority projects are; we know what the priority roads are and, therefore, by having that fund allocated to a constituency you are able to say: “These are the priority projects that we have.”

That is how you will get re-elected. If you misuse your fund and you “doh” focus on the priority projects, well, the people will tell you about it in five years. They will vote you out or vote you back in.

**Hon. Member:** Or by recall.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Or by recall. And those are the issues that we have to deal with.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the issue here that I really wanted to go into as well is that when we hear all of these success—you know, the Member for Diego Martin West, the Leader of the Opposition, spoke so much about all these various countries and it was amazing that he decided to use Cyprus and Kenya as states, you know, with PR, and said, you know, they are close to failed states. But, you know, at the bottom of the line is that if you have any sort of electoral system in

place but there is that level of antagonism that is deep and primal, you cannot fix that. That is a different problem. But if you want to talk about success stories, go to Australia, go to New Zealand, go to the Republic of South Africa and see how it is.

And you know, the amazing thing, imagine, we are talking about—you know, the Member for Tunapuna spoke about that—we are talking about proportional representation systems and the Wooding Commission spoke about that since 1971; 1971! We are talking about 40 years ago and we are still talking about PR system today, and people telling us about how rushed and when. But that is probably why we need to. We need to have something to get us off the ground, to make change in this country. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Let us walk the talk in this country now. It is time for us to do so.

You know, the Hyatali Commission, 1989, spoke to the same thing, and each one—what is interesting—they kept saying, use a mixed system of first-past-the-post system and the proportional representation. I mean, you know, I see that you went down on the case of the Member for St. Augustine. You went down on his case because, you know, you said that we are going to unleash proportional representation on the country.

**Hon. Member:** On the power brokers.

**9.10 p.m.**

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** On the power brokers. And they had a case with that. You know, everybody took it up. But, you know, I want to quote something here today. I thought this was such a good—it is an article by Ralph Premdas, UWI Department of Government. It was an article—he was speaking about geographical tribal areas and I thought this was a very good thing. He was talking about ethnic conflict in Trinidad and Tobago. He commented and I just want to quote:

“Below the surface of Trinidad’s political peace exists an antagonistic ethnic monster waiting its moment of opportunity to explode. The image of a politically stable and economically prosperous state however conceals powerful internal contradictions in the society. Many critical tensions prowl through the body politic threatening to throw the society into turmoil. Perhaps, the most salient of these tensions derives from the country’s multi-ethnic population...”

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Indeed the inherited British parliamentary system was erected on a zero-sum competitive party system that tended to inflame ethnic passions and apportion privileges very unevenly...Ethnic dominance in government and identity politics soon became a way of life..."—right here in Trinidad and Tobago.

In another section he says:

"Repeated victory by one sectional community over the other was not accepted by the vanquished group which withdrew its moral support from the state...

In particular, representation tends to become communalized so that the party in power symbolizes not the public will at large but sectional solidarity and ethnically particularized interests. Citizen commitment is passionately expressed but communally cleaved so that only one section at a time identifies with the governing regime. The out-section is alienated."

I raise this point because in 2007, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the things that we had found when we went through this country, is how many people felt alienated, [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Ramadhar:** Yes.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—how many people felt—and I made this point and a lot of people got upset with me, and I said that when one party comes into Government, the rest—the other half of the population—withdraw enthusiasm and wait for the next election, and it is something that we have to stop.

**Hon. Member:** That is right. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Hello!

**Mr. Seemungal:** "Dey making noise. Sit down. Sit down. Sit down until dey hush dey mouth."

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, you may proceed.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, what is important is this marginalization that takes place in our country, because we have political parties that focus in certain parts of this country. We have had the PNM who has focused in only certain constituencies, and over the years it has led to ethnic and tribalism.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say that one of the things that we have found out in this country is that this country is poised for development. This

country could be first-world. The diversity that we have in this country, instead of exploiting the strengths of that diversity, we exploit the weaknesses of that diversity. In any country where there is major development—the United States of America, because of that diversity of people, they were able to have innovation and development. Go in any other part of the world and you will find it.

Trinidad and Tobago, today, because of that diversity, in that diversity there is strength, and in that strength we can become an innovative nation. Everybody is talking about the competitive index, the global competitive index, the innovation. We have fallen. We keep falling and declining and that is because we have a strength that we are not exploiting, and I say here this evening that is because of the politics of today in this country, when we encourage the segregation, this segmentation, fragmentation and marginalization of our people.

Today, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the time for us to herald that new era, to start and let us say that this country is one and that everybody could participate in the governance of this country. [*Desk thumping*] And that is what participatory democracy is all about. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is why I just want to for the record, just put back what has happened over the years.

In the 2010 election, the People's Partnership coalition got 59.81 per cent of the votes and we got 29 seats. The PNM got 39.5 per cent of the votes and you ended up with 12 seats.

If I go to the 2007 election, the People's National Movement with 299,813 votes, which is 45.85 per cent of the votes, you got 26 seats. The United National Congress Alliance, 194,425 votes; 29.73; 15 seats. The Congress of the People, 148,041 votes; 22.64 per cent of the votes; not a seat. [*Interruption*] Yes, and you all are proud of that. "Not a damn seat for dem." And you all went—"that is what you proud of. Yuh not hearing Diego Martin North/East? Yuh didn't hear him say it just now?" Right! That is the way that you all carry on and that has been your campaign mantra.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** But Carolyn, that is their future.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yes, that is the future.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** It could be your future.

**Mr. Seemungal:** And we are trying to help them, you know.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** 2002: People's National Movement 308,762; 50 per cent of the votes; 20 seats. United National Congress, 284,391 votes; 46.9. Imagine with 46.9 per cent of the votes, 16 seats.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

2001: United National Congress, 49.9 per cent; 18 seats. PNM, 46.5 per cent of the votes; 18 seats.

2000: United National Congress, 51.7 per cent; 19 seats. PNM, 46.5 per cent; 16 seats.

And the one that I really want to quote is 1986: National Alliance for Reconstruction, 66.3 per cent of the votes; 33 seats. PNM, 32 per cent of the votes and how many seats? Three seats.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** You see.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** So this is not about favouring any one political party. There have been injustices over the years because of this system that we have with first past the post.

In 1981, the People's National Movement, 52.9 per cent of the votes; 26 seats. The ONR, Organization for National Reconstruction, 22 per cent of the votes; no seats. The United Labour Front, 15.2 per cent of the votes; eight seats. Democratic Action Congress, 3.7 per cent; two seats.

**Dr. Browne:** NJAC.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yes, the NJAC, 3.3 per cent, zero seats. The Tapia House—[*Interruption*] Exactly. The point that I am making here is that every time—the issue here is, this is why over the years if you go to vote, you go to a particular area, do you know what they will tell you? “It makes no sense I going out to vote, you know. I wasting my time because party A will get in, in any event. They have the margin.” Many times you are able to win a seat and you win the majority of seats by small margins, and the rest of the voters, the party that has lost in that, has had a considerable amount of votes and those votes are alienated.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** And we shifting population.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** This is it. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is why I think it is so important at this point in time—how much time do I have?

**Mr. Ramadhar:** Go, go, go.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, this is why when they talk so much about diversity and innovation, et cetera, the time has come for us as a country to get our citizens involved in governance. Time has come for our citizens to participate, to move this country forward. There is this belief right now that Trinidad and Tobago is poised to take off. It is poised in terms of innovation. Our people can be innovative.



In fact, just the other day we had such a session in the public service itself and we were able to show that there is that platform in the public service because of diversity, because of cross disciplines, but getting people together and feeling that they can play that important role, that there is significance, that they can participate, we can do so much more for Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to end by saying that I think the time has come. I believe that we have to be progressive in our approach. We cannot continue to say that we have to make the system perfect. There will never be any perfect system. If we do not start, we will never know how we will further enhance. There is always room for continuous improvement as we go along. There will never be that perfect day. There will be many more opportunities to enhance this system as we move forward. And I am sure one day we will be able to implement the system that the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke so highly about in going back to the polls over and over and when he quoted so many other countries. But let us start now, let us signal to the country that everybody counts, let us signal to the country that every vote counts, let us signal to this country that we are prepared and we are committed to electoral reform, and I say by making this small step, it is not about just unleashing proportional representation.

I made the point just now—when you look at the figures there was nothing wrong that we could use a similar system as we elect Members of the House by first-past-the-post system, we can use the total votes cast for political parties by ensuring that we can elect Members of the Senate. I am sure Members will tell you every day, I do not like to see the surprises the day after the election that goes into the Senate. Who become Senators; who become Ministers; who are the Senators on the Opposition Bench; who are the Independent Senators? I think now is the time for the citizens to have that say and, therefore, I feel this could be a nice pilot, a good pilot that will take us to that stage—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Ramadhar:** And a real introduction.

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:**—and a real introduction of proportional representation. The people of Trinidad and Tobago have been asking for this for the longest time. This is not today. It is from 1971 to today.

I also want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is so important that as we move forward, we move forward as one, as a nation. Let us carry out this intelligent discussion that we need to. Let us really look at the progress of Trinidad and Tobago. The world is moving. We need to move at the same pace if

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

not faster. We need to accelerate that pace and this is one way to do it. As the Member for Tunapuna will always say, what is holding back this country is the politics of the day. Let us get the politics right. Let us signal that electoral reform is here and we are prepared to take on our citizens seriously and that they count.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for St. Ann's East. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. Joanne Thomas** (*St. Ann's East*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I listened to the Member who just spoke there and she herself was saying, we are having a discussion, we are debating, but I swear she was going to jump across there and come and collar a few of us.

**Dr. Browne:** Sound like Anil Roberts.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** I was like, this is not Carolyn. I mean this is not how she conducts herself. I was really truly amazed. But one of the things she spoke about, she said why we must do it now before election. Let me tell you something. They have been in office since 2010. All the time they did not know election was coming in July 2013 for local election? Why a Bill did not come forward before?

**Miss Hospedales:** That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** Why? Why now?

**Dr. Browne:** Simple question, no answer.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** Simple thing. Since you came in, the Prime Minister talking about she is going to call local election on time. So all that time you did not know that you want to do local government reform, but now you want to come and rush it on us and say why not now. So I ask the question: why was it not laid before? Then she alluded to the PNM postponed elections so many times. But if she would recall, at no time were the councils dissolved—at no time. I was in that system, so I know. I can tell. We continued where we can serve our burgesses.

**9.25 p.m.**

Right now we have people not being served in the councils for three months. They have no councillor who they can turn to ask for assistance because right now the people have been abandoned because of this, “but dey talking about PNM”. Right?

**Dr. Browne:** And now they get Marlene Coudray. Oh lord!

**Hon. Member:** Shh! [*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I read something here, and of course, I heard Members say yes, teach them, teach them.

**Hon. Member:** Imagine that! The blind leading [*Inaudible*]

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** In the winding up, I want to ask a question of the Member. In clause 6, new clause 12A(2), it talks about:

“The quantum of names on the List of Aldermen to be submitted by each party in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be equal in number to the number of Councillors to be elected in each Council respectively.”

So for example, we look at San Juan/Laventille and we have 13 seats there. What this is saying is that each party would submit a list which equates to the 13 seats. Right? So you are looking at each party having a list of 13 persons who are to be elected as—right?—as aldermen.

**Dr. Douglas:** Up to!

**Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** Not up to?

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** No, it did not—it said it must equate to the equal in number to the number of councillors. Not up to. So this is what it says. Look at your Bill and you will see it for yourself. So it is not up to, it must equal to the number of councillors. I ask: how do you go about choosing—you know, I heard her say, you will cross off—after they do their calculation, you will cross off number one and say, okay, number one goes to this party. So how do you go about in this list choosing which person nominated to be an alderman would be number one or number two?

**Dr. Douglas:** That is your party’s choice.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** No, but I am just showing you. And then the Member says that from this list, if by chance an alderman gets sick or an alderman dies, or for some reason, they go to that list. So is it that you are limiting that list to be the only list to stay for the life of council?

**Dr. Browne:** Three years or four years?

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** So I mean things change all the time. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Browne:** “You cyah have a by-election for all of them.”

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** I mean, how the current system is, if you want to—a party should have that free choice to choose somebody because things change. But what

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MRS. THOMAS]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

you are saying, from what the Member has just explained, it stays at this list, so no changes to that list is accepted. That is what you said. So I just wanted to clarify that. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** One get sick, one die, one migrate, one crossing the aisle.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** Another scenario I want to draw to the Members' attention. A corporation has six seats; this is just an example. One party wins four seats, another party wins two seats, but the party that wins the two seats, has the most votes. That can happen. So what you will find happening now because of the vote system and the calculation, that party will end up with the most aldermen in the council. So what you will have happening, the party that wins the most seats in the council would end up not being in control of the council [*Crosstalk*] because of the calculation of these votes.

**Dr. Douglas:** No, explain it.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** You heard my example. I am asking: a council has six seats—[*Crosstalk*] this is what I am asking. This is my example. I am not talking to the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West. Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, “I am talking to people who know thing”. Right? [*Laughter and desk thumping*] So okay—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Douglas:** You could attack me but make sense.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** A council has six seats, one party wins four seats, the other party wins two seats, but the party that wins the two seats, they have the most number of votes, maybe because their voters came out in their numbers. Because of that calculation, that party with the two votes would end up getting at least the two or three aldermen because of that calculation of the votes—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Correct.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:**—and because of that, they could end up controlling the corporation. Right? [*Crosstalk*] You agree. But I am just showing you. But yet the other party has the most number of council seats, so this is just another scenario I want clarified as well.

Then we look again, another suggestion, an independent contesting the seats. An independent goes up—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Stay away from that callaloo!

**Mrs. J. Thomas:**—he is elected to the council, he has a vast number of votes as well—he or she—but because he does not fall under a particular party, despite

he or she may have votes, he or she would not be entitled to a partner alderman in council with him because he or she does not fall under a particular party. So what is it saying then? Does that individual have to now join one of the parties? What exactly is it saying? I am just giving you scenarios that are most likely, so I just want to get a response as regards how do you handle situations like this.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, we want to go—the Members are talking about local government reform. Why is it then that they just pulled out one section of the Act and want to call this local government reform? Now, of course, the Member for Laventille West went on to talk a little about when the PNM drafted the White Paper on Local Government Reform and how we went about it. Of course, even the Member for St Augustine.

**Mr. Peters:** Everything the PNM do, we supposed to do?

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** What these Members must know is that when you were elected in 2010, that was a contractual agreement—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** Not with the PNM!

**Mrs. J. Thomas:**—between the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government based on your manifesto. What your manifesto had, that was your binding agreement. As the Member for St Augustine rightly said, he said the Government had partnered with the people. But yet—in fact I want to read in the manifesto under the heading “Participatory Democracy”. It says:

“Our government will create a continuing awareness among our People that they have a right to participate in the Governance of our country. We will incorporate mechanisms which will permit the Voice of the People to be heard and to be taken into account in the Policies which we adopt as a Government.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, we looked at this particular piece of legislation. You know not even the councils were consulted as regards getting their feedback; not even the councils. Then, of course, the Minister talked about the Draft White Paper 2013 and the Member for Diego Martin Central here in crosstalk asked him: how many people were consulted and he said 2,000; 2,000 out of a population of 1.3 million people. [*Crosstalk*] So do you know what you are saying there? That equates to 0.001 per cent of the population was consulted on this particular—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Lesser!

**Mrs. J. Thomas:**—local government reform and he takes that as yes, the people were consulted and “I good to go”.

**Dr. Browne:** That is what they have in their manifesto.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** And it just brings me to their same manifesto, what they said about local government:

“Genuine democracy requires effective representation, transparency, participation, accountability to change the lives of people in our Communities and to alter their relationship with government.”

Then they said:

“We will provide citizens and communities with the opportunity to determine what priorities, projects and services will be delivered to their respective communities to ensure that Regional Corporations and Municipalities discharge their responsibility for basic infrastructure, maintenance, services and other facilities and support systems.”

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to just draw a little bit to the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation because that is where my constituency falls. We looked, for example—San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation covers quite a wide area because we look at areas from St. Ann’s, Cascade, parts of Belmont and Morvant, then we go to like Mount Hope, Mount Lambert in the East, then Laventille, San Juan, Barataria, Santa Cruz, Champs Fleurs and stretching way back to La Fillette in Blanchisseuse, Maracas Bay and Las Cuevas Bay. San Juan/Laventille region covers this wide area.

Now, when councillors go into the council, they are required to do a developmental programme of works that they require for their area. In 2011, when all the councillors calculated the funding that they would require, they required about \$200 million to service these areas. Madam Deputy Speaker, they got \$17 million. You are looking at \$200 million as the requirement, yet they received \$17 million, and yet we talk about equitable financial allocations to regions. That is in the manifesto; that is in the binding agreement with the people of Trinidad and Tobago—collaborative governance procedures.

Now tell me: what is a councillor to do or a regional corporation? You have needs of \$200 million and yet you are only given \$17 million by the Minister. Is that equitable financial allocation? Now, what will a councillor do? How does he even go about deciding what he will prioritize with this little bit of money that he or she is getting? It makes it difficult for the councillors so they cannot service the needs of their burgesses.

When you are talking about local government transformation, these are some of the things that you have to look at so that the burgesses can have a better way of life. “You looking at local government transformation but what yuh lookin at?” I am sure even—maybe even some of our older members of our country probably listening to the Member for San Fernando West and must be telling themselves, “what is this I hearing about multiply and divide?” and you know.

**9.40 p.m.**

They have not gone out and gotten feedback from the citizens of this country as regards this system. All of this only came about, as I heard Members say before, only after the licks in Chaguanas West, all of a sudden you know they rushed to do this [*Desk thumping*] because you must have known if you want to do, as I mentioned before, all this before, but no, “ah done call election so ah ha to make sure this eh happen to us again.” So this is damage control to make sure that at least we get a seat in each area.

Madam Deputy Speaker, a lot of our citizens, they ask questions, some of them do not even understand what is the system, what is the process of the regional corporations and I just wanted to highlight a bit of how the system works.

Now if we look at Act 21 of 1990, and probably for those members of the public who are hearing me now, Act 21 of 1990 gives a very good detail of the processes, the system, the operations of any council, any regional corporation. Madam Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to highlight a bit, as I say, so this is for the information of the persons who are unaware of what happens with the process in the councils.

When a councillor, an alderman is elected, of course, at the same time, chairmen of committees are elected. The way the system works, in the Act it specifically talks to four committees, which are the four committees that are run by the council. You have the physical infrastructure committee, you have the public health committee, you have the human resource committee and you have the finance committee. Now, some councils, based on the need, they establish other committees, like you may have a buildings committee and a festival and sports committee.

Just to give a little bit of what these committees are responsible for, you will have the physical infrastructure committee and they deal with issues relating to roads, bridges, sidewalks, curb walls and some developmental programmes. And then you have the public health committee, and they will deal with issues relating

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MRS. THOMAS]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

to scavenging, rodent and control, the cleaning of drains, truck-borne water in some regions, then cesspit tank cleaning and in some regions again they have dog catching. This falls under the public health committee.

Of course, the human resource committee, that is self-explanatory; that deals with matters relating to the staff, training and union issues and so, that is handled under the human resource committee. Then you have the building committee. The building committee, that deals with persons who have built new homes and you have to get an inspection certificate, this committee will meet and they would approve the relevant inspection certificates. They also deal there with illegal structures within the region and they would be the one responsible for breaking down all illegal structures.

Then, of course, the festival and sports committee where you have the recognition of festivals such as Divali and different events and they of course will meet and, in the region, establish different sporting events and so, to encourage the community. Now, at these meetings, the councillors come and they make their respective requests, the respective complaints in their areas and they are minuted. Of course, the technical teams are the ones who will go back, they will do the investigation and then they would come back and work a costing. This costing now of all the recommendations of all the committees would come forward at the finance committee where you have the numbers.

When the council meets, it is at this committee that they decide what they will approve and what they will not sent forward to the Ministry to get funding. Of course when this goes down, the Minister in the office of the ministry, sometimes you do not even get the allocation that you want. And that is why I say local government reform should impact the citizens. It should impact the services that the citizens of this country get.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to remind the Government again about their promise to the people. They said: "Actions our Government will take" as regards local government transformation. As I said before:

"Equitable financial allocations to regions

Collaborative governance procedures

Promote a system of Local Government which empowers the people in their respective communities

Communities will define community problems and priorities and propose solutions."



This is what they said they will do. These are actions that the Government will take. “Dey doh have much time again.” They have probably a year and a couple months. None of this has been done. What about going to the communities and the communities deciding what are their priorities, their problems, and proposing solutions? But of course, this was all done, something nice to fool the people with; this was all to fool the people.

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** But instead of saying “fool the people”, they using the words “serve the people, serve the people, serve the people”.

**Miss Hospedales:** In the opposite.

**Mrs. J. Thomas:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I really want to encourage the citizens of this country to think carefully. Think carefully of what is happening in this country and to seriously review their positions when it comes to elections. I also want to take this opportunity to let the citizens out there know it is your right to demand services. You are the employers of this Government and of course I have just explained when, they may ask a councillor for something and the councillor says no funding they may not understand. Of course now with that \$17 million to \$200 million, I think it is quite clear what happens in these regional corporations.

I also want to encourage citizens: it is your right; do your correspondence to the CEOs, do your correspondence to the chairmen of the various corporations, the mayors and deputy mayors because in these meetings I have described, there is an area for correspondence; so I want the citizens of this country to know, you take a stand in getting the service that you so rightfully deserve.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to fully support my colleagues here and to reinforce that we do not support this Bill. Of course, we just saw with the elections and boundaries how it was done. It came, same day, and vote: “is like too bad for all yuh, we have the numbers, so”. That is the way they treat people in this country. That is why again I remind people, look at all these things. Look at how they have treated your representatives here on this side. Look at that and bear in mind who you are really going to put to govern this country again. Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for this contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, go right ahead.

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh):** I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I join the debate, a debate that started this morning at

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

10.30. “Now is 9.49 p.m.”, almost 12 hours, with the exception of two hours when there were discussions on the Elections and Boundaries Commission, Order 2013. So this debate has been going on for almost 10 hours, and the question of the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2013, two issues: one, the issue of local government reform, and the other, how does proportional representation fit within the context of the reform?

On hearing the Member for Diego Martin West earlier today, he started and indicated that proportional representation is nothing “anathemic” to the People’s National Movement because the “Father of the Nation”, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams, in one of his works and in his book, and I think he said, on page 120— something, spoke about the need for proportional representation, but that was in the 1950s, probably around 1960. Now we are 53 years later and after the talk and talk about proportional representation and reform and so on, it is the first attempt, by any Government, to begin the first step in the introduction of proportional representation in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to congratulate our colleague, the Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, of course the Members of Parliament for Tabaquite, St. Augustine and Tunapuna, who preceded me here, and they were very lucid in their contributions. The Member for Tunapuna spoke about proportional representation being the future of world politics and coalition governments and partners coming together to present a united front in the determination of policies and planning for development of their countries.

The country which most of the Commonwealth countries emanated, the 53 Commonwealth countries, Great Britain, has a coalition government which is working, between the Liberals and the Labour Party and then the Conservatives on the other hand. In Italy there has been a lot of coalition governments, and it is because of proportional representation to a certain extent. There are about 84 countries, the last time I read about it, around the world, which have sought to have coalition governments and which have had to go by coalition governments, that came from proportional representation. So our introduction of the issue of proportional representation in local government reform is something we feel proud about.

Now, let us go back to the history of the evolution of this. The entire country knows about the question of the Sir Hugh Wooding Report, the Hyatali Commission Report, and then there was Mr. Tajmool Hosein’s round table discussions and the Sir Ellis Clarke Report on Proportional Representation and

even Mr. Panday, former Prime Minister, speaking about it on numerous occasions. In our People's Partnership manifesto it is well documented that we have come to the people and told them—and we were elected based on our discussions with the people and our promises—that we will engage, in some degree of reform, on proportional representation to some extent.

Now it is a slow, evolutionary process and one has to discuss with the population and hear their views. It is not something that you can rush into.

**9.55 p.m.**

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Agreed.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Sure. And this is why—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** We are rushing into it.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Now, it is not a wise thing. It is not necessary to go back and give a little history, but the People's National Movement, which you all belong to on the other side—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** You did.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Never—since 1956—I had friends; some of my best friends. Since 1956—so it is 57 years now.

**Miss Mc Donald:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Not so at all Marlene.

**Dr. Browne:** Fyzabad.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** All right—1956, 57 years, you governed this country; except for the NAR in 1986 and 1991, that is five years—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** You have the screening sheet.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The UNC from '95 to 2001, that is 11 years, and now three years we are here. That is 14 years. So out of the 57 years, you have governed this country for 43 years.

Now, the first time your Government came to speak about local government reform was in 2002. In 2002, you began to speak about local government reform and then you produced a Green Paper in 2004 and then a White Paper in 2006. And the only time you came to begin to do something about it was in 2009. So you came into power the end of 2001/early 2002 and from 2002 to 2009, seven

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

years, you brought out the discussions in Parliament on the issue of local government reform and you began to work with your White Paper and you came to Parliament to discuss that.

But what happened along the way? You postponed local government elections on four occasions under the pretext and under the excuse that you were looking for local government reform before you decided to call the election. So when did you have this situation? You postponed it four times, local government elections, four times, between 2006 and 2009. Year after year you came to Parliament seeking a postponement of local government elections, under the excuse that you are moving with local government reform.

**Mr. Sharma:** Quite true. Quite true.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Minister Sharma and a few of us will remember, distinctly, Minister Moonilal and, of course, our hon. Prime Minister, some of us will remember distinctly, your Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Manning, the Member for San Fernando West, speaking about a Jamaican consultant—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** Hamilton.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—Hamilton, doing some work from Jamaica on local government reform and he was waiting for that consultation to come through before he called a local government election.

**Mr. Sharma:** They hid the report.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And when we kept asking him: Where is the report of the consultant? He said he had five books and he stacked the five books on the table there. We asked him: Well, can you give us copies of the five books to see what was the reform that you were talking about? Up to today we have not seen a copy of that consultant's work, Hamilton from Jamaica—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** Which taxpayers paid for.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—which Trinidad and Tobago Government paid for and five books, he said, were going to be given to us to have a look at this reform. We never saw the light of the day in those books.

So you robbed the citizens of this country of their democratic right, which is enshrined in the Constitution. Citizens are supposed to have been voting every three years for their local government councillors and they had to serve for seven years longer than the term of any elected Member of Parliament; five years—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** With no office.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—with no office. Seven years your councillors served; between 2002—2009.

**Mr. Sharma:** What a shame!

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And today you are asking us about our reform. Four years.

Now, in those seven years, every year you came to ask for Parliament to give you the permission for you to postpone local government election; year after year; once, twice, three times, four times and in one of those years you came to say that you only want to remove the chairmen—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Sharma:** Which you did.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—which you did.

**Mr. Sharma:** Ian Atherly

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And why did you want to remove your chairmen? Because one or two of your chairmen were giving you some static and some difficulty—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Sharma:** Ian Atherly.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—and Mr. Ian Atherly was one of your chairmen you wanted to remove.

**Mr. Sharma:** Replaced by Ferguson.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** That is right. And he was replaced by Mr. Ferguson in south Trinidad; Point Fortin, I believe.

**Hon. Member:** Sando.

**Mr. Sharma:** No, San Fernando.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** San Fernando. So, here it is, you decided that you want to postpone election. You were asking for local government election to be postponed and postponed but you came selectively to remove your chairmen and leave your councillors without office.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is not only then that PNM showed this propensity and had this propensity for postponing local government elections. It seems to be in their blood. It is in their DNA, because as early as 1962 to 1968, they postponed

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

local government elections three times, 1962 to '68 and 1974 to '77. Madam Deputy Speaker, is this an administration belonging—is this their Opposition belonging to a PNM administration, that within the short history of our nation, they have postponed local government election seven times? That is, they have robbed the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago of their democratic rights by postponing elections seven times during their reign.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** They have no moral authority.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** 1962 to '68, 1974 to '77, three times during that period and four times from 2006—2009.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this population never forgets nor forgives such disenfranchisement. It is wrong, morally wrong, and, therefore, it is an obvious thing for me to say then that you all have no moral authority to comment or—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** Exactly.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—discuss any of these issues here today—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** Very good point.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—because you stand guilty of what you are trying to accuse us of. You are guilty. So, basically—and many people will remember the bitter struggles, over the years, for a democratic system of governance, which we strongly cherish today and hold strong to our Constitution and our parliamentary practices and our governance.

**Dr. Browne:** What about Jack and the 31 party groups?

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Putting power into the hands of the people, and this is what this proportional representation is seeking to do; putting power into the hands of the people. [*Crosstalk*] We all know that when there is a local government election the councillors are the ones who are elected by the people and then the councillors elect the aldermen.

**Mr. Peters:** “Ah know what Mayaro have.”

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** What we are giving to the people now, this is the list of the People's Partnership Government aldermen. These are our councillors. You put up your list of the aldermen, the people see the possible aldermen that they may choose from and they decide whether they are voting. [*Crosstalk*] Yes—which this obtains around the world and they will decide whether they want to

vote for your aldermen with your councillors. So, therefore, they are basically elected, because they are seeing the list of the aldermen in front of them. Do I like this party with this list of aldermen in this corporation? Yes, and, therefore, they vote. No, they do not vote. And that is as clean and clear and transparent, rather than having a team of people—you are voting for councillors and councillors deciding they are going to appoint X, Y and Z as aldermen. This system brings out the clarity. The people are able to see who they want to vote for.

So, we could have come to you, the hon. Prime Minister could have come to you, to the Parliament and say: “Well look, we want local government election reform.” The Minister of Works and Infrastructure now and former Minister of Local Government, Dr. Suruj Rambachan, Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, went around the country for about a nine-month period last year and part of this year. I even participated in one of the meetings in central Trinidad, in Chaguanas, and listened to the views of the entire country on what we should be doing.

As the Member of Parliament for San Fernando West indicated in her contribution today, we laid the White Paper on Local Government Reform in this House. We laid, for consideration. You had laid your White Paper in 2009 and there was a debate on it and then it lapsed in 2010. So from 2002, when you started to 2010, the eight years, you did not succeed in doing anything whatsoever, as far as local government reform is concerned. So we have your White Paper, 2009. We have our White Paper, 2013 for consideration now for more reform.

Now, this first step in proportional representation in local government is the first step and the prelude to more issues, as far as constitutional reform is concerned, which will probably include more reforms in local government and more in the general election. We promised you, the hon. Prime Minister promised, that we will have the issue of a two-term for our, hon. Prime Minister, a fixed date for general election and a number of other areas; the ability to recall, and so on. And in just three years of our governance we are bringing these issues to the forefront. We promised the population that this is what we are going to do and this is what we are going to do. We are fulfilling our promises to the population. And this is a Government that people can trust because it is a Government that fulfils its promises. When we say we are making the promises we keep our promises. [*Desk thumping*]

Today is not the opportunity for me to speak about all the hundreds and thousands of achievements and things we have done as a Government.

**Dr. Browne:** Hundreds and thousands.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Hundreds and thousands of things that we have done; thousands.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You would speak of them during the budget.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And I often say—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Millions.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—everything. This is something that we have not given to the population as much as we should have, by telling the population what we have done.

**Dr. Browne:** Very special.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** But in our first year you would remember we had a 100-day plan and we delivered most of the promises we made.

Then we had a 38-page document on all the achievements of the Government within the first year of office and hundreds of achievements on that.

### **10.10 p.m.**

In the second year of office we produced another document indicating the tremendous amount of work that had been done by this People's Partnership Government keeping its promises, and telling the population this is what you put us in there to do, and this is what we are doing because we have promised you and we are delivering; and some big things. The Prime Minister has already indicated that.

We promised that no child must die because of the lack of funding for surgery, emergency surgery, and we have satisfied all the requests that had been made, and the hon. Minister of Health will tell you that whatever has come to him he deals with it with alacrity.

Then we promised the laptops for the children and we have been delivering on that. We promised that there will be no rapid rail. There is no rapid rail. We said that there will be no property tax, and there is no property tax, and so on; big issues. What we have been able to do as one Government, in a short space of three years, has been unparalleled in the history of any Government in this country, *[Desk thumping]* and for any Government which has done even in five years, we have done in three short years—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Enough damage.



**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—much more than any other Government has done in five years. And as the Prime Minister said yesterday, there is acceleration in performance and many of our colleagues work 18 and 20 hours. It seems as though now we are continuing to work longer hours and smarter hours trying to deliver to the population and keeping, fulfilling our promises—a Government which people know they can trust in fulfilling its promises.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, they on that side stand accused of breaching the constitutionally enshrined democratic process of having elections and preventing—or not having elections and preventing the citizens from exercising their franchise which democracy affords them, and they have done that on so many occasions in the past.

Our hon. Prime Minister was very determined to fulfil the promise she made in the manifesto and the postponement of any local government election is alien to her concept of people-centred development. It is alien to her. She said I—we will have elections when they are due and the Prime Minister has been keeping her promise and is keeping her promise. She is having the local government election when it is due. That is so much a part of the hon. Prime Minister.

Today, she is a patron of the local government forum of the Commonwealth, and some of her partners, her fellow patrons are the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Miss Helen Clark, and the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni. So our Prime Minister is at the forefront of the international movement for the reform and strengthening of local government to give greater power to the people. That is in her DNA. She is there at the forefront at the Commonwealth level and she has ensured that her promise is being fulfilled and kept.

This Government is ensuring that we will not follow the precedent set by your Government and your administrations, using the local government reform as an excuse to facing the electorate. We are not doing that. The hon. Prime Minister is keeping her promise.

So my colleague for San Fernando West, the Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, very clearly demonstrated the necessity for this proportional representation to start with at the local government level and move subsequently to the general election level. And she gave the statistics to show when parties got a significant amount of votes, they ended up with no seats. And even your administration got more than 30 per cent of the electorate in one particular general election and got three seats out of 36. So, that system cannot continue and this is one of the new things we promised the population, and we are going to move with

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

that. But you have to be careful in the pursuit of what you are doing, and continue with your collaboration, consultation and discussion before implementation of any policy and coming to Parliament to get Parliament's support for such legislation.

I would now then move to commenting on a few of the statements made by some of your Members on the other side, and I will first start with the Leader of the Opposition. For a moment I thought that your Leader of the Opposition was really filibustering.

**Mr. Sharma:** He did. He did.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** He came unprepared and he had no substance in the whole question of his discussion and his—

**Mr. Sharma:** Contribution.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—contribution; that it was only one part at the end he touched slightly on the question of proportional representation. He went all over the place. I will come back to some of the things he said, but I can remember clearly, he spoke about proportional representation giving rise to and the propensity to have instability in governance. How far from the reality this could ever be—PR giving rise to and propensity to have instability in governance. How does he come to that illogical conclusion? I do not know. Where did he get that thinking from? He never sought to justify how he could have come to that scenario.

Then he went on further to say that we want one alderman because we are going to lose, and we want to have one person in a corporation because we know we are going to lose the corporations, and when that one person is there as an alderman, that one person will undermine the elected representatives and we want to put one alderman to run the corporation. How in heaven's name, with 13 councillors and four aldermen—God forbid that somebody wins 13—they have 13 councillors, one political party and three or four aldermen. How can one alderman that—let us say belongs to us—how can that one alderman affect the running and the performance and the contributions of that entire corporation?

**Dr. Browne:** Easy.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** It does not make sense at all. [*Crosstalk*] How could he have thought about that? We want to get one person so that we can dictate—the Minister of Local Government can dictate, with that one person—what will happen and how we will move forward with running and administrating that corporation, but the true facts are at the moment. We have governance of a

number of the previously held PNM corporations—Diego Martin, Arima, San Fernando—these corporations are now run by the People’s Partnership Government. So there is no question that at the local government election we will be contesting very clearly, and we will undoubtedly regain a significant number of councillors for the electoral districts of 136 in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** In Trinidad.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** In Trinidad, sorry. And he speaks about—the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about increasing the ratio of unelected to elected; increasing the ratio of unelected. I thought when we put up the names of the aldermen for the voters to look at, basically they are electing them because they are electing the councillors, they are seeing the names of the aldermen, they are not hidden. So basically they are electing the aldermen as well, and it is a matter of who wins the most number of votes will get the most number of aldermen. [*Laughter*] That is a fact. So, these were the only two areas that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about in his entire contribution on proportional representation and local government reform.

**Mr. Sharma:** Totally unprepared.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Totally unprepared. I was—well, he usually has the brim and fire with him, but it was useless. He was shooting off Scud missiles, [*Laughter*] they were aimless.

**Mr. Peters:** Nothing in it.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Nothing in it. [*Crosstalk*] I remember him speaking about laxatives and enemas and so on. I wondered where he was going. I really thought that his contribution was probably a whole constipated, empty rhetoric, gaseous in content and context. [*Laughter, crosstalk and desk thumping*]

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** It was sad. So anyway—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Medical terminology.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And the other thing—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Unparliamentary.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—I was—no, it is a medical jargon, my colleague, my young brilliant colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, who I have a tremendous amount of respect for as a young brilliant doctor.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am not seeing that brilliance, you know.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Well, not brilliant in politics. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Browne:** “Whey yuh worrying for? Go ahead nah man.”

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The question is—

**Dr. Browne:** “Yuh going bad enough already.” [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—the other issue: when the Member for Tabaquite spoke about the statements made by the former Caribbean Chief Justice and Prof. Selwyn Ryan—when they lauded this administration for the work that we are doing in bringing on this local government reform—he read out what they said and the Member for Diego West took umbrage at it. So it would seem as though when these writers, or these distinguished gentlemen, speak positively on the PNM side sometimes, they are happy about it. But when they speak positively about what the hon. Prime Minister and the People’s Partnership Government is doing now, he is unhappy about it. How hypocritical.

**Hon. Member:** The same thing happens with you all.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** So you have to know where you are going. One day for you, one day for us and what is right, is right.

Let me just read a little. I saw it today, the editorial in the *Guardian* and I would just read part of it, today’s *Guardian*. I quote:

“This new level of transparency in forcing political parties to let the public know their pool of talent for potential aldermen before the holding of a local government election is a welcome development...”

That is the Trinidad and Tobago *Guardian* editorial:

“This new level of transparency in forcing political parties to let the public know their pool of talent for potential aldermen before the holding of a local government election is a welcome development...”

And, of course, they had a concern about August 02 when we made the announcement and so on. And it is goes on:

“It is known that the Prime Minister had a request before her to postpone the local government elections and she made a firm decision to hold the elections on time, which is to be applauded.”

I quoted from the editorial of the *Guardian*.

**10.25 p.m.**

Some other issues which will have to be considered as we move subsequently with the local government reform, are two main issues which I have spoken to my colleagues about and we have two distinguished—three distinguished Members—on our Government team who have served faithfully and diligently in the areas of local government: the Member of Parliament for Fyzabad, the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite and Sen. Marlene Coudray, who served as CEO of the San Fernando Corporation for a number of years.

**Mr. Sharma:** You have two former practitioners, Glenn and—

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And two former practitioners—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Sharma:**—the Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—the Member for Caroni Central and the Deputy Speaker as well and the Member of Parliament for Moruga/Tableland. So, we have the wealth of knowledge and talent and expertise on this side; notwithstanding that they will have their talent as well.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Where?

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Well, it is not to be seen. It is not seen. It is not seen at all. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, the ability to name your aldermen and to choose who you want to be on that list, as my colleagues indicated earlier, gives the country the ability to see the competence and the ability of certain individuals who can work in these corporations and bring about meaningful change for the citizens whom they serve in the corporations.

So you will be able to choose a representative who can be looking after the agricultural needs in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation and Point Fortin looking after the energy needs and so on. So you choose people who can lend a helping hand and complement the competence with the councillors in the administration of the affairs of the corporation.

One of the issues which we will definitely have to deal with at a subsequent occasion on the reform is first, which needs a constitutional majority and, therefore, it does not give us the opportunity to deal with it at this time, but subsequently, which is enshrined in the Constitution, the holding of local government election every three years.

It is not within the Constitution. Sometimes someone can say, “I do not have to hold the local government elections”; or somebody can say, “I am removing it

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

altogether”, but we are looking to ensure in the future that that becomes a part of the Constitution and enshrined in the Constitution so that local government must be held according to the constitutional guarantees and safeguards, which will be put in at a subsequent time, which will need a constitutional majority.

The other issue which both the Member of Parliament for Fyzabad and the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite have raised on a number of occasions is the number of electoral districts in certain cities and boroughs that are not commensurate in parity with other boroughs and corporations. For instance, we cannot change at this moment, and we have not changed over the last number of local government elections, the number of electoral districts. The City of Port of Spain has 12—you cannot change that—and number of aldermen, four.

San Fernando has nine electoral districts and three aldermen. Arima has seven councillors, two aldermen. Point Fortin has six councillors, two aldermen; Borough of Chaguanas, eight councillors, two aldermen; and we have found that in a number of these boroughs and in the Cities of Port of Spain and San Fernando, you have a councillor representing probably one to 5,000 citizens and, in some areas like the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, Couva/Tabaquite—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** Point is one with 1,600.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Point Fortin is one in 1,600 and I am sure Port of Spain is probably close to one in 2,000, whereas in other corporations, you have one to 12,000; one to 10,000.

So this is something that we will have to deal with as we move with more and more reform; but we cannot do this between now and the local government election. It is impossible. So we take the first step, the first small step and, as we all know, Martin Luther King said the longest journey begins with a short, single step and this is the short, single step that we have taken for consideration of Parliament and it is a worthy step in the right direction.

Therefore, we will have to rearrange the number of electoral districts in the various corporations and, of course, we are arranging the number of aldermen to four. Perhaps in the future we may have to do something with the aldermen commensurate and bring about some parity of the aldermen versus the councillors and, therefore, in some corporations we may need to have more aldermen in the future, but this is the first step in the right direction.

So, I just want to speak about two other areas before I close my contribution. I did not like the way that senior Members of Parliament, Diego Martin West and

Diego Martin North/East behaved, in a type of mockery in the statements that have been made by the hon. Prime Minister yesterday.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It was shameful and disgraceful.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** It was shameful and disgraceful behaviour, both of them. I would not expect a little child in a kindergarten to behave in that manner in which they behaved today.

**Hon. Member:** “What you talking about?”

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And the camera will show them, when they tried to mock what the Prime Minister said. “Well, we are going to work for 18 or 20 hours and we are going to accelerate and so on now”, making a mockery of it. You must respect the Office of the Prime Minister. You must respect the Prime Minister.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Madam Deputy Speaker, 36(5). I rise on 36(5).

**Mr. Sharma:** Nonsense! Nonsense!

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, I know you are winding up. I just want to ask you to link in your debate and you can wind up after.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I was appalled by the behaviour and I am passing on. This is not behaviour that is needed in this Parliament here from senior Members who have been in Government for so long. It was very appalling and when any little child sees that, when it is replayed, they will see what it is I was speaking about.

Then I want to speak about the issue—he spoke about Clico, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, saying that we are behaving as though we did something for Clico; they bailed out Clico. [*Crosstalk*] The question is they bailed out their own money from Clico and we would not forget the days when we spoke about the Minister of Finance bailing out their own money and then we have colleagues in Parliament here who did not get the opportunity to bail out their money.

**Mr. Sharma:** Marlene did not get.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The real fact is, it must be—we must respond to that. They said that they bailed out Clico. They signed an agreement with Clico, which could have put us in trouble and let taxpayers lose billions of dollars, and we have had, in our three years, to deal with close to \$20 billion in debt to the people with short-term annuities and other Clico loans and so on and pay close to

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

\$20 billion to citizens of this country for the mess that their Government had made by not ensuring the close supervision of that company and the financial supervision, which they ought to have done working with Central Bank.

And not only \$20 billion we have had to bail out from Clico, but almost \$5 billion from Harry Harnarine's group, HCU. So we had to bail out about \$25 billion and I could not understand how the Member for Diego Martin West could say that they had to bail out Clico when they left us in a mess and we had to deal with it. So it was important for me to respond to that issue.

Then the issue of procurement: everybody would know the Prime Minister promised in the People's Partnership manifesto that within the first 30 days of Government, we will lay a Bill in the House on procurement; and this is what the Prime Minister did. Within 30 days, we tabled the issue of procurement for legislation.

Now, we worked well. We debated it here. We formed a joint select committee. We had presentations from a number of groups.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Caroni East has expired.

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. W. Peters*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Thank you colleagues and thank you Madam Deputy Speaker. So the question of procurement: it is a well-known fact that while the work of the joint select committee was going on and we were meeting with distinguished personnel who had tremendous competence and knowledge and organizations which have dealt with the issue of procurement legislation, we were meeting with them and formalizing to produce a Bill on procurement. When it seemed as though the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for Diego Martin North/East thought that we were moving expeditiously, that we may fulfil our promise to the population on the procurement legislation, they began to backtrack, hold back and thwart the exercise of moving with us to ensure that we complete the whole aspect of consultations to bring about the procurement legislation.

They stalled it. They said they were not coming to it and they never came until the national population and different organizations—the contractors association—



began to hammer them and they yielded and they shamelessly came back to work with the team to bring about the completion of the discussions on it.

This will be laid pretty shortly, the procurement legislation, which is going to come from the CPC very shortly and be laid in Parliament for discussion, deliberation and debate within a short period of time. It is not something that you rush like that. It is not something that you could just—you have to collect sources of information worldwide and see what is best practice occurring. It has to withstand the scrutiny of transparency and accountability and this is why it took a little while for us to bring it. They must never forget how they tried to stop it. For a long period of time it would have been here before; sometime before; a few months earlier it would have been here.

Then the last point I want to make is the area related to my area where I have the privilege and honour to be serving as Minister of Education. That is the question where every speaker spoke about school repairs and schools breakdown and so on.

I want to indicate to the national population, through this debate and through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to Members on the other side, that what we inherited as a Government had been massive and widespread decay and dilapidation in the infrastructure of schools in Trinidad and Tobago. We have nearly 100 schools that are 100 years of age and nearly 200 that are more than 50 years of age. What has their administration been doing from 2001—2010, the nine years that they were there?

Madam Deputy Speaker, all I can see that they did, they built six primary schools and they built 22 early childhood education centres in their nine years. They allowed the buildings to deteriorate so that every day we have to deal with plumbing things—water problems, sewer problems—and infestation of rodents and so on around. In short, for 18 months we had to deal with 939 emergency repairs to schools, Madam Deputy Speaker. In an eighteen-month period, on a daily basis, we have had at least six schools that had to be closed because of the things mentioned earlier about sewer, water, toilets and so on.

**10.40 p.m.**

And then, Madam Deputy Speaker, we can boast as a Government that in our period of three years—from July 2010 to now—we have done 850 projects plus in our schools in Trinidad and Tobago at a cost close to over \$500 million using more than 550 contractors; small, medium and large. That is the extent of what we have had to deal with as far as infrastructure in schools is concerned.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Of course, admittedly, on a daily basis there will be areas where schools remain closed, but during this vacation period we did 196 projects, Madam Deputy Speaker, and about 30 of these needed major electrical works to schools costing nearly over \$1 million because we have to change transformer and cabling to these schools and, on a daily basis, the Educational Facilities Company Limited—I want to congratulate and thank them for the tremendous work they have been doing.

And, as I said earlier this week, opening Monkey Town Government Primary with the hon. Member for Oropouche East—their primary schools used to cost about \$40 million to build—we built Monkey Town for \$22 million, and it is like a secondary school. This Government built 51 schools in our short period of three years. They built five primary and 22 early childhood schools in nine years. We built 51: 32 Early Childhood Care and Education Centres; 14 primary schools and five secondary schools. We are completing 20 Early Childhood Care Education Centres by December. In one month's time we are starting another 26. We have 17 primary schools under construction now, and 11 secondary schools under construction.

We inherited from them some secondary schools that they started from 2007 at an approximate cost of \$180 million to \$200 million for a secondary school. We are building them now close to about \$100 million and \$110 million, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is the mess we inherited. We inherited two schools: Marabella secondary and Aranguez secondary which are a phenomenal disaster with the air-conditioning system. You built two schools with central air conditioning using natural gas where the gas lines were not even close to the schools, and a massive water supply that has to be moving in tandem with the natural gas. So that if there is an uneven flow of the water system, the whole air conditioning shuts down, and this has happened to Marabella and Aranguez. These are the schools they want to accuse us of not opening, but it is their—

Do you know what was the cost of that central air-conditioning unit? Madam Deputy Speaker, \$30 million; a rape of taxpayers' dollars—\$30 million for an air-conditioning system, and there were two or three other schools. The same contractor and the same supervising consultant and design consultant were working in a number of these schools—whether he had the same contract for the other three—we have had to change the system in the other three; millions of dollars. So I had to respond to the question of what they think is the daily breakdown of the schools and the population and so on.

We give principals of secondary schools between \$800,000 to \$1.5 million per year to manage their schools; government secondary schools, and the board schools get close to that as well. We provide security, we provide janitorial, we provide everything for the schools, but they have \$1.5 million that they can do the little infrastructure work. They could change their bulbs, they could fix their air-conditioning units, they could change the water pump—for \$2,500 they could change the old water pump—but, no the Ministry of Education has to do this and has to do that. They have to take a little responsibility themselves, Madam Deputy Speaker. They have to show their responsibility.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you, colleagues, and I want to say how grateful I am to have been afforded the opportunity to respond to some of the comments made on the other side, and to put them in perspective, with my other colleagues, the necessity for advancing this issue of proportional representation in the context of local government reform. It is the way to the future. We have begun it and we will continue to move and develop it with the support of the Opposition, if they are so inclined. We would like to have their support because we know for sure it is the way for the future, and the people will feel more a part of the decision making when they can select the aldermen as well. Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you very much.

**Mr. Sharma:** Well done “man”, well done.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon** (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I feel obligated to speak on this Bill because of the great import of it. This is a Bill that would change the way—it is a serious Bill—the electorate voted in local government election for the last number of decades. It is also perhaps going to pave the way for another four or five decades, I am sure. So this is the seriousness of this Bill, and this is why all of my colleagues are adding their voices to it.

It is now 10.46 and we have been here for, perhaps, more than 12 hours, and we are likely—my colleagues are still going to speak, even though I think on the other side they are probably starved for contributions. I think we are probably going on for another 15 hours. Something has to be done about this, these marathon debates.

But I was very, very, disappointed. Let me start with the contributions from the other side today, and I am going to be quick. I am going to try to do this in 20 minutes, no more. Let me start with the contribution by the Member for San

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MRS. GOPEE-SCOON]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Fernando West who has accused us of defending the status quo, in other words, that we are avoiding change that is so badly needed. What I just want to remind her—and I think one of the earlier speakers would have said so—and I think it was the Leader of the Opposition who had said that we really have no problem with change with regard to any matter, more so, fundamental change with regard to local government. We have no problem with change, but the change is not about us, the change is about the people. It is not about us and, therefore, I am really disappointed.

The reason we are having this terribly long debate is because we have chosen to effect such change in a cart-before-the-horse situation, where you are actually coming to the Parliament in a matter that affects the electorate, and then going to them when it should have been the other way around; you go to the people and then you come to the Parliament with a more comprehensive and constructive way forward. So this is the reason.

The Member for San Fernando West was so pleased with herself; thrilled with herself, about this meeting which she had with a council of 35 persons, I believe on Wednesday evening. She is satisfied that the COP has done their consultation. Well, I am saying, this cannot be democracy if you have had a meeting with 35 people in a room. Democracy would mean going and taking this matter, yes to your council, but then taking it further to your party groups so that you are really informing all members of your party groups. But I can understand if they have very few members in the COP now, it is not so on the PNM side. Our membership is extensive and, therefore, we meet with a council, yes on a matter like this, but it has to go down to the individual councils within the constituencies and then to the people.

But greater than that, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not about political parties only; these are not the only persons we have to treat with. This is not just about members dialoguing with members of political parties. We have to reach the entire electorate and, therefore, before the Government came here, it was very important that more than the party groups that we belong to, we would have consulted with them. It has to go to every member of the electorate. Everybody should be given a chance to voice their opinion on this. It has to go to every NGO, every trade union. This is the kind of dialogue. This is true democracy when you want to advance something as fundamental as this, and they have all said it is a significant change.

The Member for Tabaquite in his presentation said it was a significant change, but I am saying it is beyond the politics. There are many people who choose not

to belong to a political party, yet they have a right to voice their opinion on that. So I am very, very, disappointed that the Member would find a great thrill in the fact that a council meeting was held with 35 people.

But the folly as well of this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the fact that the Members in this House do not understand the formula on which the aldermen are to be elected. The Members in this House are not united on that and earlier—I am sure the public would have seen it—there was general disagreement. In fact, if you were able to see all of the faces of the persons opposite, you would have realized that most of them were dumbfounded. I do not think they understood the formula, and there is total disagreement, and it is not a matter that could be satisfied in committee stage on the formula.

This takes me back to the point where this is the kind of Bill where there should have been some kind of agreement among both parties—met in a committee and discussed it and made sure that everybody understood the formula, but this is not the case and it is not a matter that could be settled at the committee stage. So you are saying this big significant change and we are going forward here tonight without agreement on the manner in which these aldermen are supposed to be selected. Right. [*Desk thumping*] The Members here do not understand it. There are Members in here who do not comprehend and there are different views on the formula.

In addition to which, whilst we are here, there is another amendment which has come forward, an amendment which deals with the very clause which Members are having a difficulty with. During debate here we have a significant amendment again on the proposed section 13(2), which is the method of calculation, the formula.

So I do not know when, perhaps, this Member for San Fernando West is going to go back to her dear council to speak about the new amendment. No one had a chance to discuss this with their members and, therefore, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am putting it to you, to use whatever authority you have—I was checking through the Standing Orders—to stop this. This is fundamental and nobody agrees with it, and you have yet another clause which has come before us here. Well, the Member for San Fernando West is coming in, but I am going to ask her: when is she going to discuss that with her council? This is the amendment. So you are talking as well—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** I have already discussed it. That is what we discussed on Wednesday.

**Dr. Browne:** Before Members got it?

**Mrs. Thomas:** So you got yours before.

**Dr. Browne:** She discussed the amendment before—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** So you discussed the amendment with the council—*[Crosstalk]*—so you are saying now you have already discussed it with the council—*[Crosstalk]*—and did you take it to your Cabinet then? *[Crosstalk]* Did it go—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Point Fortin.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** I will talk to you.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Please address the Chair, thanks.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** But if the dear Member had taken this back to her council, did it go before the LRC? Did it go back to Cabinet before it came here? Then why are we now getting it in the heat of the night? It makes no sense to me. I cannot follow that logic at all, Madam Deputy Speaker. And then the Member spoke about a new paradigm and, of course, she was talking about the public being ready for change and the new paradigm. But I do not understand a new paradigm where you have Parliament without the consideration of the people. Parliament is the people. I do not understand Parliament without the people. That is the new paradigm that you have come up with Member for San Fernando West? Disappointed!

**10.55 p.m.**

And you talked about sinister motives; the people on our side, the Members on our side having sinister motives. As you have spoken about that and you used that word, I want to say, without going into any detail, that yes, there is a dark and sinister side to PR. There is a dark and sinister side to it and, therefore, that is why I want us to be comfortable with it. There are good things about proportional representation, but then Trinidad is a unique place. Not everything that is imported into a European country or into the US or so necessarily may fit into our society, or a country perhaps where—because of the cosmopolitan nature of it we will have our peculiar circumstances.

What I am saying is that there is a side of it—and you see, the Member for Tabaquite spoke of this gentle introduction and then we got some confirmation along the way that they might go the full way if they are allowed. So in other words, it is looking like what the Government really wants to do is to go the full

way of proportional representation, and I am saying that if you are going to do this full debate you have to go to the population first.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** You have to go to the population first. [*Crosstalk*] And then Member, you went on to talk—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** After they vote.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Yeah. He is saying, “yes, we will do”, but after they vote. It makes no sense, Member for Caroni East, no sense, no sense at all, but we are moving [*Crosstalk*] right along at this hour of the night. I am speaking to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, please.

Then the Member goes on in the course of the debate to talk about an equitable distribution of the country’s resources and national development and so on, echoing all these lovely, lofty national sentiments, and so no. There has been veritably no fairness coming from this Government. [*Desk thumping*] All our PNM constituencies have been treated with disdain. The three Laventille constituencies—why do you think the Government is having the problems with the constituents of the three Laventille constituencies that they are having? Port of Spain East and Port of Spain North—I mean St. Ann’s East/Port of Spain North, I am just grouping; again they have voiced over time the sentiments of their constituents where they have been left behind.

We go to the three Diego Martin seats as well: no progress made. We have heard about the flood victims and the fact that the Government has not really assisted, and more than a year has passed, and more floods would come, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Member for Arouca/Maloney has spoken—and she is such a good MP—she has spoken at length about her constituencies and the complaints that they have voiced. They have got nothing under this Government, and “doh let me speak about La Brea and Point Fortin”; I am leaving it for the budget, Madam Deputy Speaker. But there has been no fairness, there has been no equity and I think, I mean it is a travesty that the Member should speak here about equitable distribution of the country’s resources and national development—very, very disappointing.

And then, the Member for St. Augustine—two seconds on him—he is the one who had done a lavish consultation right through the country and yet still—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Millions of dollars.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:**—costing millions of dollars, my colleague is reminding me—and yet still he could not refer to anything in his documents. Instead of being prayerful, as usual, and speaking as though he is speaking from a pulpit, I expected him tonight to have documentary evidence that this is the one who I have spoken to. This is what they have said about this kind of proportional representation that we are seeking to introduce here tonight. And it is because they hold sham consultations; that is what they were and addressed nothing [*Desk thumping*] on local government. So, again, empty vacuous statement by the Member for St. Augustine. What disappoints me more than ever than the two Members of the COP who have spoken, St. Augustine and San Fernando West as well, is the Member for Tunapuna. I really want to put it to him: is this your new version of politics, the new politics that you speak of? Where is the moral high ground that you normally espouse? I cannot believe that—I get from you, usually, views put forward definitely resembling something of integrity, and today I got nothing from you, Member for Tunapuna, and I was very, very disappointed. I ask you: is this new politics?

So I have to say, generally, I am disappointed with the kind of discussions that came from the other side.

**Dr. Browne:** “Doh talk bout Caroni East.”

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** The Member for Caroni East contradicted himself. He said, “this is not something that we should rush into”, but here we are rushing into it. [*Desk thumping*] Then, of course, he said that the Government has been exceptional in the last three years, and they have done much more than we have done in five years.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is a verifiable fact!

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** I just want to say it—and the Member for Tabaquite is now saying that it is a verifiable fact, and I want to say, yes you have been exceptional; you have been exceptionally damaging—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:**—to the country and to the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Miss Hospedales:** That is so correct. Exceptionally—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** What did you do for the people?



**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** So here we are, Madam, I am saying to you—you have spoken already and you have another turn. You have spoken already. Right. As I have said, there are two reasons why I cannot agree with this, and why we would not agree on this side, well at least two reasons coming from me that I am putting forward: one, it is an insult to our intelligence—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** You are voting against it?

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes, I am voting against it, I am telling you that from now. One, it is an insult to our intelligence [*Crosstalk*] and, the other thing is, it is on affront to our democracy. [*Desk thumping*] This is not democracy, this cannot be called democracy. Simple reason is that you are seeking to make fundamental changes to the system of election without any consultation to the electorate. That is what this is about. Here we are on the verge of an election which is to take place on October 21, a mere six weeks, and we have to rush to meet here tonight, meet in the Senate as well, hopefully get the vote there, go to the Office of the President for the assent on it, and do this all before, not even October 21, but nomination day, which could be September 23, September 30, October 14, but all of this rushing has to take place before nomination day. Madam Deputy Speaker, but they insult us all the time; that is their modus operandi in Government, they know no other way; respect and civility are not their strong suits, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** I do not mind the disrespect here; the disrespect that I am concerned about it is disrespect for the population—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:**—for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And as I said just now, the disrespect for the Office of the President, because you remember that office is expected to assent to a fundamental change in the conduct of election, so that there must be some time for scrutiny and serious pondering on the implications of the Bill. So it is an affront to everyone across the board.

And I want to read—permit me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to just read from the *Hansard*, a contribution made in the House just about a month ago at the opening of Parliament, and it says, I quote:

“Timely receipt of policy, of documents and draft Bills is an imperative to facilitate both scrutiny and the counterproposals of all parliamentarians. As the engine room for national political debate, Parliament then must be about

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MRS. GOPEE-SCOON]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

the people's business"—and—"not the party's business. In other words, as leaders and lawmakers, parliamentarians of differing political persuasions are still expected to cooperate on matters that promote the development, security and uplifting of the society."

Madam Deputy Speaker, what I am saying here: there is not enough time for counterproposals, there is not enough time for scrutiny. Again, here we are, it is a marathon debate; again, we are going late into the night, you are taxing the speakers—late into the morning—you are taxing the speakers, we are taxing you, we are taxing the media, the parliamentary staff; this cannot be right. If it had been done in a proper way I think we would have had agreement, we would have come here with agreement and not a divided position; it would have been totally different you know, but they do not listen.

His Excellency gave his very wide—not wide, sorry, I would say, wide, yes, and wise admonition. A criticism, but very good for us, and he spoke about this marathon debate, but, as usual, the Government does not listen; we come at 10.30, we still end up with the same long, marathon debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, please speak to the House Committee, we really have to speak about these 30 minutes as well that we have to come down to.

**Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*] the President say that—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** We cannot continue like that. But as I was saying, timely receipt. And they may very well argue, the speaker after me, because that is what they are about, that we got timely receipt by getting this Bill a week ago. But that may hold for particular Bills, for ordinary Bills or Bills where we can easily follow the outcome of them. That cannot be so for a Bill of this nature—cannot be so for a Bill of this nature; so I am saying one week in this case was not enough to go back to the population. I am saying, it is simply insufficient time, we have not reached the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and we therefore should not seek to rush this fundamental change which is before us.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You made that point ten times for the night.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** This is an affront to our democracy and I will say it a hundred times, Member for Tabaquite, okay. It is an insult and you are just expecting rubber stamp from all of us here, rubber stamp from the Office of the President as well, that is not good enough, I am saying. This is the first one, "we doh listen."

The other thing; let me go back to this mathematical formula, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have said here tonight, we have seen here tonight where there is no agreement in this House on that mathematical formula, and I can tell you that

there are Members who do not even understand and did not take the time to understand the mathematical formula. And the Member for Caroni East will tell you that the failure rate for math out there at O levels, at CXC, is something like 67 per cent, Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** [*Inaudible*] per cent.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** It is 67 per cent, you have said it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is in the Caribbean not Trinidad.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Sixty-seven per cent, as far as I know, you can correct me on it at another time, right. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, what that is saying to us, these are people who are voting as well, you know.

In the last few years those persons, that 67 out of a hundred persons who are not able to pass CXC math, they are 18 now, you know, and they are all voting on this, and if we do not understand in this House, I do not know how you expect the people out there to understand—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Why are you insulting the people?

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:**—the mathematical formula. And I am not insulting the people, [*Crosstalk*] I am saying we do not understand it; I am saying they do not understand it. [*Crosstalk*] We have not been able, we should be going—please, may I have some protection?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, please allow the Member for Point Fortin to speak in silence.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** We literally should be going before our people and ensuring that they understand the mathematical formula; that is what should happen.

If I go to this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I go to clause 7—section 13(2), which is repealed and substituted too, and I will just read a little subset of that, you tell me, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you could easily grasp what I have said:

“The Elections and Boundaries Commission shall allocate the number of Aldermen for each party contesting such election as follows:

- (a) a quota of votes per seat shall first be determined by dividing the total number of valid votes cast at an election under section 11 by the number of seats in each Council designated for Aldermen; and
- (b) the number of Aldermen to be awarded to a party shall then be determined by dividing the total number of valid votes...”

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MRS. GOPEE-SCOON]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

And it goes on, and it goes on. Then it goes to subsection (3):

“Where the result of the calculation under subsection (2)(b) yields a remainder of vacant seats not absorbed by the number of Aldermen awarded...the surplus calculated under subsection (4)...competes with other similar surpluses accruing to any...”

And it goes on, and I have not yet touch the amendment, and you want to tell me that the people who this will affect will really understand this?

**Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** So how is it done elsewhere?

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** It is done by proper consultation no matter how long it takes, but you want to rush it for your own purpose. [*Desk thumping*]

**Miss Hospedales:** Correct.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** This is self-serving. That is the part that is an affront to our democracy, it is self-serving to this coalition Government. [*Crosstalk*] It serves the interest of this coalition. You understand?

**Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** And we just showed you here how you will get more seats in this.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** No. No. No. Madam, you have had your time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, please. Hon. Members, you would recognize that we have been here for more than 12 hours and your arguments are becoming tedious, repetitious, again and again, and I wish to direct you to Standing Order 43(1), and if this is continued I may have to ask you to resume your seat.

Please bear in mind, like I say, we are all tired and we have been here for more than 12 hours. Please take that into consideration and look at section 43(1). You may continue, Member for Point Fortin.

**11.10 p.m.**

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you for your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I pose the question to you: in the presentation of the Bill made by the Member for Tabaquite, did you hear the words “education plan”, “communication plan”? Nobody has talked about this tonight. [*Desk thumping*] Nobody has talked about educating and communicating. What is the plan? You are presenting a Bill and you do not talk about it. I am not being repetitive—nothing. We have not heard about educating the population.

**Hon. Member:** You are challenging the Speaker?

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** No I am not challenging, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am raising a valid point. I am sure that the Deputy Speaker agrees with me.

I am saying that the whole focus changes. I will tell you what one of the differences is: whereas before under the first-past-the-post system the focus was on getting enough votes to win—there is something at the back of everyone’s mind that we only need to get enough votes to win—this is not the case under proportional representation. For instance, if you live in Laventille you could easily say that you are not going to vote because you expect the seat to be won easily by the PNM. Am I right? There are many people who do not vote because they take it for granted that in Laventille the PNM is going to win the seat.

**Dr. Griffith:** Are you sure?

**Mr. Peters:** “What ent meet yuh, ent pass yuh.”

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes I am sure about that. We have never lost the Laventille seat. Let us take Chaguanas; up until a few months ago we could have easily said the same for Chaguanas, where people in Chaguanas would take for granted the fact that it would be won by the UNC in any event. But again, post-July 29, I mean, that tells us that we are not too sure that Chaguanas could ever go the way of the UNC, so we have had a changed situation there, but this is different. The whole mindset of the population has to change. The number of votes makes a difference, and that is why the education is so very much important.

**Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** That is what you are worried about. [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** I am not worried. [*Interruption*] Madam Deputy Speaker, may I have your protection?

**Hon. Member:** Protection for what?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** You have my protection, Madam. You may continue.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** I wish to speak in silence.

**Hon. Member:** I wish you would too.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** I am moving on from the point about the fact that votes matter. It is just not about seats and the fact that we are all for change, but there are some fundamental matters which must be discussed with the population first and foremost.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MRS. GOPEE-SCOON]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

My other point that I just want to briefly touch on is that this Bill is inherently undemocratic. It is undemocratic. I say so because I honestly believe it is part of a partisan plan to assist all the parties that belong to this coalition to, in fact, be successful. It is about turning losers into winners. I think it is all a sinister plot to help the parties which form the coalition. So from the point being that it is self-serving and not necessarily serving the population, this is why I find it inherently undemocratic, and I have made my point on that.

I want to go back to the *Hansard* again, when we first met for the opening of this session of Parliament. It says:

“...as leaders and lawmakers, Parliamentarians of differing political persuasions are still expected to cooperate on matters that promote the development, security and uplifting of the society. Once a delicate balance is struck, all Parliamentarians may seem to be cooperating, even collaborating, to ensure that Bills passed are in the wider public interest.”

When we speak of democracy that is what we speak of. Bills must be passed in the wider interest of all concerned and not in the interest of the political parties to suit their own purpose. That is the issue. Based on the fact that I am satisfied and we are satisfied here that this Bill is to serve the parties' own selfish interest, their very narrow interest, I am saying that there is no justification for this Bill and you would not receive our support.

**Hon. Member:** “You say that 10 times.”

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** And I will say it over and over, and then we will all say it in unison after as well.

The other point I wish to make is that the hon. Prime Minister when she brought this up, spoke about the Bill keeping faith with the recommendations of the Principles of Fairness Committee, [*Crosstalk*] and that the Government was seeking to introduce—Madam, I cannot continue with this.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members, you are indulging in talk that is irrelevant at this point in time—that is Members on the benches—and I want to listen to the Member for Point Fortin so I could hear clearly what the Member is saying. So please avoid crosstalk.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** I was saying to you that the hon. Member for Siparia had said in speaking about proportional representation that it was in keeping faith with the recommendations of the Principles of Fairness Committee, and that the Government was seeking to introduce proportional representation first in the local

government election. But I just want to make the point about this Principles of Fairness Committee and how it came about and so on. I want to inform the House that the draft which was presented by the Principles of Fairness Committee to the PNM administration said nothing about proportional representation for elections in local government.

So the Prime Minister alluded to that, but it actually said—the draft which they presented to the PNM, which I have the honour to serve, said nothing about proportional representation for election in local government. In fact that draft did not mention local government at all. The draft said with regard to the system of balloting, that the election of Members of the House of Representatives shall be by a secret ballot and in accordance with the first-past-the-post system. So it endorsed the first-past-the-post system, but there was never any suggestion of introducing proportional representation.

When it spoke to proportional representation, it spoke to it with regard to the appointment of Members of the Senate. It was the Members of the Senate it spoke to. What this Government is seeking to do is to import what they said about proportional representation for Members of the Senate for aldermen, with regard to the appointment of aldermen in the local government elections.

Of course you know what the mindset of the members of the Principles of Fairness Committee is, because you know who it is made up of. That committee was made up of Sen. Dr. Bhoë Tewartie and a number of members who, in fact, were the members of the National Alliance for Reconstruction administration. In their evolution of becoming COP members, of course, they realized that they were being consistently rejected by the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

So there they were; they consistently could not earn the trust of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and therefore they came forward to the PNM with these recommendations, and being the national inclusive party that we are, we took on those recommendations, joined in one committee with Sir Ellis Clarke and we came up with the drafting for the new Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the way in which our Government had dealt with the fundamental rights and freedoms of our citizens. That is the way we expected that this Government would have dealt with this piece of legislation, and it just did not happen.

Nothing recommended here today really speaks to the heart of the people, not the mock consultations that were held by the Member for St. Augustine or so. It really brings me to the question as to who wrote this Bill. Who came up with it? Who came up with this Bill?

**Mr. Imbert:** A non-mathematician.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** My colleague is telling me a non-mathematician, and I really do believe so, but I am hearing that it may have been even one of the advisors to the Prime Minister who may have done this. The fact is that it may not have gone to the LRC at all. It may have gone to the Cabinet I think, but never to the LRC.

What I am hearing out there is that it was done by the advisor to the Prime Minister, Dr. Hamid Ghany. That is what I am hearing. I want the person who speaks after me to correct me if I am wrong, because I am very, very concerned about the drafting of this undemocratic piece of legislation. Particularly if it is Dr. Ghany, I am asking the question; especially as he is in that new job at the *Guardian*, which is a very good newspaper that comments on very important media information to the public. I am really concerned about who is guarding the *Guardian* and about the whole guardian of democracy and so on. So I want some assurances that this did not come from that source and that there was absolutely no role by him in the drafting of this legislation.

As I wind up, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is nothing else but an attempt by the Government to give themselves an advantage in the upcoming election. It is nothing else but that. It is a clear case of gerrymandering the election. *[Interruption]* In fact, the people of Trinidad and Tobago should reject it in the same manner that they are poised to reject this administration whenever the next general election is called. The mere presentation of the Bill and the manner in which they have done it, I think they have reached the point of surrender.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:** When you come to the population with something like this, this cart before the horse situation, it is surrender. When you come to the population with the kind of shake and bake reshuffle that you did last night, it is surrender. I think what the Government should do is come to the population and say, "I surrender all; let us call a general election." *[Desk thumping]*

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would just like to conclude and say once again that this Government is in a crisis. We have gone beyond midterm now; I think there is no recovery. They have reached the point of desperation and all that they speak of in terms of extending the olive branch and collaborating, et cetera, we have gone past that. They just have not, as I said before, been able to permeate society at all. They have had no positive effect on the population at all, and therefore I



can only join and act as the population would expect me to act, would expect us to act, and reject this Bill outright. We condemn this atrocity of legislation before us. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Before you speak, Member for La Brea, as I said a moment ago, I just want to draw—the rest of the speakers for the night—your attention to Standing Order 43(1), which also says that I could ask you to resume your seat if you continue to be repetitious as regards the debate. Many things have been said here tonight and many things are understood. So I just want to ask you to look at Standing Order 43(1). [*Crosstalk*]

**11.25 p.m.**

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for La Brea.

**Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey** (*La Brea*): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] I want to advise this hapless Government that never again—  
[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Hatless and hapless.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:**—in the history of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** And the world.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:**—must they call an election on the 21<sup>st</sup> of any month because the preceding month is one with either foot and mouth disease or mad blood incursion with their legislation. [*Crosstalk*] Madam Deputy Speaker, one would recall—[*Interruption*] that last December they hastily brought before this Parliament the [*Crosstalk*] Tobago House of Assembly Constitution (Amdt.) Bill. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** They said that.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** And on January 21 we had the election. We all know what that result was. Again, we have an election on October 21—

**Hon. Member:** “Gawd.”

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:**—the month before September, they come with this Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act to introduce proportional representation in the selection of aldermen and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I dare say come October 21 a similar hiding will be given to this Government. [*Crosstalk*]

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. JEFFREY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

The Member for Tabaquite saw that the Prime Minister's decision, to introduce proportional representation at the local government election, as laudable. He said she had gone where no former Prime Minister had gone before despite the discussion of proportional representation since the 1920s. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is indeed frightening. Her track records of misstep, misinformation, mistakes, misgivings, gave us no solace.

**Hon. Member:** That is right. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** In fact, what they are saying to us here is that our distinguished Prime Ministers in the past, the father of our nation, Dr. Eric Eustace Williams—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Stop reading. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:**—George Michael Chambers, Arthur N.R. Robinson, Patrick Augustus Mervyn Manning and Basdeo Panday did not [*Crosstalk*] have the courage or wisdom to introduce proportional representation.

In fact, our former Prime Ministers saw the wisdom of recognizing that proportional representation was not appropriate for a plural society like Trinidad and Tobago. We boast of a rainbow society, our callaloo mix, our fastest growing segment of the population—that mixed group—and I dare say, we should not willy-nilly tamper with that arrangement

Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the Member for Tabaquite speak about the selection of aldermen by proportional representation, how it promotes inclusion and strengthening our democracy. Our Prime Minister also spoke about the strengthening of our democracy through this question of proportional representation. Democracy means more than voting. Democracy has to be seen through a context of benefiting not some but all the people. It is not just for a favoured few, it has to promote social equity and equality. This Bill before us is a shenanigan. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** A what?

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Madam Deputy Speaker, it is pure deceit to tell us that proportional representation was introduced to promote democracy. I am certain that when they had the consultation nobody had raised the necessity for proportional representation for the selection of aldermen. I will come to that in a while to show what are the fundamental issues that any legislation or amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act should deal with. I dare say that none of the points raised here tonight, on the other side, dealt with those fundamental issues.

I went to the *Concise Collins Dictionary* on page 388 to look at what democracy means.

**Hon. Member:** “Yuh reach far.”

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** It says that democracy has to do with the practice or spirit of social equity. It speaks about a social condition of classlessness or equality. Where in this Bill [*Crosstalk*] are they dealing with the whole question of equality and equity; where in this Bill? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** “Yuh talking to La Brea from here.”

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I dare say that this Bill before us has nothing to do with those fundamental issues.

**Mr. Sharma:** “Yuh cyar read what yuh write?”

**Dr. Khan:** “De President say doh read, you know.” [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** With those few words.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** The whole question of—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** With those few words. Stick a pin.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** When we are looking at what is fundamental we have the following to look at. First and foremost, any legislation, as far as local government is concerned, would deal with the eradication of rampant corruption in the awarding of contracts. That is something that should be dealt with in the legislation.

Two, the inadequate financial resources for the various municipal corporations—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Sharma:** Three.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:**—to address the numerous infrastructure needs and services. If we are talking about social equity then the municipal corporations must have the resources with which to do their work.

Madam Deputy Speaker, permit me to just use a few examples to illustrate why, instead of talking about proportional representation, we should deal with more fundamental issues in terms of providing the municipal corporations with adequate resources.

I wrote the Siparia Regional Corporation on January 12, 2012 and they wrote me back on February 02. I had requested assistance on behalf of the residents of

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. JEFFREY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Ellis Street, La Brea, for the construction of a canal behind the old cemetery in La Brea where water from the cemetery was flowing into the premises [*Crosstalk*] of residents.

**Mr. Sharma:** That is dead water. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Madam Deputy Speaker, “yuh” know what was the reply I got from the Siparia Regional Corporation? [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** No response.

**Hon. Member:** “What that have to do with this Bill?”

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** It says:

“I have been directed by the council at its 18<sup>th</sup> physical infrastructure committee meeting held on January 12 to inform you that the council is unable to accede to the following request due to the unavailability of funds.” [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** “If we had alderman here we wudda look after dat for yuh.”

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** This is no joking matter. This is a very serious thing.

**Hon. Member:** If you had an alderman—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Madam Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 40(b) and (c). This is ridiculous.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members, please, please. Member for La Brea, I want you to address the Chair and avoid the crosstalk.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** I am not talking in any crosstalk.

**Hon. Member:** “Yuh not talking at all.”

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Continue, Member.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] I want to turn to another example, “roadwork repairs on behalf of members of Lodge Street, La Brea.” [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Lodge Street.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** I wrote to them on August 29, 2011, and I was told [*Crosstalk*] on January 12, 2012—almost six months later:

“Kindly be advised that the corporation was unable to assist due to financial constraints.” [*Crosstalk*]

I daresay that we need to come to grips, that this is something fundamental that we need to address.

Thirdly, the inequity in the timely releases of funds for the various municipal corporations. In UNC-controlled corporations they have easier access to the release of funding than PNM-controlled corporations. *[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Garbage!

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** That needs to be addressed. I daresay as well that even in UNC-controlled corporations the electoral districts that are controlled by the PNM, the releasing of funds for those electoral districts to do their jobs are being stymied. That is something that should be addressed.

**Hon. Member:** Should be a pants.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** As well, Madam Deputy Speaker, inadequate remuneration for councillors. Rather than increase the number of aldermen, what we should in fact be doing is increasing remuneration for councillors for them to do their jobs. I think we need to understand how serious this thing is. This mere pussyfooting—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** “Wha kind of language is that?”

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:**—of the Bill before us needs for us to take into consideration that it is much more fundamental than that.

When we look at the Bill, in clause 6, section 12A(2) we are told that—

“The quantum of names on the List of Aldermen to be submitted by each party in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be equal in number to the number of Councillors to be elected in each Council respectively.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, imagine the City Council of Port of Spain having 12 electoral districts and they have to put up 12 names for the aldermen to select four. I think it is a waste or an abuse of time and privilege. Rather than ask for 12, what about six? Why go to that big extent, that number? I think that is something we should consider in this regard.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to go back to clause 7 where in the case of the pool—we say that, for example, a councillor who fails at the polls cannot be elected as an alderman. And I ask the question—yes, I agree, at the time when you are having the nominations you are supposed to submit the names of those who are going to be in the aldermen pool.

But what happens? If that pool is exhausted for some reason or the other midterm, that defeated alderman—I mean candidate—why is he excluded from

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MR. JEFFREY]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

the process? Because you know what happens? At the general election when a candidate loses, is defeated at the polls, right in this Parliament here, we have people who come back into the Parliament through the Senate. Why are we excluding defeated councillors of ever getting the opportunity to serve as aldermen in a particular three-year period? “Dat doh seem right.” I think we ought to look at that.

In clause 7, section 13(12):

“Where for the purpose of subsection (11), in respect of a Municipality, there are no more names available on the relevant List of Aldermen, the Council shall, at the next meeting after the vacancy arises, elect an Alderman or such Aldermen, and such persons shall be persons who qualify to be Councillors and who possess demonstrated knowledge, expertise or experience...”

Who determines what “demonstrated knowledge” means? Who determines that? Who determines the level of expertise that is required? Who determines the level of experience that is required for that person to be an alderman? Who determines that? Madam Deputy Speaker, after the Resmi fiasco I am scared to leave that open.

**11.40 p.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to look at the following section 13, where in the case of a Municipal Corporation, “ah right”, where you have to elect an alderman. We are saying that it should be persons who are qualified to be councillors and who are members of a village or community council functioning within the municipality. Does it mean that somebody who joined the village council last week is one who is eligible to be an alderman?

**Mr. Imbert:** Clearly.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** “Hmm?”

**Mr. Imbert:** “That is what it mean here”.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** That does not make any sense.

**Mr. Imbert:** It makes no sense.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** We are fooling around, we are not serious. If in fact we are looking at getting good persons to be aldermen then we have to go further than that as far as the village and community council representatives are concerned. We have to be serious. And sometimes you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that distinction between proposed sections 12 and 13, I do not understand it at all.

What makes an alderman in a City Council different from an alderman in a regional corporation? “Why is the difference?” Why can’t the criteria not hold true in both cases? I think we need to look at that very closely.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this whole question about equity is one I want us to look at very closely because it is in the corporation that we have a lot of problems. I could tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I watch at the discrepancy, and it is something that the local government amendment with proportional representation will not address. And I could tell you, I have gone throughout the south-western peninsula and I have seen the inequity that is at work—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Roberts:** In a blue new pickup?

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** People in Cane Street, in Lot 10, Merrimac Road, Virginia Avenue, Larington Trace, Upper Salazar Trace, 40 McCarthy Street, Marvin Crescent, Black Heat Avenue, Paria Gardens, Victor and Lodge Streets, Sobo Extension, Sobo Circular, Pier Road, Los Bajos, First Avenue, Dickie Trace Extension. When you watch the conditions of those streets and you go to other areas and you look at Gulcharan Trace and others you say, “hmm”, yes inequity is fully at work.

**Dr. Ramadharsingh:** PNM—[*Inaudible*]

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** And no amount—I would come to you just now.

**Dr. Ramadharsingh:** Yeah.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Madam Deputy Speaker, let me take him up one time. I spoke to the Minister of the People and Social Development about a woman in Rumstill Avenue, poor woman with six children—

**Dr. Browne:** Six houses.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** —not going to school, poverty, and I asked him for help. You know what he told me to do—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Nothing.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:**—go and ask his mother who is a councillor.

**Dr. Browne:** What?

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Right. That is an indictment against your operation. In other words, rather than look at addressing the need of that person, this is the advice he gave me, and I want him to stand up and deny that.

**Dr. Ramadharsingh:** I deny that.

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Now, I have to believe that you have six houses in truth. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Now I believe you have six houses.

**Hon. Member:** “You finish?”

**Mr. F. Jeffrey:** Finished.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin Central. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Amery Browne** (*Diego Martin Central*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption and crosstalk*]

**Mr. Jeffrey:** You told me that! You told me that!

**Dr. A. Browne:** We are really getting some shocking revelations in the House—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Jeffrey:** You told me that!

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Please! Order. Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** You told me that!

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are getting some shocking revelations in the House today. It is now 11.44 p.m. and we have been here all day, really. We have been here all day really, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I feel pressed into service during this debate because my constituents feel very strongly about what has transpired since 10.00 a.m. this morning and the manner in which the Government has brought these matters to the Parliament. I see the Member for Oropouche East and the sedentary Member for Toco/Sangre Grande are stirring at this time, but I have a few points to make and I shall make them right here in this House, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I remind all Members present that even though it is 11.44 p.m. I have the same rights and privileges as any Member who spoke at 10.00 this morning.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government is indeed on life support at this time, a non-functional vegetable, a divided vegetable and they are trying to squeeze an electoral lifeline out of this particular measure here today. They could and will get a very bad trouncing. Somehow they would hope to get an alderman or two in spite of their trouncing in the upcoming local government election. That is what the mighty People’s Partnership has been reduced to at this time due to their own hands.



Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to respond right at the outset to the Member for Caroni East, who shamelessly tries to boast about school repairs during this particular debate and he does so in the face of the most abysmal performance by the Education Facilities Company Limited, and the most abysmal performance ever by the Ministry of Education under his hand in school repairs or lack of school repairs right across Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* He is still murmuring and grumbling, but the schools in Diego Martin Central, primary as well as secondary schools—and the Member for Oropouche East knows I am talking the truth here and he is trying to interrupt me. Primary and secondary schools in Diego Martin Central all submitted their requests for school repairs on time. I have seen the documents, Madam Deputy Speaker. All of them did. Since last year, 2012, the Minister himself joined us due to a crisis in one of the secondary schools and he toured the area, 2012 and he went to some of the schools and he waved his hands, grandly, he said: “We will repair across there, new tanks, new toilets, new classrooms, new libraries.” The children were excited, some of them took his autograph—*[Interruption]*

No, I saw it. Yes, literally. So everyone was—Madam Deputy Speaker, that was 2012. These repairs were supposed to be done during the vacation. They went to Christmas vacation—Cocorite Government Primary is a classic example; if you see the condition they have this school. They went to Christmas vacation—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It has 100 years.

**Dr. A. Browne:** They came back out of Christmas vacation nothing was repaired. They went to Easter vacation, they came back—those poor children—from Easter vacation, guess what, nothing was repaired. When the Minister visited he wanted to examine all the rooms, I give him credit for that, but some of the staff said Minister you cannot go into those toilets in the school, a primary school, little children. You cannot go in there. He listened to them.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will build a new school for them.

**Dr. A. Browne:** It is terrible, terrible. Those children went for their August vacation. They came back out from their August vacation and guess what, Madam Deputy Speaker, nothing has been done. That is bad enough, that is terrible

enough, but then to stand here on this Bill and boast about performance in school repairs in the face of the reality that is facing the families in this country, that is shocking and I would describe that as shameless behaviour by the—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Use better language.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Shameful. He does not like shameless, shameful, by the Member for Caroni East. Nothing has been done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, and bear in mind these schools are also workplaces for citizens, taxpayers, teachers and other professionals and they are really getting some shoddy treatment and being further insulted by these boasts.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the introducer of this Bill, the Member for Tabaquite, did so in grand fashion, as is his style. He hailed this measure, these amendments as portending a fairer system of governance for Trinidad and Tobago. I wrote his words down. And he said we need to re-examine the first-past-the-post system. But where is the opportunity for this re-examination by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? It certainly could not be over the last five days and then this one day in the Parliament here today. Because whether they are listening or not they will have no say from here on in because we are going to be putting these measures; the Government has said they would put these measures to an immediate vote and they already have a special majority.

So who is doing this examination that he is talking about? And even the Members on the other side, Government MPs, do not understand what the Government is proposing. We heard so many contradictions by Members opposite, only one of them was courageous enough, the Member for San Fernando West, she made a total mess of it but I—[*Laughter*] but I at least acknowledge her courage in trying to explain this Hare formula to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who heard about it for the first time today and only a few minutes ago got a mangled effort to explain it and break it down. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is what they are heralding as a fairer system and a re-examination of the first-past-the-post system, something that has served us for generations and decades in one day in a sandbag ambush approach—

**Miss Ramdial:** Sandbag?

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes, this is sandbag politics against the population. They want to change all of that in one day of the debate without giving the people an opportunity to communicate with their Members of Parliament on the measures that have been explained.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government does not even understand what they have brought here today and that is a bad sign. And looking at their manners it is a total insult to local government, and we have former Ministers of Local Government, in fact, we do not have any Minister of Local Government in this Lower House anymore. We have former Ministers of Local Government, and they have insulted local government in the manner and the haste in which these amendments have been brought.

For central reform what do we have, millions of dollars, fancy national consultations across the country for the first time, bizzarely, a government Minister heading those consultations, and they are touring up and down the place doing a little COP politics as they go because the Prime Minister said, okay, Member for St. Augustine, run with this one and let me give you something to work with. And he is all over the place spending millions of dollars for central reform, consultations, consultations. I did attend one of them. I was very disappointed with what I saw there. That was for central reform. But for local reform in bringing these measures a one-week ambush approach and not a single consultation for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and those who will be voting, who will be engaging in the mechanisms that they have brought to the House today. None of them understand, but somehow they want to pretend that all of the citizens already understand.

Sadly, none of the citizens also understand what the Government has brought here. And they say that we need a system, Member for Tabaquite again, we need a system in which there is wider citizen participation in decision making; wider, and he said wider, broader, he nearly said heavier, but he did not go that far—wider and broader citizen participation in decision making. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, he did not realize the irony in his own words because they are saying that these measures would bring wider citizen participation in decision making. The irony is that they are introducing these measures in a manner that involves absolutely no citizen participation. Tremendous irony in this Government's approach but they fail to see that counting simply on their majority, as the Prime Minister trumpeted it, the majority in the House, "and who vex loss".

They went on, the Member for St. Augustine, this Bill will reduce marginalization. And I wondered what on earth is he talking about. This Bill will reduce marginalization and I think I have the explanation. Maybe he was talking not of marginalization but of threatened future marginalization of the UNC, the COP and the TOP in the coming local government election. That is the type of marginalization that they are seeking to reduce.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

**11.55 p.m.**

But if you find yourselves becoming marginalized, Madam Deputy Speaker, do not blame the citizens for that, blame your Prime Minister; blame your cabal and blame your Cabinet for your political marginalization. Look at this crazy reshuffle that they have just had; it would just increase their marginalization. Bad, hasty decisions lead to bad, terrible results, not to progress.

This Government does not listen to warnings. So many times we have warned them about their approach and what they have brought to this House. So many times they have ignored those warnings and they have fallen into trouble every single time and dragged the population with them. We keep warning them and they ignore the warnings, Madam Deputy Speaker. We warned the Member for Chaguanas West about this Government, but he did not listen to us and he is paying a price. We warned this Government about the Member for Chaguanas West, they did not listen to us and they are paying a price. The citizens across the country are suffering a loss of hope and guidance; a loss of hope on all sides.

Members on the other side, again you hear them, always talking about the PNM, the PNM. They are addicted to talking about the PNM, but I want to just reassure this population, let not your hearts be troubled. Let not your hearts be troubled. Just look at the calendar. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** More amendments again.

**Dr. A. Browne:** What? No, no, I refuse to believe that.

They are talking about the PNM, but let not your hearts be troubled. Just look at the calendar. I am speaking to those out there, Madam Deputy Speaker. Just look at the calendar and you can be reassured with the knowledge that we are closer to the UNC defeat in 2015 than we are to the PNM loss in 2010. We are closer on the calendar to the UNC defeat in 2015 than we are to the PNM loss of 2010. That should comfort many citizens in spite of this travesty.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for St. Augustine really reached a low point today in defending these measures. [*Interruption*] Yes, I know the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara would agree with that. The Member for St. Augustine read extensively, extensively, from a document earlier in this debate to try to justify the travesty of the manner in which they have brought this amendment to the Parliament. He kept referring to this document and he did not give the source initially, so there was some degree of mystery.

He kept referring to this document “and the COP government shall do this”; and he went on, “the COP government shall do that”, and we were wondering, what is this Member reading from? What is he talking about? The COP government? What COP government? What was he reading from? Then it was revealed that he was reading from the 2007 COP manifesto. I have a newsflash for the Member for St. Augustine: the COP manifesto of 2007 was adjudicated upon by the citizens of this country. You know what? They got not a single seat in Trinidad and Tobago based on that manifesto. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Member for St. Augustine, that document is dead and buried. It is cremated, *finito, sayonara, punto, finale*. You cannot be referring to that now to try to justify what is happening here in the House today. That document has already been adjudicated upon and it resulted in not a seat, not a councillor, not an alderman—nothing came out of that in 2007. So how then can they justify what they are doing here today?

We heard all of the grandiose adjectives: historic measure, tectonic shift, game changer. Where is the Member for Tunapuna? He gave us a few others: earth-shattering, unleashed new measures, quantum shift, landmark legislation, revolutionary, transformational.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Giant step.

**Dr. A. Browne:** No, I did not hear that part. [*Interruption*]*—*with midnight amendments. That is not giant thinking at all.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if it is all that, if this Bill is all of that—tectonic, historic and so on—why did they wait three and a half years and then give this country five days before a vote on this tectonic measure? Explain that. How many people in this country—when you listen to the media practitioners, they are all bewildered; not a single one of them understands this Hare’s formula and these principles. I wonder if even the EBC has been taken into the confidence of this Government.

Even as we speak, it is so unfair to Members who have spoken already, even on their side, because we are now starting to see the machine warming up and amendment after amendment is coming into our hands, live, during the debate because the Government realizes yet again, they are unprepared to come before the population and to submit to the voice of the people yet again; totally unprepared and inadequate. None of them: St. Augustine, Tabaquite, Caroni East, San Fernando West, the whole slew; none of them have explained the rationale or the formula or the justification for these measures at this time. They did not because they cannot.

**Mr. Imbert:** “They doh understand.”

**Dr. A. Browne:** They cannot; they are bewildered. The Member for Tabaquite told us about Hare’s formula but this approach is not Hare’s formula, it is hare-brained. It is a hare-brained approach. It is harum-scarum. It is as bad as putting someone who is under police investigation into the position of Minister of National Security—hare-brained approach, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the approach this Government has used in this fundamental matter is a direct repudiation of their very 2010 manifesto; the so-called PP manifesto; consultation, consultation, consultation. My colleagues have given the quotes, which I would not repeat, but there has been no consultation whatsoever on the issue of proportional representation for local government elections. They engaged in no explanation whatsoever for the population; not even today, really.

Then we had the Member for Tunapuna who kept telling us, “Forget the arithmetic, forget the maths; do not worry about that”, and this was a Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. Was he not? Was he not? [*Crosstalk*] Yes, and the amendments are all scrambling to correct the garbled maths, but he told us hours ago, “Forget the maths, forget the arithmetic, do not worry about that, just look at the big picture.” This is someone we entrusted our Central Bank, our economy, our budgets to—again, the judgment of the hon. Prime Minister.

That same arithmetic that he wants us to ignore and overlook will result in councillors and aldermen for the next three or, if this Government has its way, four years. “Trust us, trust us”, that is the Member for St. Augustine’s motto, his credo, “Trust us, trust us”, but they do not realize it is too late for that. It is too late for those on the other side to request trust from anyone in Trinidad and Tobago. They abused that trust for 3.5 years but in one week, with no consultation, “Forget the maths and trust us.” We do not trust you, Members of the Government, because we cannot trust you. We know that for sure.

I do not trust this Government, Madam Deputy Speaker, when they say that they consulted and informed, so I decided to check for myself. Who did they consult and who did they inform and when, besides the COP executive—what is it—executive committee or something like that, on Wednesday? That is all we heard so far. That is national consultation, to bring a fundamental, tectonic change in how people choose their representation. [*Crosstalk*]

Yes, and the COP executive—whatever it is—got it before elected parliamentarians, plus the amendments. The Member for San Fernando West has

confided now, they got the amendments before us. While we are in debate, I am speaking here and sheaves of paper are fluttering down onto the desk. Please, come on. [*Interruption*] The Member for Diego Martin North/East is trying to make me see the lighter side of this, but there is nothing light about this at all. This is ridiculous! I cannot trust them, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, they said about all this consultation and examination and they informed the citizens, so I decided to check, who did they consult and when did they inform?

The Prime Minister made her post-Cabinet announcement last week Thursday; today is Friday. There was no Bill as yet. In fact, she said that the Bill will come to the Parliament on September 06. That is what she said then. One week later, we are here for fundamental change. So one week ago it was announced and then the Member for St. Augustine engaged in an expedition here today where he—I think he had an assignment—decided to try to merge his constitutional reform work and consultations with this issue to try to confuse the population and give persons a sense, and reassure the Parliament that, “Well, we have been engaging in consultation all along” and he blurred the lines a little bit. I think that is as a song now, and all; a blurred line. Well, he blurred the lines to try to deceptively merge the constitutional reform consultation, which he has been spending millions on, to try to tell people out there who are listening—the thinking members of the population—that, “Well, we have been engaged in consultation on such matters.”

He boasted about it, yes, but I went to one of those consultations, right there in Diego Martin, and I was deeply disappointed. I am even more disappointed now because I can state definitively that no such issues arose at those consultations. They were never tabled, they were never discussed; they did not come from the panellists and they certainly did not come from any citizens who attended and participated in those consultations. So, that was another attempt by the Member for St. Augustine to hoodwink this House and members of the public that there was consultation on these measures, the introduction of proportional representation for the election/selection of aldermen for the local government system. It is not true and he needs to bear in mind that local government is not yet enshrined in the Constitution, so it never arose in the constitutional reform discussion.

But then I said, wait, all right, so that is his deceit and his consultations, but maybe I missed it otherwise. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I went online and reviewed every single media article and every single media report on local government reform that I could find from May 24, 2010 to August 29, 2013;

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Saturday, September 07, 2013*

every single one. Guess what? Not a single—so, if I missed it, every media house in this country missed it as well. Not a single passing reference, not one, whatsoever, to the use of proportional representation for the selection of aldermen at the local government level.

Just on August 08 the *Newsday*, one of their favourite newspapers after the *Sunshine*, had an article entitled “White Paper suggest extra year for Local Govt”. It talked all about different elements of local government reform, three to four years; sources in the Cabinet—there are lots of sources in the Cabinet these days, perhaps—indicated this was the approach and:

“...there were currently no plans for the local government elections to be delayed...”—but it was—“understood that a White Paper on...Reform was tabled last week and the document contains a proposal to have the Municipal Corporations Act amended to reflect a longer term for local government bodies.”

Well, we have yet to see that amendment coming to the House.

### **12.10 a.m.**

The article went on to say:

“This particular proposal was contained a policy document published by the Ministry of Local Government which also contained proposals to have municipal corporation get more pay and become full time in line with the requirements of the job.”

And it goes on and on and on. Nothing about proportional representation for election of aldermen; no one knew about it. That is why none of these media, hundreds of articles, not a single passing reference to this issue, but they want to tell us that they have consulted, they have given the opportunity for re-examination, they have included the wider population in this fundamental tectonic change in how we choose the people that represent us at the local level. There has been no consultation whatsoever on these measures. I am satisfied that is the truth, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I checked for myself. Not a single reference to proportional representation at the local level; not one passing reference. But the Member for St. Augustine told us there had been consultation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this proposal is the bright idea, as the Member for Point Fortin told us, of some advisor, some hidden advisor, as the UNC has gone into survival mode after the “greenwash” in Chaguanas West. They have gone



into survival mode and we saw that in some of the contributions here today, and the very frontline role that the COP has adopted in trying to convince the population on this particular last-ditch effort.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I checked a little further and I asked myself: was this proposal or any aspect of this ever mentioned in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago since May 24, 2010? Was it ever mentioned in the Parliament since May 24, 2010? And we had so many debates here: two SoE debates, a mangled anti-gang debate, three section 34 debates. In total we have had—and I checked—121 sittings since May 24, 2010. That sounds impressive. That sounds like a lot of work by elected Members of Parliament, but I can tell you I did the search. Not a single passing reference in 121 sittings, but they come today to talk about involving the wider population and to pretend this is just one component in their grand invisible, unheard of vision for local government.

This is part and parcel of that wider scheme that they are coming with. This is part and parcel of nothing but survival politics by the UNC because this was extracted from no wider plan; this can be found in no reference, no debate, no Bill. Not once was this mentioned. It was not mentioned for good reason because none of them knew about it at that stage, because they had not yet been “greenwashed” in Chaguanas West and their advisor—Mr. Advisor—had not yet approached the Prime Minister with this particular scheme.

They could not mention it because they did not have it. They never knew of it till survival mode. And the Member for Laventille West raised an excellent point of how are aldermen determined when independent local government candidates are elected. And there are independent candidates who have indicated they will be participating—several of them—in the upcoming local election. And how would these amendments engage, and this PR system for aldermen, engage an independent local government candidate? And independent means free of any party affiliation, or at least it used to mean that. We are seeing, you know, some different interpretations more recently.

And then across the floor, the Member for San Fernando West gave one explanation. She said proportional representation excludes independents altogether. It only deals with parties.

**Mr. Imbert:** Now they amend it.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Bizarrely. Somebody was typing in another room, listening to what was going on. It is only for parties. And then the Member for Fyzabad

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Saturday, September 07, 2013*

was stirred and he said—he corrected her. He said independents are considered parties. Independents are considered political parties and would have to list their aldermen as well.

Mass confusion in the Government, and they expect the population to be clear, and they brought amendments while we are on our feet here today. We are going to be forced to put this to a vote. They already have a majority which is crumbling as we speak. This will become law. Persons will be forced to go to the polls, employing a system which they do not understand and which the persons who foisted it on them do not understand themselves. Mr. Speaker, this is madness—  
[*Interruption*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Madam Deputy Speaker, it is ridiculous. And you are doing such a good job, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is so refreshing, the fairness and your voice alone is very refreshing. And did I mention the fairness? Yeah.

Madam Deputy Speaker, moving right along. So I do not know what is the fate of these independents. We are forcing them to become—to join a—to create a political party of at least five persons? Is that what is happening? So you cannot stand on your own—and I do not know if that might be the fate of any Member here—as an independent. You are being forced by the Government to somehow assemble others. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** They changed that.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Well, this amendment has just arrived.

**Mr. Imbert:** A party includes an independent.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Well, that is further madness as we speak. That is further madness, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is further madness.

The point is, the Government does not understand what they have brought, what they are proposing and what we have to vote on today. It was never mentioned once in 121 sittings in this session, and the Member for San Fernando West said, ironically, participation in democracy. But there is no participation in the decision. Never once mentioned! You know how many ministerial statements we have had in this House, Madam Deputy Speaker, since May 24, 2010?

**Mr. Imbert:** Would you give way?

**Dr. A. Browne:** I give way to my colleague.

**Mr. Imbert:** I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Are you aware they are now saying do not take a count of fractions when you are counting seats? Are you aware of that?

**Dr. A. Browne:** I am aware.

**Mr. Imbert:** But the arithmetic does not count, eh.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you for that wonderful intervention, Member for Diego Martin North/East—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Forget the fractions.

**Dr. A. Browne:**—because they are saying, forget the mathematics, but they are now bringing amendments to ignore the fractions after the garbled explanation, the mangled explanation, by the Member for San Fernando West. But we have to vote and it is going to become law and they are going to try to get it through the Senate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was making the point because I checked—*[Interruption]* Madam Deputy Speaker, I am making the point because I checked; we have had 63 ministerial statements since May 24, 2010. That is overfeeding the population's ear—63. Thirty in the first session, 16 in the second session, 17 in the third session—the last session. Not one single passing reference, not one solitary passing reference to proportional representation in local election for the selection of aldermen, but again, the Member for St. Augustine and his crew want us to believe this is part and parcel of a wider scheme of reform that they have lifted out caringly and brought before the population at this time.

I do not want to say—I cannot say “donkey logic” in the House, but what I would say is that cannot be acceptable given the evidence that has been presented thus far. We cannot accept it. We cannot trust them at their word. This has nothing to do with any programme of local government reform. Madam Deputy Speaker, this fits into nothing bigger than this is. This is survival politics, UNC style. It has nothing to do with consultation.

The Member for San Fernando West tried, and she did quite well in trying to do a PR job—a different kind of PR, a public relations job, on top of this particular amendment, but she could never say to us that she herself was consulted in advance and knew before two weeks ago about this specific proposal. She could never say that because she did not know. She said the COP was consulted last week Wednesday. This is a tectonic shift after 60 years of first past the post at this level—tectonic shift—and one week ago, last week Wednesday, a partner in the

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Saturday, September 07, 2013*

Government was learning about it for the first time. What about the citizens? What about the Members—the elected Members—of this House? Is this the way that we now make decisions in Trinidad and Tobago?

People would be strolling to their polling booths, running, driving to their polling booths in a few weeks, engaging in a brand new system that they have no clue about. Those they are depending on in the media to explain it to them have no clue about it, and those who brought it, Members of the Government, are absolutely and totally clueless. Exhibit A, the Member for Tabaquite who piloted the Bill, with no explanation whatsoever.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is unacceptable. But this was the plan all along, but the COP was consulted last week Wednesday after 3.5 years of governance. We were ambushed. The electorate was ambushed with this measure but the COP, apparently, also was ambushed.

If this Government has any modicum of respect for that same electorate that they claim to cherish with this Bill, if they have any respect for the democracy that they wish to make wider and broader and taller and heavier with this Bill, they would withdraw this Bill, they would suspend this debate. They would proceed with the local government election on time, under a system that this nation, this Elections and Boundaries Commission and this electorate, understand. They would take their “redwash” in October. They would take their “redwash” medication in October. They would then do their homework and study their own proposal and their own amendments that they are trying to drown us with today, and they would then present local government reform and all its sub-components in the full context and detail to the national population.

They would engage in meaningful consultation, not just the million-dollar steak and lobster Prakash Ramadhar consultations on constitutional reform, but also full proper consultation, including such matters of proportional representation for aldermen at the local level, right across Trinidad and Tobago. They would consult properly with the national population and give time for citizens to write in, to engage, to go on to their email hotlines and all the fancy things the hon. Prime Minister announced, all the measures. Citizen engagement, none of those measures are relevant here, because there is no time. They are in a rush—survival mode. There is nothing new about this politics! Nothing new about this at all!

They need to give the citizens—and that approach that I propose would give every citizen, and every voter would be able to know what they are getting into; what we, as a country, are getting into. Not even the Government knows.

This is serious business, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is no joking matter. We cannot vote this into law while ignoring the need for informed views of our constituents. Should we just feign ignorance? Should we just block our ears and assume that people out there know what they are engaging in? It does not work like that. Life does not work like that. It is not like that.

It is not like the Member for Chaguanas West giving us an entire PP Government—UNC Government—and then saying, “I am sorry. I did not know they were corrupt”. It cannot work like that for us. Good law and genuine, real reform does not work like that. You have to know what you are getting into with your eyes opened.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is not new politics. Ignore what the Member for Tunapuna said earlier; ignore what the Member for St. Augustine tried to say. This Bill, and the manner it was brought here, is not new politics. It is ugly, ancient, hasty survival politics. There is nothing new about it. It is ancient, and this is the approach we need to move away from.

The Member for St. Augustine said with this system every vote will count, and then the Member for San Fernando West made a startling interjection that the same system would stop the nuisance-type parties.

**Mr. Imbert:** Imagine. Those who get less—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. A. Browne:** Every vote would count on one hand—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Less than 25 per cent—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. A. Browne:**—but it would stop the nuisance-type parties.

**Mr. Imbert:** Twenty-four per cent is nuisance.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Which parties is she referring to? Twenty-four per cent?

**Mr. Imbert:** Twenty-four, in her words.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes, nuisance-type parties. What? Like a mosquito? A fly? But every vote will count, you know, but some of your votes will be going towards the Member for San Fernando West’s nuisance parties, not to be considered even with so-called proportional representation, and I wish she were here to withdraw that phrase because that should not remain on the *Hansard* record.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, just like the state of emergency, this Government is making dangerous anti-democratic mistakes—well, not really

mistakes, you know—transgressions; dangerous, anti-democratic transgressions just like their state of emergency, without understanding the consequences.

We have been here before and just like that state of emergency, they find themselves advocating for it by force—all of them—by overinflating the heavenly benefits it would bring to the citizen—tectonic shift. I would not go through the list—over-inflating. But that is dangerous. That is insulting to right-thinking people out there, but it is also dangerous by overselling the so-called heavenly benefits of these fantastic amendments that they are bringing with this Bill. And just like the state of emergency, that miserable illegal state of emergency, little if anything. In fact, nothing will improve in the lives of the people of this country in spite of these measures. The people, the people, the people, nothing will improve for them.

**12.25 a.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, local government is in shambles in this country. I am going to repeat that. Local government is in shambles in this country. This Bill does not fix the shambles that are all around us. Local government is underfunded, bureaucratic to an obscene degree, incompetent. Talk to any chairman of any corporation—no matter controlled by what party, talk to them—talk to any CEO, and I have spoken to many in the last few days. Talk to any of them of any regional corporation, they will tell you that there is massive pervasive interference and micromanagement from the Ministry of Local Government and even from other Ministries, and there is massive corruption as well affecting their work, contractors beholden to multiple paymasters—mass chaos, shambles.

Some of them are beholden to the ODPM, taking instructions from up there to the Ministry of Local Government, to the regional corporation itself, to the Ministry of Works, to the Drainage Division where they have now moved, to the URP, to CEPEP, to URP social and the thugs—I do not know if they are still there in the Ministry of Social Development—to the PURE Programme; beholden to all these agencies, supposedly serving the people at the local level, many of them doing nothing but committing fraud. That is the truth, all doing similar work and making similar claims, expecting, some of them, money for nothing whatsoever. That is the experience of our people with local government.

This amendment does nothing about that. Three and half years have gone, but they are telling us, overselling it for heavenly results. Your experience will improve, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while preparing for this, I went down a street in Diego Martin called Eligon Avenue—historic street—long narrow street joining the Diego Martin Main Road, almost to the Diego Martin River, Eligon Avenue—and some other streets in Diego Martin under a UNC regional corporation, but not for long. Let me tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker. On mornings, a garbage truck goes down the street to collect garbage, but you know what? It only collects garbage from the right-hand side of the road, and then later in the day—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I just want to know if you are winding up because you just have one more minute. So I am asking you if you are on your 45 minutes.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you. Well, I will complete this point and then I will welcome an extension. Madam Deputy Speaker, let me complete the garbage because you have so much experience in this area, your mind will be blown. On mornings, the garbage truck goes down Eligon Avenue and it only collects garbage on the right-hand side of the street. Do you not dare come out of your house with garbage if you are on the left. Not at all! They are not going to collect it. Then later on guess what happens? Another truck from another contractor goes down the same street, narrow street that needs paving—where is the Member for Tabaquite?—and you know what? They are collecting on the left-hand side of the street. That is the experience of our people with local government. This Bill does nothing to fix that. I thought you were going to move the extension.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time for the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central has expired.

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, you may continue.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I hear the fatigue in your voice. So with your vast experience, you realize what is going on here. This cannot be described as anything acceptable. Two contractors, two different paymasters, two different trucks, two different crews, one street, one simple narrow need to be paved street in Diego Martin like many others, and the citizens are exposed to that in their face. That is their experience with local government. But they say, “You will now have proportional representation to select your aldermen and you will get a heavenly experience. There will be great enthusiasm. People will be running to the polls now. All votes will count.”

**Mr. Imbert:** To get a third truck.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes, to get this. What, you are going to get an alderman truck coming down at night now to collect from the middle of the road? I mean, Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** In the middle of the road.

**Dr. A. Browne:**—what is going on? Just like the SoE, they are overselling the benefits. Overselling! That has dangerous consequences to the citizens because they know better. They have been dealing with this shambles for some time and nothing has improved.

In fact, in many aspects, it has gotten much worse. Three and a half years, but as I have said before, we are closer to the UNC defeat in 2015 than we are to the PNM loss in 2010. That should provide some comfort to some of our citizens. So that is the experience with local government—left-hand side, right-hand side; wanton waste and abuse at the local level. This Bill changes nothing about that, but this is emergency. This, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the emergency before we go to local election. This is what they have extracted as most meaningful despite the shambles that our local government system is in. This experience that I have described is what they are bringing new councillors and new aldermen into.

You can have the best, most intelligent, most saintly, most honest of local representatives in the system that the UNC after three and a half years has gifted to them, they are destined for, well, a very difficult experience, and the citizens are destined for an even more difficult experience because they have to live with this every single day. This is the level of governance that is closest to them and that can mean the most or hurt the most, and right now it is not meaning the most. But they care! The Member for St. Augustine, the Member for Tunapuna, the COP, the UNC, they care, they care. This Bill is a labour of love for us, for the citizens.

The Member for San Fernando West lamented that people feel they do not need to vote right now at the local level. To some extent she might be right, but the Bill will fix that. But this Bill would not fix that. This Bill will not create any of what she oversold as creating great enthusiasm to go to the polls. What, all of a sudden because you can choose an alderman indirectly, some of you who do not vote for nuisance parties, according to her? That will create the enthusiasm? This Bill will not fix that because nothing has changed in the everyday horrors that our people face treating with local government.

I will not spend much time—because my friend, the Member for Couva North, is asleep—talking about the issue of flooding because that is one of her



favourite topics. Every time I rise to talk about flooding they get very dismissive, oh, “you the flooding man”, you talking about flooding again. Madam Deputy Speaker, but you know some things can wait—like in my view, this amendment should have waited—and some things cannot. Some things cannot wait, Madam Deputy Speaker. Some things are more urgent than others, and some things are more urgent than staving off a “greenwash” or a “redwash”. We would hope not any “greenwash”, a “redwash” in Chaguanas. Yes, that is what should happen, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the shambles are there.

Two years they took to repair a simple pedestrian bridge, a footbridge over the Morne Coco River. The Morne Coco Road collapsed into the river in August 2012. They took a year to repair it and what? How many days to pull a fire truck out? I kept speaking to Minister George at the time, Minister of Works at the time, and do you know what he kept saying?—this was after a natural disaster—“Well we have to wait on approval of funds from Cabinet.” After a natural disaster that they declared a disaster zone, we have to wait. A year has passed since then. We have to wait, but in days, in hours, in minutes, a fire truck comes skating up for an inflated cost. Some things are more urgent than others. I will not dwell on it, Madam Deputy Speaker, because it can be construed as not directly relevant.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Diego Martin Regional Corporation, bless them, bless their dear hearts. They have claimed that 95 per cent of watercourses have been completely cleared in 2013. Ninety-five per cent of watercourses were cleared; flat falsehood, direct deceit. The people started sending in photos via emails, instagram, twitter and Facebook messenger; started sending in photos of the drain right outside their house and right outside their neighbours houses and through their communities. Then I embarked myself on a survey armed with my camera, photographed literally—this is just within the last three weeks—hundreds of watercourses in Diego Martin including large segments of the Diego Martin River itself, especially the northern extremes, totally overgrown completely, with trees in these watercourses. That is the experience of our people with local government. Tall bush, debris from the 2012 flood still in those watercourses, people’s walls collapsed, the debris still in the watercourses. They are more at risk now than they were then. Rubble!

Your Minister of Local Government and your Cabinet have failed them. This Bill does not absolve them of their responsibility, and that is why, Member for San Fernando West and Members of this Government, some people are not enthusiastic about running to the polls for local government election. Not because

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

they did not have the ability to vote for aldermen, indirectly; not because they are waiting, waiting on you for proportional representation; not at all. That is why they are not enthusiastic. This Bill does nothing to improve their lives or reduce their horrors.

WASA and corporation trucks busy selling water up and down the place; poor people paying taxes and then having to pay for water from these trucks that are sent out. I have reported many such cases: lack of action on request for footpaths, retaining walls, humps, roads, but they promise to do better.

**Mr. Peters:** “Allyuh sound like allyuh was never there.” [*Interruption*]

**Dr. A. Browne:** Three and half years have passed, the Member for Mayaro promised to do better, arguing with people on the news about whether they are PNM voters and so on. Three and a half years have passed, the shambles have gotten worse.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the cutting truck charging people \$1,200 to remove cutting from their yard, but taxpayers are paying for this. Councillors, some of them feel they are bigger than the Member of Parliament. People confused and holding MPs to account for local government issues by the hundreds—humps, roads, bridge, street sign, mirror, this, that, the other, retaining wall, local government issues. The MPs are being held to account, but the MPs have no control whatsoever over those local government issues and the corporations do not answer to the MPs. People are people, but that is the experience with local government in this country. This Bill does nothing to fix that, but this is the Government’s most urgent priority. Why? Because they have learned from the “greenwash”, they are seeing the coming “redwash” and they are trying to stave it off. [*Desk thumping*] That is why; that is why this is their priority. It has nothing to do with caring about anyone, except their own ability to have a toenail in these corporations, a toehold or however it is phrased.

This Bill changes none of that. It will not create any of that enthusiasm, Madam Deputy Speaker. Leptospirosis, dengue, other diseases strive with mosquitoes, rats; a plague in many municipalities and families are experiencing this. So why would they become enthusiastic? Give me one reason. They will not, they shall not, because this scenario will not improve with this Bill. The best of councillors, so little can be done. This Bill will not solve anything. This Bill will not change the job situation at the local government level; friends and family only getting jobs in most of these corporations. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** [*Inaudible*]

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes! Gangsters taking control under the UNC and I discussed some of this with the Member for Tabaquite. Gangsters, seizing equipment—listen to what is going on now—seizing equipment and holding the equipment hostage; ransom. You have to pay to get back your heavy equipment now.

**Mr. Peters:** Never did that in—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. A. Browne:** That is what is going on. That is what is going on. But the Member for Mayaro wants enthusiasm, run to the polls at local election time because you now can select your aldermen via proportional representation, bringing those aldermen into the shambles that the UNC has made of local government in this country. Madness and insult to the population! [*Desk thumping*] Friends and family getting jobs!

**12.40 a.m.**

They are not dealing with the most troubling aspects of local government, they are dealing with the least troubling aspects and expecting us to respond and give them their vote on this measure. Why the rush? Why the rush if not survival politics? Explain the rush on this particular one. They are afraid of October. What was the movie? *Hunt for Red October*. They are afraid of “red” October because that is what is coming.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just conclude with a message to the population, as they assess the rush with which this Government has brought this Bill and that EBC report that none of them understand, none of them read and none of the affected MPs have spoken to their constituents about. I have a message to the population as they assess the rushed, “vaille-que-vaille” manner that this Government has taken with the proportional representation Bill and the EBC report. I want the population to listen—they have listened—and I want them to listen to the lack of clarity from the other side, to the mangled explanations and non-explanations, to the contradictions from Members on the other side.

I want them to observe and engage as citizens, the lack of opportunity to engage as citizens in any referendum despite all their promises; or any consultation, despite all their promises embedded in the manifesto. Observe all of that! Look at their *modus operandi* in these matters. But it is going to a vote. The citizens are going to be held hostage to the majority of the UNC while pretending to expand democracy. Look at it, assess the contradictory explanations, assess the corruption that was revealed earlier by the Member for Chaguanas West, and he

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

should know about corruption. He should know about corruption. But they need to—citizens need to look and learn from the experts sometimes; listen to the experts.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The expert?

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes, you know that! You know that!

**Dr. Rambachan:** You know better than I do! You are speaking about that.

**Dr. A. Browne:** We both know that. Madam Deputy Speaker, all that corruption that was revealed. Assess the fact that they say this is integral to plans for local government over the past few years when none of them knew about it before two weeks ago, before the recent by-election certainly. Assess the fact that after three and a half years of their local government experience with at least, well, three Ministers now, the experience for citizens has been so bad: road conditions, drain cleaning, retaining walls, drainage issues, landslides, trees leaning over houses cannot be cut, filthy dumping grounds all over the country, overgrown verges, collapsed bridges. None of that has been improved. Examine that! All that has gotten worse in your lives over the last three and a half years.

The message for the citizens, think on these things, consider these matters, listen to those on the other side and their attempts, and vote this so-called PP Government out of office—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Oh yes, oh yes!

**Dr. A. Browne:**—at every single opportunity you get. Tobago, well done to the voters of Tobago. Chaguanas West, well, not so well done at all. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Peters:** “Cause they did not vote for PNM!”

**Dr. A. Browne:** Not so well done at all! You see, the secret—the ILP getting vex. Not so well done, [*Desk thumping*] but well done because they rejected the UNC but they should have voted for Avinash. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, much better candidate than the current MP.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Yeah, yeah, without a doubt!

**Dr. A. Browne:** You would not agree with that, do not get me started. The Member for Mayaro should be very silent, chagrined.

**Mr. Peters:** For what?

**Dr. A. Browne:** Madam Deputy Speaker, local election, it should be PNM all the way! All councillors and all aldermen! All! [*Desk thumping*] And at the

upcoming general election, whenever it should come, God alone knows, they should be punished—the Members on the other side—for today’s ambushed survival politics; foisting these measures for their convenience only with no consultation whatsoever. They claim to be championing democracy and even in doing so, they are acting in the most anti-democratic manner in this House and to the population. Think on these things, my friends [*Crosstalk*] think on these things, and administer the most severe punishment to the UNC, the COP and the ILP as well. Listen to them! Their goal standard is the PNM. [*Crosstalk*] Their goal standard is the PNM, so they and all, even they, should vote PNM at the next election. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Oh yeah! [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Browne:** Finish it!

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Finish it up now! [*Desk thumping*] Excellent, Amery!

**Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Recycled speech.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** You keep quiet!

**Miss A. Hospedales:** I am actually happy to contribute to this debate on the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2013. I would like to say that time and time again just listening to all the Members speaking, I am reminded of so many flawed pieces of legislation that this Government has brought, and again, I can say that you all—“yuh just do not know what yuh doing”.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Really?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** It is a fact!

**Miss A. Hospedales:** The piece of legislation that they have brought to this House really demonstrates their level of incompetence, it also highlights—you know, it is so flawed that I do not think that any right-minded citizen would want to take the time out to read this piece of legislation.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What is it all about?

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Not only that—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** “Yuh want us to repeat?”

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—but they actually brought two sets of amendments, you know, they so confused.

**Hon. Member:** Two sets?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Yeah.

**Dr. A. Browne:** They amended the amendments!

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Hot off the press!

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Right! That is correct! They amended the amendments and, you know, it really tells on your—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** Tell us what is flawed! [*Continuous crosstalk*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** We all told you already.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Tell us what is flawed.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—level of—your ability to draft legislation that is credible, legislation that can stand up to scrutiny. You all have not been able to do that.

One of the things, you know, is so—I do not know. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am almost lost for words because the Members on the opposite side always come to try to justify these flawed pieces of legislation and for some reason or the other, they are always found wanting continuously.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I took the time out to read the Policy on Local Government Transformation and Modernization—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Ha! You did not do that!

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—put forward by the Ministry of Local Government—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** They did not do it! They did not do that.

**Dr. A. Browne:** At all!

**Miss A. Hospedales:** And the previous Minister of Local Government, his face is highlighted [*Crosstalk*] on the cover of their policy document. [*Crosstalk*] Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, I took the time out and I read the document to try to find out whether or not any mention was made of proportional representation in the selection of the aldermen and I could not find anything. What the document actually stated—it did make reference to aldermen. It did

make reference, but what it said is that in each council, three special aldermen: one representing youth male, one representing youth female, [*Continuous crosstalk*] the other, women and children.

What they indicated as well, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that there is a global trend moving towards the inclusion of youths, women and even representatives for children in local government, in order to ensure that the local government institutions are much more democratic. So it really begs the question: where did this whole concept of proportional representation with respect to the selection of the aldermen come from? Where did that come from? Whose idea is it?

The other thing I took note of in their policy document are three specific things. They said that in the first phase in the implementation of their policy and programme of evaluation and monitoring they are actually going to go out and do public consultations. We have heard it over and over and over today, there has been no evidence, none whatsoever—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Absolutely none!

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—of them consulting with the people.

I remember in 2010 during their election campaign, they said that they would consult with the people, consult with the people. Again, empty words, Madam Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** “They doh listen!”

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—because they have not consulted. There has been no consultation on this piece of legislation. I am sure even the members of the media, they came face to face with the information earlier on—yesterday actually, because we have been here for so many hours. They came face to face with the information yesterday. There has been no consultation whatsoever. People are so confused. They hear about proportional representation being used to select aldermen but that is it. They have not really grasped the understanding.

As the Member for Point Fortin said: where is the communication plan? Where is the communication plan? There is none, because their intention was to railroad us through the Parliament—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Exactly! That is their style.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—and seek to implement this piece of legislation so that they can implement their sinister plan.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What is the sinister plan?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** “Yuh did not hear it? Yuh heard it many times over. Being disruptive.”

**Miss A. Hospedales:** You know, even in one of the Members’ contribution, they said that they are going to re-examine the first-past-the-post system, but there has not even been any consultation on that. There are no recommendations coming forward. None whatsoever! And they are coming here to tell us that they are implementing proportional representation when, you know, there is not even a document stating that, okay, we have had 25 consultations throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, and these are the findings, these are the recommendations. There is nothing like that! [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the other thing they said is that they will focus on developing and approving new local government legislation. Is this the legislation you are talking about? Is this the legislation?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Cannot be! Cannot be!

**Hon Member:** Impossible!

**Miss A. Hospedales:** It really cannot be the legislation focusing on local government reform. They said as well that in terms of the specifics of the legislation that there would be amendments to the current Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 and there would be a programme to implement those parts or sections of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 as amended. They gave specifics in terms of what they intended to do. The review of staff structure and the establishment of the municipal corporations and the Borough of Chaguanas; the reclassification of chief officers other than CEOs; the decentralizing of the internal audit function; strengthening the municipal police service; strengthening operating and service delivery systems. They have not brought any piece of legislation or any clause in this particular piece of legislation stating that these are the things that they are focusing on and this is what local government reform is all about. It is not about the aldermen. What authority do they really have? What freedom would they really get?

**Dr. Rambachan:** You do not understand.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Well, Sir, you say so, but I understand exactly what I am saying.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Exactly, exactly!

**Dr. Rambachan:** “Expand yuh mind. Vision.”



**Miss A. Hospedales:** “You be a little quiet and yuh will learn something.”

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Standing Order 40(a) and (b); of 40(b) and (c).

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the other thing they said, in the third phase; they said that the third phase involves the development of a comprehensive plan after the new and revised local government legislation for the transformation and modernization of the local government system. Could you tell me how does the application of the proportional representation system to the selection of aldermen modernize and transform the local government system? How does it do that? I really, really do not understand. If you have the answer, you can tell me at the end, Member for Tabaquite, if you understand it. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I really do not understand them when they say that they are seeking to modernize and transform the system by bringing this issue of proportional representation.

The other thing I would like to make reference to is the Prime Minister in her address. She made an address to the officials of the Commonwealth Local Government Conference held in the UK of March 2011. And what she said? [Crosstalk]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Hmmm! That is when the—Chandresh Sharma went!

**Miss A. Hospedales:** She said that—she made a commitment that there would be a more determined effort to energize local government and she was telling all her colleagues at the time—[Interruption]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Uh! They on a trip! They would say anything!

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—who would have been present—regional and international colleagues—at that conference. [Continuous crosstalk] Yes, they say all sorts of things.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** [Inaudible] joyriding!

**Miss A. Hospedales:** All sorts of things. [Continuous crosstalk] So hear what she said—she said I—well, quoting her:

“In my own country, I intend to achieve this by effecting the following:”

And she went on to say: [Laughter]

“Giving Constitutional protection to Local Government

Increasing the financial resources available to local government authorities, and even allowing some level of borrowing for special projects.”

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

This has not been—[*Interruption*] [*Glass fell and broke*]

**12.55 a.m.**

**Miss A. Hospedales:** [*Interruption*] “Ooh”, the Member for Tabaquite is nervous, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Member:** We can understand that.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** She also said that they were—

“Providing state financed offices for local government representatives so as to impact upon more effective representation.”

—partially done. Madam Deputy Speaker, she said as well they were—

“Examining functions which are now managed by Central Government and delegating these to local government given the affinity of the function to local communities.”

This has not been done. She also talked about the—

“Creation of full time local government representatives.”

“Dey still waiting.”

“Construction of town halls in every district and utilizing them for regular town meetings.”

I wish I had one in Arouca/Maloney constituency; still waiting.

“Increasing the involvement of NGOs in the work of local authorities especially social service delivery.”

The NGOs are non-existent in the work of local government.

“Training of local representatives in management and leadership skills, as well as skills related to the organization of people and communities.”

Still wanting.

“Formulating national budgets with greater inputs from local communities thus creating a needs driven and needs fulfilment model of governance.”

That too was not done.

Then she also talked about—

“Local government must be assisted to fulfil a primary mandate which is people-centred development. AND...”—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** “Nah”.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—a, n, d, in capitals—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** “Dai talk.”

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—“The election of three special representatives...”

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Rhetoric.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**

“...in each local authority, via, male and female youth representatives and a representative for women and children.”

Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Dr. Browne:** This is the Prime Minister of this country?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes.

**Dr. Browne:** Trinidad and Tobago?

**Miss A Hospedales:** This is the Prime Minister of this country—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** How much that trip cost?

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—stating that all of these things will be done to reform local government in Trinidad and Tobago—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** The then Minister of Local Government, Mr. Chandresh Sharma.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—but the only thing that they have done so far is brought this piece of legislation that says that aldermen must be selected through the process of proportional representation. Is that local government reform? Is that local government modernization? Is that local government transformation?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** That was a good trick. That is what it was.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Madam Deputy Speaker, it is certainly not and these are just empty words because when we expect them to bring the legislation that will strengthen local government reform, they have not done that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to talk about the MORI polls. Right? The MORI polls. It was actually, I think, the 19<sup>th</sup> wave of the MORI polls on local government performance provide the perspective of the burgesses on the distribution of goods and services by their regional corporations. Madam Deputy Speaker, the MORI polls revealed the following, and I hope the Member for

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Tabaquite listens—I know you are Minister of Works and Infrastructure now—but you can convey the information. It stated that the—

“Areas identified for improvement in local areas/neighbourhoods...”

These are the concerns expressed by the burgesses, not the concerns expressed by the Members in this House. [*Interruption*] It was for the period May 24 to July 15, 2011, Sir, Member, right? It states:

“Areas identified for improvement in local areas/neighbourhoods include:

Roads (38%)

Drainage (34%)

Facilities for young people (23%)”

Then it goes on to state that—

“Areas for Service improvements based on the highest level of public dissatisfaction are:

Local Government Body (41%)”

Madam Deputy Speaker, the quality and the quantity and the availability of secondary and local roads, bridges, drains, recreational facilities and markets are all a concern to the burgesses. I would talk a little about the burgesses of the Bon Air/Arouca/Cane Farm, Mausica/Maloney and Macoya/Trincity areas which fall within the constituency of Arouca/Maloney. Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Interruption*] many of the residents, just imagine in one community, the Bon Air/Arouca/Cane Farm community—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Converted to a cough.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—the Bon Air community—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** He converted it to a cough.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—there has not been road patching for almost three years. All they have done is come and fill the holes with gravel and that is it.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Terrible!

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Right. The holes just keep getting bigger and bigger and bigger. We started our own initiative by filling the holes with concrete but, you know, I mean, that is the responsibility of the regional corporation. We should not have to take money out of our own pockets, purchase the cement, pay a mason to actually seal the holes—

**Mr. Peters:** Why? Why you must not do that?

**Miss A. Hospedales:** We should not have to do that.

**Mr. Peters:** Why not?

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Because that is the responsibility—

**Mr. Peters:** That is your civic duty.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—of the Tunapuna/Piarco—

**Mr. Peters:** Civic duty.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—Regional Corporation.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** “You speaking?”

**Miss A. Hospedales:** That is the responsibility of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. Madam Deputy Speaker, another thing: in the communities of Bon Air and Maloney, there are box drains and those box drains are covered over with metal grills.

**Mr. Peters:** That is your civic duty.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Those drains have not been cleaned in three years. Just imagine some of the drains, they are so muddy, they have grass growing in them and all sorts of garbage. I actually sent a comprehensive list to the Chairman, the CEO and copied to the Minister as well, to indicate to them that these are the major causes of flooding in a community. If you do not clean the drains the water would not have a free flow and they will spill over to the roads and stuff like that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, even in terms of the recreational ground, I remember coming to the House and talking about the sports day on May 30 at one of our recreational grounds and the grass was so high, the marchers, the runners, everybody had to be running through tall grass because the regional corporation refused to maintain the recreational ground. Apart from that, the exercise equipment: many of those recreational grounds have exercise equipment that is falling apart and there is no programme to ensure that the exercise equipment is repaired on a continuous basis.

Apart from that, Madam Deputy Speaker, just imagine it took over—almost a year—for a coconut tree that was hanging over a walk to be cut because the coconuts on the tree posed a major danger to the residents who would normally

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

commute back and forth on that specific walk. You know when that coconut tree was cut? When I came to the House and I raised the issue. That is when the coconut tree was cut, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Apart from that, you have overgrown grass. For the last three years I have been appealing to the regional corporation to cut the grass behind the houses on Seventh Avenue, Bon Air Gardens because the grass actually is on a river bank, just bordering the houses on that particular avenue. They have refused even though I have appealed to them, written to them, gone to statutory meetings, complained to them about it; they have refused to cut the grass.

Madam Deputy Speaker, local government reform is about improving the services to the burgesses in the various electoral districts. It is not about bringing a piece of legislation about increasing the number of aldermen through the system of proportional representation. How does that address the needs of the burgesses in the various communities? How does it address it? And the issue of garbage collection, Madam Deputy Speaker; school repair; the Bon Air Primary School has a major issue.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** “Nah. Up by you too?”

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes. They made a request to have the floor tiled. When the contractor came on board, the contractor said he refused to do it because he is not getting paid. He had previous jobs and he had not gotten paid for them. He does not have the money to begin the work. He refused to do the work. Madam Deputy Speaker, something is wrong with the Government’s system. Something is wrong with the UNC-A, government institutions—

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Very.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—and the way in which—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** You just hit the nail on the head.

**Hon. Member:** “How much time yuh got?”

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—they deliver goods and services to the members of this great nation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, additionally, the Maloney Government Primary School, I even mentioned it to the Minister of Education last term, that the library was infested with pigeons. The teachers come to school on mornings to meet pigeons all over the school, on their desks; the faeces are here, there and everywhere. It is really, really—

**Dr. Browne:** Oh no, it is a health risk.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** It is a health risk and some of the teachers and the children are actually falling ill as a result of the contact with those things.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** It is frustrating.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** So Madam Deputy Speaker, I really do not know. So when they are talking about local government, that this piece of legislation and the proportional representation system in terms of the selection of the aldermen, it really causes me to have to express concern—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** A disconnect.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—because—yes, they are disconnected from reality. In their reality they are just focused on achieving their political agenda but in reality there are thousands of people across Trinidad and Tobago who are crying out for better service delivery where local government is concerned. So really, again, how does proportional representation in the selection of aldermen address the needs of all these burgesses? It does not, it does not address the needs of these burgesses and, Madam Deputy Speaker, what the Members on the opposite side failed to tell us is: what are the needed reforms to ensure that the goods and services are delivered to the burgesses? They failed to tell us that.

They have not told us. What are the needed reforms? What do you intend to do? Where is the legislation that you said that you are actually going to be bringing? In their policy document they identified critical issues that needed to be addressed. Those are the issues that should have been presented here today, these critical issues. They said they needed to have a legislative and regulatory governance framework, the roles and the responsibilities of local government needed to be redefined, they needed to take a second look at the structure of the organization; the human resource and productivity.

Productivity is so low, just imagine it is defined—they said that the productivity at the regional corporations is even lower than URP and CEPEP. We know the workers at CEPEP work but the URP, it is being considered to be lower than URP? Wow! You know, so that is a severe, a major issue, and you should have been bringing legislation to deal with those issues, so after the October 23 election there will be implementation of the different areas in terms of administration and all the other areas.

The issue of infrastructure and service delivery, again, financing modality; the management systems and business processes; community involvement and

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

participation; regional planning and development; local government boundaries, the need to redefine them in so many instances; public health and environment; information communication; ICT technology. I remembered in our local government plan, there was a significant plan for ensuring that ICT was made available to the burgesses.

The municipal policing; disaster preparedness and management; roles of the association of local government authorities—Madam Deputy Speaker, all of this they have set out as critical issues to be addressed and yet still they have bypassed that and brought this piece of legislation that is not even critical. What about the selection of aldermen through proportional representation is more critical than these critical issues? I really, really do not understand it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the submission of the list of the aldermen for selection, I do not even know how much more important this is than the critical issues that they have identified, or are identified in their policy document. How critical is it to determine which alderman, how many aldermen, get positioned in a particular regional corporation based on the number of valid votes cast in the election divided by the number of seats in each council that is designated for the aldermen? That is not important. That is not important to the burgesses. It is not important.

Is that going to better increase service delivery?

**Hon. Member:** No, no.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** The answer is no. It will not better improve service delivery in any way. It will not improve efficiency and it will not make the regional corporations more effective.

**1.10 a.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the words of the Member for Tunapuna, he said: “This cycle of political paralysis must be broken”; and I say that, this cycle of political paralysis that the UNC Government has placed this country in, we declare it must be broken. You ignored the voices of the people. You ignored the findings of the MORI polls. You ignored the views of those very, very—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** The people will ignore them.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—concerned burgesses, with respect to the fact that they are not receiving the goods and the services that are to be delivered by the regional corporations. You have ignored them. You have bypassed them in



pursuit of your sinister agenda to implement the selection of aldermen through proportional representation. You have ignored the people. I really pray that—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** The price.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—people across Trinidad and Tobago are listening right now. They have ignored you! They have ignored you and they have run. They actually have run ahead to seek to implement their sinister plan of proportional representation in the selection of aldermen. This cycle of political paralysis again, I say, must be broken. It must be broken in this country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another thing I would like to highlight—I just want, if for some reason, the Members on the other side do not know what local government reform is all about, they made reference to the new wave of local government transformation and modernization. They stated that there was a thought-provoking statement on local government reform outlined in the 2006 local government draft White Paper. Who created that in 2006? A PNM document. They made reference to the *White Paper on Local Government Reform*.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Why the PNM did not implement it?

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Madam Deputy Speaker, this is what they said; this is what they said. They made reference to that which was stated in a PNM document in 2006, the *Draft White Paper on Local Government Reform*. It says that:

“Reform of the Local Government System is the pathway towards fulfillment of a covenant between Government and the people to mutually work towards the improvement of the quality of life of citizens through the delivery of...public services and amenities, which are compatible with local needs and expectations.”

What does the use of the proportional representation system to select aldermen have to do with the improvement of the quality of life of the citizen through the delivery of public services and amenities which are compatible with local government needs and expectations? I have not a clue and I am sure the Members on the other side, they are clueless because proportional representation has nothing to do with the improvement of the quality of life of citizens through the delivery of public services and amenities which are compatible with local needs and expectations. It has nothing to do with that.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to make reference to clause 6, proposed section 12 of the Bill. It speaks to the fact that:

“(1) Parties fielding candidates in an election under section 11 for a Municipality or Corporation shall, at the time of nomination of the candidates for Councillors, nominate candidates for Aldermen on a list to be known as the ‘List of Aldermen’.

(2) The quantum of names on the List of Aldermen to be submitted by each party in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be equal in number to the number of Councillors to be elected in each...”

I want to ask the Member for Tabaquite if he can state what guarantee do we have that this process is going to be a transparent one? What guarantee? Yes, you are going to publish all the names, et cetera—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Browne:** The guarantee is non-transparent.

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—but we are accustomed to hearing of very, very, very, non-transparent actions of Members of the Government. We heard, yes, we heard some earlier. We heard many examples. I must ask because when you hear of the mother of a Minister being a regional coordinator for the Food Card Programme you have to be very, very, very, very—

**Dr. Browne:** Ohhh, Sangre Grande!

**Miss A. Hospedales:**—concerned about transparency. *[Desk thumping]*

**Dr. Browne:** Aye, aye, aye.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** When you hear of the cousin of another Minister being the chairman of a regional corporation, you have to be very, very, very concerned about transparency.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the selection process is open for abuse. The selection process for aldermen, I would say—is based on the history of the UNC-A Government—the selection process of these aldermen is open for abuse and it can result in the friends and relatives of senior Members, senior Government officials, being selected, rather than the persons who are qualified for the positions. In many of the instances that we have heard, the individuals that have been appointed have no qualifications or their qualifications do not match the qualifications for the job that they are actually placed in.

**Hon. Member:** I feel it is the first case—no qualifications.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to just make reference to the extensive work on local government reform that was done in the past by the then PNM Minister of Local Government, Minister Hazel Manning. The end result of the local government reform initiatives in the Ministry of Local Government then, was to ensure that there was a system for more efficient and effective local government and there were regional development plans. I read the regional development plan for the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation.

Two examples I want to highlight in the plan. The plan indicated that the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation would be known as a university town because there were three significant universities in the area. So there would have been significant investment in developing the area as a university town, making sure that there would have been housing and transportation available, et cetera, for persons desirous of studying in the three universities that surrounded the area, as well as the—in the plan, it stated that the Trincity area would have been known as a—part of the Trincity area would be known as the Trincity Business Centre.

Local government reform at that time focused on administrative changes to make it more efficient. They sought to make the CEO, the Chief Executive Officer of the regional corporation more independent and the regional corporations would have been given the freedom to operate, the freedom also to contract out, and the day-to-day maintenance of the regional corporations, with respect to the delivery of services would have been readily done, as against the problems that are encountered; not just by Members on this side you know; not just by the burgesses in the areas that fall under our purview but every single Member of Parliament can give examples of how challenging it is, with respect to the delivery of services to burgesses.

All these things and more were documented just for the passing—all these things and more were documented and all that was really needed was for them to take the legislation, revise it, amend it, bring it to the House, pass it and seek to implement what would have been stated. Madam Deputy Speaker, the reform initiatives undertaken by the last PNM administration would have revolutionized local government.

Again, I want to go back. So we talked about—giving a few examples of what would have been done under the PNM administration. I would like to ask, again, the Member for Tabaquite: what benefit does an increase in aldermen bring to local government reform? What benefit does it bring to modernization and transformation of the regional corporations? And the answer to this is none. It

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MISS HOSPEDALES]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

brings no benefit. The aldermen cannot do anything. What authority do they have? What can they really do to make local government more efficient and effective? What can they do? They can do nothing.

In closing, I would just like to say, again, that the Bill is flawed. There is a sinister, as the Member for Point Fortin said, a dark sinister motive behind it and it deserves to be withdrawn.

Just making reference to the Member for St. Augustine. The Member for St. Augustine, I really, really pity him, you know. He said that a healthy distrust is good. I do not understand what that means. A healthy distrust, is good? Is there something really as a healthy distrust Madam Deputy Speaker?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** That is how they operate.

**Miss A. Hospedales:** Madam Deputy Speaker, distrust, we all know, leads to insecurity, instability. I would hope that the Member for St. Augustine would have come out and tried to initiate some measure of trust in the members of the population; to help them to recognize that, listen, what we are doing you can trust us in the process. But rather than saying that, he is saying: “Do not trust us because what we are doing is sinister.” It really is not to your benefit and it really would not modernize. It would not transform. It would not reform local government. Do not trust them. Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

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

**Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh** (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker for the opportunity to make a contribution to this— [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** Make it short. Make it short.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:**—Bill under review in this honourable House this morning. I see that we have not heeded the advice of His Excellency the President— [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** No, you have an opportunity now.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:**—not to debate into the wee hours of the morning—

**Mr. Peters:** You have an opportunity.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:**—such is that; very late in the morning.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Eighteen hours.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** Madam Deputy Speaker, listening to this debate I was getting a feeling—listening to the arrogance, seeing the arrogance displayed, demonstrated by the Members opposite, the reluctance to even heed the contributions of the Members on this side of this honourable House; the contributions, on a very, very, critical and important issue like proportional representation—the complete rejection in part of the views expressed by my colleagues, saying that we do not want proportional representation, which is not true. I felt, at times, that this is an exercise in futility.

I heard the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for Diego Martin North/East both say that: “While the PNM has traditionally advocated first past the post, times are changing, times are evolving. And if it is the people wish proportional representation we are willing to debate the issue. We are willing to listen and debate the issue if a proper piece of legislation, a proper Bill, is brought to this honourable House.” But what they have brought today does not give us much to go on. We are willing but it does not give us much to go on, in respect of a debate on an extremely critical issue like proportional representation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East tried his best and did an excellent job of demonstrating that the allocation of aldermen for a constituency, as defined under the Eleventh Schedule, is a convoluted and flawed process. He tried to show that the proportionality that this Government is seeking will not materialize with this sort of mathematical calculation. This is a very complex mathematical calculation that the Member for San Fernando West tried to simplify and she did a very bad job of it. It will not bring any equity, [*Desk thumping*] nor will it not make proportional representation [*Crosstalk and laughter*] a meaningful reality.

**1.25 a.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is enough to confuse the general public, and the public is indeed asking questions. They want to know what this is about. Nobody is really explaining to them what this is about, and they are also asking, will the EBC be ready given the short time frame? They are concerned about that. They are concerned about the training of personnel to effectively and efficiently execute this new process, and they are wondering whether the integrity of the process be compromised at any stage. These are some of the questions that the public are grappling with, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** Madam Deputy Speaker. Having said that, I would like to refer to an article entitled: “Consider EBC from the website: [sabhlokcity.com/2012/08/notes-arguments-against-proportional-representation-1...](http://sabhlokcity.com/2012/08/notes-arguments-against-proportional-representation-1...)” [*Crosstalk*] This very short excerpt that I am going to read now, will underscore what I mean by the complexity of this process of mathematically calculating the number of aldermen per party:

“The system of proportional representation is sufficiently complicated and beyond the comprehension of an average voter - a complex and tedious problem with the intricacies of preferences and transferring of votes.

Moreover, it places voters at the mercy of the counting authorities. In the List system there is an additional danger of corruption. Prospective candidates are tempted to use unfair and corrupt methods to get their names included in the party list.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, we cannot take this Bill lightly, there are many pros and cons. This is a debate and what I do not understand and will never understand in this honourable House, is that when Members on this side try to offer a sensible alternative or try to demonstrate a pro against the con, or a con against the pro, the Members opposite do not appreciate it. They do not appreciate that balance we bring to the debate. They do not appreciate our constructive criticism in trying to iron out the kinks and presenting or trying to move to very good law, good legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the *Oxford Dictionary* gives us two definitions of reform:

1. Amending parliamentary representation; and
2. A radical change for the better in political and/or social or religious affairs.

I am not going to deal with religious affairs here because that is not what we are about, but I must say that political ramifications do incur social implications in respect of social services to the public.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is indeed purporting to make amendments in parliamentary representation, but the question I must ask is: how would these amendments radically transform the way the operations of the municipal

corporations are conducted so that they become more effective and efficient and redound to the benefit of the burgesses? Madam Deputy Speaker, we must remember that these burgesses we are talking about are also our constituents, so we are very, very concerned.

As I said there are many pros and cons to this issue of proportional representation in respect of the selection of aldermen. While this talk for some, especially for those on the other side, sounds all good—it sounds good to you all—the question of reform raises many more fundamental and critical issues that need to be addressed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, currently the operations of the corporations are hamstrung because of insufficient funding from central government, all designed to frustrate the operations of the corporations, particularly in the PNM-controlled corporations. The hon. Minister frequently claims that central government gives the municipal corporations sufficient funding to manage their affairs and that they are unable—he claims they are unable to spend them because of all the unspent balances that are left at the end of the financial year. What the hon. Minister does not say and what he does not disclose is that the release of those funds is dependent on the Minister signing off on them, signing his approval for those funds to be released. And this is because political agendas often supersede the needs of the corporations and their burgesses.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to know how additional aldermen will address and resolve this problem, because this problem of funding to corporations and the Minister not signing off to release funds in a timely manner, is indeed a critical problem and hampers the operations of the corporations. I want to know how an additional alderman, an alderman per party will address this situation. These issues have to be addressed from central government.

Mr. Speaker—Madam Deputy Speaker—I am sorry. I am so used to Mr. Speaker—the PNM-controlled corporations are always severely constrained in respect of funding for the construction of minor roads, box drains and retaining walls. Indeed, their operations have been reduced to collecting garbage, cutting bush, spraying for mosquitoes, baiting rats and delivering water in areas that do not enjoy a regular supply of pipe-borne water.

In this regard, Madam Deputy Speaker, the central government, I have to say, has been micromanaging and mismanaging local governments, so that the State's assets are not properly utilized to the benefit of the citizens. How are additional aldermen going to solve this issue?

**Dr. Browne:** They could bring in an alderman and fix all that.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that any reform should address permitting corporations, as the Member for Diego Martin West stated in his contribution, to collect and keep their taxes and spend those moneys to undertake infrastructural and other improvements in their respective municipalities in very much the same way as it is done in the Tobago House of Assembly.

As the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, I would welcome any reform that will facilitate the efforts of the municipal corporations in my constituency, to rehabilitate the physical infrastructure in my constituency unimpeded by political interference. You see, the selection of additional aldermen in terms of the number of parties that have gotten their councillors elected, Madam Deputy Speaker, is not a solution to the issues that are plaguing local government; certainly not a solution. I would like to see the issuing of funds and the devolution of authority to the municipal corporations. I would like to see that effected so that we can see more meaningful infrastructural development in our corporations.

In respect of my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to refer to the repair of minor roads in areas such as Gonzales. I refer particularly to Augustine Lane, which collapsed two years ago and houses are being threatened and it is very inconvenient for people to access their homes. Nothing has been done. The funding for such a project is beyond the corporation and needs the help of the central government, but the central government will not release the funds for the corporation to get this done. [*Interruption*] I want to know how proportional representation will address this.

Albert Lane off Belmont Valley Road, the very same thing, Madam Deputy Speaker, the road collapsed over two years ago; houses are being threatened. We have Unity Avenue; Upper Belmont Valley Road; Layan Hill in Belmont; Julian Trace in Cascade; St. George's Hill, St. Ann's; Hutton Road in St. Ann's. We have minor roads and steps in Casablanca in Cascade. We have repairs and minor roads in Fondes Amandes as well as Upper Ariapita in St. Ann's.

What about the restoration of the historic buildings such as the Magnificent Seven and the President's House? I see they are beginning restoration on the President's House, probably that would have been finished already had the corporation been given the funding and the authority to do so.



What about the churches? And I will make special mention here of the St. Francis RC Church in Belmont, which is a historical site, and this is where I worship on a Sunday. I would like to see that church restored. We are now in a tent and the church, that lovely historical site is now in a state of disrepair.

I would have expected, Madam Deputy Speaker, that any local government reform would have addressed the devolution of authority from central government to the municipal corporations. Any reform should speak to the vesting in the corporations the power to effectively and efficiently manage their affairs in the best interest of their burgesses. Any reform should ensure that the corporations have some sort of reliable revenue stream so they are able to manage their own finances independent of the interference and constraints of central government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what is worrying to me and indeed to all my colleagues, because we did all express the same sentiment, that no public consultation on this new radical change was held. There was no referendum. Who were the NGOs consulted? Was the law association even brought into the picture? We know the Opposition was never consulted. This we realized was not even part of their manifesto. This Bill proposing proportional representation, where did it come from? It came out from nowhere. It came like a thief in the night, like a bolt of lightning—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Like a Hamid Ghany—[*Inaudible*]

**Hon. Member:** From a white hat.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:**—but just because this Government has a simple majority which is needed to pass this Bill in a very autocratic manner, it decided to shove—and I say shove—this piece of legislation down the throats of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago a mere five weeks before local government election.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to ask, what is the rationale of this UNC-dominated partnership for this radical move on the eve of the local government election? The UNC-dominated partnership; note I did not say “People’s Partnership”, I just said “UNC-dominated partnership”, because the word “people” fell out sometime ago. The people of Trinidad and Tobago do not want this UNC-dominated Government.

**1.40 a.m.**

More and more the population is rejecting this Government. They rejected it completely and overwhelmingly in Tobago and they did so also in Chaguanas and all over the country. The talk is—because you all do not listen to the people—you

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[MRS. MC INTOSH]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

all say that you are in touch with them, but you are not. We have been warning you and you have been laughing at us and scoffing in our faces and we have been telling you, but it is catching up with you. All over the country, Madam Deputy Speaker, the talk is, “We do not want this Government; we have to get rid of this Government; this is the worst Government this country has ever seen.” Madam Deputy Speaker, the court of public opinion has already adjudicated against this UNC-dominated partnership. There is no “people” in this partnership. The “people” have gone.

I heard the Member for St. Augustine and the Member for San Fernando West—we are talking about the COP—I think, if they take stock of themselves—and they are not; their feet are not on the ground; his head is in the air. If they take stock of themselves, they will see, it is the Member—both Members—if they have two other Members with them and if they look behind, there is no one behind them; no one behind them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, even the Prime Minister’s approval ratings are down. When we look at the *Express* newspaper dated May 23, 2013, we will see that it says:

“In terms of job approval ratings, the survey compared Persad-Bissessar’s handling of the job of Prime Minister in 2013, 2012 and 2011.

It was noted that an increasing proportion of respondents (58 per cent) indicated they disapproved of the manner in which she is managing the job of Prime Minister.

This is compared with 53 per cent in 2012 and 39 per cent in 2011.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is why this Government is making this bold, pathetic and desperate move to select aldermen by proportional representation, a move that can only be described as vulgar and obscene. They are reeling from the whipping in Tobago and Chaguanas, this Government, and it is anticipating that it has another whipping to get soon. It is very fearful that it will not get a single councillor elected and the tragedy of it all for them is that they will not get a single councillor, not only in the PNM-controlled constituencies, you know, but also in those constituencies that have been traditionally held by the UNC. And this is their sad predicament.

And they have begged for it. They had begged for it. They have treated the people badly, this Government. All they say is: “Serve the people; serve the people; serve the people.” I do not hear that anymore. It is a long, long time we

have not heard that. They started with that mantra, but that dropped off and they have been treating the people badly. I can speak for the people in my constituency.

Tell me how appointing—allocating—additional aldermen will get this Government to treat the people in my constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West any better? I want to know that. I want to know how my constituents will be better treated. They have been treated less than humans. I see them every day. Three times a week, I go to my office in my constituency—Upper Belmont, Observatory Street and St. Ann’s—three times a week.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Yuh good.”

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** We talk about food cards, I have a little lady there—a lady in my constituency—she goes to get her food card, they said she is in the system. They said they can see her on the computer. Her name and everything is there, but could she get a food card? Each time she goes back—she is going back and going back and going back and they are telling her there are no food cards for the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West. I feel they are in the garbage bin that the Member for Chaguanas West spoke about—

**Dr. Browne:** No; in the car trunk of the Member for Caroni Central.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:**—or the car trunk of the Member for Caroni Central. My people have been victimized by this Government and I stand here this morning and I make no apology for saying it and I say it without fear of contradiction. [*Desk thumping*] We are waiting for them. We are waiting for them. I speak to my people every day. We are waiting for them. It is wrong and I want to know how local government will fix all of this.

So this Government, in anticipation of another shameful and humiliating defeat, they have brought this Bill to this honourable House with indecent haste in an attempt to gain some sort of presence and some element of power in the municipal corporations because they will have none. They will have none.

**Dr. Browne:** They want to put people in Chaguanas as an alderman.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** They want to bring some sort of political interference to bear on the operations of the corporations and, in addition, we must remember that this beleaguered UNC-dominated partnership has to save face. They have to save face. They are losing face very fast. They had better listen.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** They have no face.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** They are faceless. My colleagues are saying they have no face; it is true. They are faceless right now. Who knows what they look like anymore?

**Dr. Browne:** Boldface.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** This morning I was looking at my list. I have about four lists in a drawer, Madam Deputy Speaker, because, you know, every now and then you need to write letters to the various Ministers. You know, I do not know who I am writing to now. They have changed. It is like a pack of cards. I do not know who is the Minister of this or the Minister of that.

**Dr. Rowley:** They do not know either.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** They do not know. Who we thought was the Minister of Local Government was not the Minister of Local Government today, addressing us. The Minister of Works and Infrastructure addressed us as the Minister of Local Government and the changes—three sets of reshuffles. Some people have been changed four times. It is clothes, Madam Deputy Speaker? Is it clothes they are changing?

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is obscene and a desperate and vulgar move that is disguised as reform. It is not reform. If it were reform, it would address other issues like devolution of authority from central to local government.

This Bill is not about reform. It is about political expediency and bringing this Bill to this honourable House on the eve of the local government election. It reminds me very much of what was done when they brought the Tobago internal self-government Bill to this Parliament just before the Tobago House of Assembly election.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is like déjà vu. And what has happened to that Bill now? Lapsed and total silence! I see letters in the papers being written.

**Dr. Baker:** That is your fault.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** It is not our fault because we are not passing legislation that will put our people in a predicament.

**Dr. Baker:** It is your fault.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** And you from Tobago West should be ashamed because you are willing to throw your people down the chute.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, please!

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** You would have thrown your people down the chute.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Please, address the Chair. Member, please! Refrain!

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

**Dr. Baker:** You be quiet!

**Mrs. P. McIntosh:** Madam Deputy Speaker, we have heard nothing about this Bill—he just heard the word “Tobago” and he jumped up to say the wrong thing.

**Dr. Rowley:** As usual.

**Mrs. P. Mc Intosh:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of Tobago would be ashamed of him. We have total silence on this Bill. It was nothing but political expediency. They lost and they dropped it. It was nothing but political expediency. But you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I always wanted the opportunity to thank the people of Tobago for being wise and bright and unafraid and for not allowing themselves to be fooled by this treacherous Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, devolution of authority from central government to the municipal corporations is the type of meaningful reform that I as a responsible Member of Parliament would like to support; certainly not the kind of reform that is being proposed in this meaningless Bill whose intent is nothing but a shameful ploy to save the face of this failing and falling UNC-dominated partnership and to give it a presence in the municipal corporations and a toehold for political interference in their affairs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, Port of Spain South.

**Dr. Rowley:** For the record; you have to announce it for the record.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I said it—Port of Spain South.

**Dr. Rowley:** You were very silent.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Miss Marlene Mc Donald** (*Port of Spain South*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, the hour is late.

**Dr. Rowley:** It is early, man; early. The hour is early.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** I am fighting a bad flu and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was not about to join this debate at all, but when I listened to the speakers on the Government Bench—

**Dr. Rowley:** Name them. Name them.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:**—especially the Member for Tunapuna, the Member for San Fernando West and the Member for St. Augustine and, of course, the Member for Tabaquite, I had no choice but to stand and clarify certain matters.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me look at the Member for San Fernando West because quite oftentimes they come to this House and make a lot of misleading statements and these statements are placed on *Hansard* and the national community outside there, listening, would of course believe what they say and it is our duty on this side to correct, as far as possible, the misleading statements made by the Government Bench.

In her contribution—that is, the Member for San Fernando West—I will try to quote her. She said the PNM stayed on the East-West Corridor and used the first-past-the-post system to gain and retain power.

**Dr. Rowley:** Nonsense!

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** I want to tell you that statement is the furthest thing from the truth, Member for San Fernando West. I think you should go back, research—

**Dr. Rowley:** And learn history.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** Exactly! Learn your history. Let me bring this House up to speed. Let us look in the southern areas. The PNM is in La Brea. The PNM is in Point Fortin. The PNM had Mayaro. We had Moruga. We had San Fernando, the same seat you are sitting in. We had Caroni East. We had Nariva. We had Princes Town. We had Chaguanas East. So what are you talking about?

**Hon. Member:** Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** Pointe-a-Pierre—

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:**—at one point in time. So why did you state that we stayed on the East-West Corridor. I want to tell you, since 1956, the PNM has fielded candidates in every single, [*Desk thumping*] every single constituency in this country—[*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Rowley:** With tremendous success.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** And we have had successes in many of them. So to make this statement, it is misleading, and I think that you ought to know better Member for San Fernando West. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Dey now come and dey going.”

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** I also want to look at the Member for Tunapuna, Mr. “New Politics”. The Member for Tunapuna stood there and he said that we, the Opposition, are opposed to change and we have been so for the past 50 years and he also went on—he said that change must start in this Parliament and that it was at this time that the people power must take precedence over parliamentary power.

Well, obviously, the Member for Tunapuna, the Member for San Fernando West, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara and you see how they are [*Interruption*—they are not even here on something as earth-shattering and the tectonic shift as this Bill—

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Three Members, two sleeping.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** They are not even here to listen to what the Opposition has to say; but Madam Deputy Speaker, I will enlighten you and the national community. I will not rehash what my colleagues have said and I want to put on *Hansard* that I thought that my colleagues captured this debate quite well. I thought that they stood on their own and they showed the national community exactly why we will not support this Bill. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to ask all the COP people here today—

**Hon. Member:** “But dey not dere.”

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** I want to ask them: Are you aware of what your UNC counterparts were doing before all of this came to the Table? Are you aware? Are you aware, when you were rushing this Bill, what transpired before?

**1.55 a.m.**

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am speaking from a position of knowledge. Madam Deputy Speaker, in August, I had a four-day holiday in Tobago. I was on the beach when I was approached with a proposal to support this Government to postpone the local government election.

**Dr. Rowley:** What!

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** I could not respond, I had to seek my leader's advice. That was not my call. I was not even aware he was in Tobago, but "I hunt him down" and I found him. I found him the night, and Madam Deputy Speaker, my leader vehemently said, no way is this Opposition going to support any postponement of the local government elections. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Deputy Speaker, he stated the election should be called when election is due; call the local government election.

And so I want to ask this Minister, I want to ask the Government here today: if this Opposition had supported the question put to the Opposition to support them to postpone local government election, would we have been here debating this today? [*Desk thumping*] Would we have heard anything about proportional representation?

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** That is so urgent; so urgent.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** Would we? Madam Deputy Speaker, you see, I sat here and I was listening, and at every point the speakers on this side asked: Why are you rushing this, what is the purpose of this proportional representation? We could see no good reason. You just heard from the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. How would it help all the local issues for your burgesses fighting over one alderman? How would it help? It would not so, therefore, this thing is not meaningful. Even your own Cabinet Members did not know about this. Many of them do not even understand what is inside the Bill. Many of them cannot participate in such an earth-shattering legislation because they do not agree with it, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, after this scenario where we refused to support the Government to postpone the local government election, we then heard the Prime Minister in the public domain stating that some UNC councillors were requesting that the election be postponed, but public pressure came down on her. Even the Chamber of Commerce said to call the election.

In so doing, recognizing that they faced a complete whitewash, this Government mysteriously came up with this proportional representation to save face. It was at that juncture that this entire plan was hatched; this proportional representation in the guise of reform was hatched. This Government did that. That is why it made absolutely no sense to my bench, no sense whatsoever.

And, you see, I want to tell them this morning they are not fooling me, they are not fooling the leader here, they are not fooling this bench, but what they are doing is fooling this population; fooling the population because the proposal came



to us to support the postponement. There was no talk about PR system. If we had gone along, we would not have been here, we would have been in our beds at this time, but from the time we said no, they had to devise a plan and this is where it was hatched, and now they want to sell it as something different. So I want to know COP, “What allyuh saying to that?” Well, TOP you have no leader, you have none.

**Dr. Rowley:** They are nothing; they are zero.

**Miss M. Mc Donald:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to agree with my colleagues that this amendment is deceptive, ill-conceived, and haphazard in nature. As we always say, this Government run this country by “voops, vaps and vaille-que-vaille”. We always say that, and nothing in this amendment speaks to true local government reform.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you are from local government. You spent many years in there, and I know how you feel. I am having this conversation with you, you cannot respond, and I know that you know that this is meaningless, meaningless and, therefore, like my colleagues, we cannot and will not support this measure. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a matter of some seriousness and urgency, before you invite the Minister to wind up. It has just been brought to my attention that apparently there are two versions of this Bill circulating in this Chamber and, in fact, that Members of this House may have received different versions of a Bill, and may have made their contributions based on different copies. Worse than that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am advised that the amendments, as circulated, seek to amend a Bill that has not been laid and it is not the one that is before us.

Under the circumstances, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the seriousness of that potential development, I am asking that this House now recess for 15 or 20 minutes to check and find out what are the facts surrounding what I have just said. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Oh my God! [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Based on what was just said by the Leader of the Opposition, this House is now suspended for 15 minutes. [*Crosstalk*]

**2.03 a.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**2.15 a. m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Deputy Speaker, before we proceed, I would like a clarification from you as to where we are with this matter. Maybe the Leader of the House could explain what happened here.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Leader of Government Business.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Deputy Speaker, there is nothing that happened here. A Bill was circulated, the Bill has been debated and there are amendments that have been circulated—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** “Nah, doh try dat.”

**Dr. Moonilal:** Unless there is any other speaker on the Opposition side, the Minister of Local Government is now prepared to wrap up, and to deal with the Bill that has been circulated through the parliamentary procedure to all the Members of the Opposition who have spoken. So I imagine the Minister will wind up and also there is a list of amendments. In the committee stage, our colleagues are free to raise matters relevant to that.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I call upon the Minister of Local Government.  
*[Desk thumping]*

**The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Suruj Rambachan):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, let me begin by thanking all Members of the House, including Members of the Opposition, for their contribution to this debate that started at 10.30 this morning, and I am beginning my wrap-up at 2:16:43—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Peters:** Yesterday morning.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—this morning—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Peters:**—10.30 yesterday morning.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, it is really very difficult at this hour of the morning to sum up a Bill like this but, nevertheless, I am going to persist and do as good a job as I can.

Madam Deputy Speaker, throughout this debate, reference has been made to this document, and this document was published by the Ministry of Local Government as the basis for the public consultations that took place across the country, during which 14 consultations were held in the 14 different regional

corporations. Apart from that, consultations were held with stakeholder groups; submissions were received in writing and according to the register of persons who came to the consultations, just over 2,000 persons contributed in those discussions.

This document is entitled: Policy on Local Government Transformation and Modernization. Fifteen thousand copies of this were printed and circulated at an average of 300 to 500 copies per regional corporation. In addition to that, copies were mailed out to all the important stakeholders—Chambers of Commerce, NGOs, CBOs and what have you—and also sent to the Members of Parliament. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is very interesting that when we went to some of the corporations, like San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, and also when we went to Point Fortin Regional Corporation very few—if any in those two corporations, if I recall—of the Opposition Members came and contributed to the debate, and it was very disappointing; very disappointing that they did not come and contribute to the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is out of those consultations that this document entitled Draft White Paper on Local Government Transformation and Modernization 2013 was accepted by the Cabinet and which document I laid in the Parliament yesterday. So you have two different documents; one that was the basis for the consultation reflecting the policy on local government transformation and modernization with three objectives: better quality services, better communities and stronger councils.

**2.20 a.m.**

This document contains the recommendations that came out of those consultations on the elaboration on those recommendations, and this document will form the basis, after it is considered by the Parliament, for the implementation of a wider package of reforms in addition to the reform that we are dealing with here in the House today. And you will see in this document when you read it and you get it, that it contains many of the recommendations that you have been alluding to in your contributions.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is interesting—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** What about proportional representation?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—that while my colleagues on the other side speak so eloquently and so vociferously about local government reform and what has to

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

be done, and what should have been done, although they inherited a Municipal Corporations Act, 1990, when they came into office, but particularly between 2001 and 2010, and despite the numerous consultations which they referred to, particularly the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney, they did nothing to introduce one reform in local government—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—in those nine years.

**Miss Hospedales:** That is not true.

**Hon. Member:** Serious. Not at all—[*Inaudible*]

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Not one single reform was introduced in local government in those nine years. [*Crosstalk*] To the credit of this Government—to the credit of this Government we have courageously come before this [*Desk thumping*] Parliament to introduce proportional representation in the selection of aldermen, something that has been avoided. The whole concept of proportional representation has been avoided by the Opposition, and the former Prime Minister—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** When is the consultation?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—Dr. Eric Williams said it will be like a dagger in the heart of the PNM.

**Mr. Imbert:** “When he say dat?”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** I really wonder whether they were serious when they said: “Bring a total discussion on proportional representation to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.”

My dear friends, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is interesting, therefore, that they talk about reforms but they have brought no reforms; they brought none whatsoever. And I want to repeat that: they bought no reforms, [*Desk thumping*] none.

**Miss Hospedales:** No, that is not true.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** But while they talk about reforms, it seems to me that the only reforms they understand, or the concept of reform they understand is related to legislation, but reform is not just about legislation.

**Hon. Member:** Good point.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Reform—while legislation will help in certain areas, reform is also about changing attitudes.

**Hon. Member:** Mindset.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Reform is about shifting mindsets, reform is about systems—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—reform is about processes *[Crosstalk]* that you employ in order to achieve better quality services, build better communities and achieve stronger councils, the last one of course will be aided by your legislation.

And this administration has been introducing several matters of reform that deal with processes and systems—processes and systems. And like I said yesterday when I began the debate, as I said, within eight months of the fiscal year, up to 90 per cent of the development work by the corporations was completed under the PSIP. Historic! It never happened before, and even as we speak in this Parliament, before the Ministry of Local Government, already, are detailed estimates from several corporations which the Ministry has begun to check. So that when the budget is debated and passed, they will be ready to apply for drawdown of funds in order to get the programme of works going.

**Hon. Member:** Early.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** That is part of the kind of reform that has taken place in local government and that is important. Just to let you know, that in the 14 regional corporations this year, in terms of the PSIP, 969 projects were completed, *[Crosstalk]* 969 projects—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Fourteen corporations.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—and if today—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Eight hundred in the—*[Inaudible]*

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—in the PNM controlled areas, work has not been done, do not blame the UNC Government; blame the quality of councillors you have on the PNM side. *[Desk thumping]* Blame them, because they are supposed to represent your interest at the level of the regional corporation. Blame them.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** They have no funds.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption]*  
*[Crosstalk]*

**Hon. Member:** Champion of reforms.

**Hon. Member:** They probably have too much funds.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—I want to address the matter of funding.

The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney read out a speech, extracts of a speech that the Prime Minister delivered at the local government conference in Wales. A very good speech, one for which she got a standing ovation, because it was visionary in terms of what she proposed for a better local government system. *[Crosstalk]* And in this speech, the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney referred to—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** He wrote it.

**Miss Hospedales:** “Ah”, he wrote the speech.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—several things that were promised by the Prime Minister, for example, providing state-financed offices for local government representatives so as to impact upon more effective representation. It was under the guidance of Minister Chandresh Sharma when he was Minister of Local Government—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** He did not perform.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—that state-funded offices—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** He did not perform.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—were given to councillors, and for the first time in the history of local government, they had a place that was being rented *[Desk thumping]* by the State with support staff from the State, where people were able to go and deal with their problems. You were in charge of local government all these years and you never did anything to lift the status of local government representatives. *[Desk thumping]* You did not do that.

**Miss Hospedales:** Some of them were just paying money and they had no office.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** You talk about—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Hospedales:** You were monitoring it?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—financing, increasing the financial resources [*Crosstalk*] available to local government authorities. Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] in every year since this administration took office—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members! Members, come on, please. I am listening to the Minister of Local Government, please allow the Minister to make his contribution. You may continue, Minister.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, every year the amount of money made available to local government has in fact increased—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Correct.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—under this administration.

**Dr. Rowley:** So has the corruption.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** And if I may demonstrate to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in addition in the 2012/2013 budget, \$228 million was made available to the 14 corporations and the Ministry under the PSIP programme.

**Mr. Sharma:** That is the highest in 50 years.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, that is not all. During the year, I approached the Cabinet for additional funding and the Cabinet approved \$140 million for work on bridges and landslips, because there are 925-plus bridges that are under the control and management and maintenance of local government. Yes, 925 bridges. [*Crosstalk*]

There are many landslips in this country. In several parts of the country roads have become impassable, not due to anyone's fault, but because of land movements that have taken place and which have to be attended to—and the Cabinet responded and \$140 million was provided to the Ministry of Local Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in terms of roads \$310 million was provided. Again when we approached Cabinet for the paving and rehabilitation—rehabilitation and paving of local roads in Trinidad—and this is a programme that was executed through the three special purpose companies: CISL, RDC and PSAEL. And the Minister of Sport, who is making a very gallant attempt—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Gallant.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—to ensure that young people have adequate sporting facilities, supported me in Cabinet when I went—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Do not go there.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—along with my other colleagues—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Do not go there.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—to ask for \$70 million to construct 32 pavilions in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Member:** Do not go there.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** And just a reminder, the Minister of Sport—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Gopee-Scoon:** Where are they?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—is also constructing 32—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Roberts:** “Doh” worry, Maloney will—*[Inaudible]*

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—which means that by the end of this fiscal year, 64 new pavilions would have been built in Trinidad. *[Crosstalk]*

**Miss Mc Donald:** None by us. None in Port of Spain South.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, that means that in the fiscal year *[Crosstalk]* 2012/2013, *[Crosstalk]* 700—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member! Member! Minister of Local Government, take your seat. Members, I know everybody is anxious and we are looking at the time *[Crosstalk]* and I know that you are thinking that it is time for you to go home. I want to ask you to please conduct yourself in a manner fitting for Parliament. Minister of Local Government, you may continue.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** I did not know I had the capacity to provoke so easily. I think what happens here is the truth hurts.

**Dr. Rowley:** According to the report done here?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Seven hundred and forty-eight million dollars was provided therefore for local government over the last year. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, good work has been done. I refer to the 32 pavilions being built, but in addition to that, most of those recreation grounds are being outfitted with lights.



**Hon. Member:** Where?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** By the Ministry of Public Utilities.

**Hon. Member:** “Nah!”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, in terms of the road paving programme, it will be instructive to note that 150,536 metres of roadway have been rehabilitated and paved under this programme. That represents about 143 kilometres of local roads that have been paved by the Ministry of Local Government through the special purpose companies this year, and that does not include the 412 roads that have been paved and rehabilitated by the regional corporations themselves during this fiscal year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke about the fact that small contractors were not being given the opportunity. I would like him to know that a total of 124 contractors were involved in this road paving exercise. One hundred and twenty-four contractors were involved in this road paving exercise, 554 local roads, 150,536 metres.

**Dr. Rowley:** [*Inaudible*] from your backyard to our backyard. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] the hon. Leader of the Opposition talked about unspent balances and accused the Minister of Local Government of signing off on these unspent balances close to the end of the local government term.

I want to inform this honourable House that during this fiscal year, 2012/2013, I made sure to find out how much money was there in the coffers of all the regional corporations as unspent balances, had these funds audited, because you cannot spend that unless it is audited and balanced, and then signed off on these funds so the corporations could spend them.

And I want to read into the record that the Port of Spain City Corporation had \$22,646,436 and there are some more funds available. But contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition was saying, we requested estimates, when the first request was made by Mayor Louis Lee Sing and the corporation to the Ministry of Local Government for the Minister to sign off on these funds; we requested estimates on October 05, 2012. It took the regional corporation until May 08, eight months before they submitted the detailed estimates. It was then checked and approval was granted on July 04, 2013.

It remains now for the corporation to execute or implement the works. This Minister never denied them the unspent balances. They had to submit detailed

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

estimates, because we at the Ministry want to know what these jobs are going to cost. You cannot come with a stage A estimate and tell me, “This is going to cost \$5 million” and I must sign it off. We require detailed estimates.

**Hon. Member:** How many [*Inaudible*]?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** In the San Fernando City Corporation on January 07, 2013, I signed off \$11,500,000, and if you go down to San Fernando you will see that they are using some of this money to do the boardwalk and the very beautiful facilities they are providing in San Fernando along the waterfront.

Arima Borough Corporation: July 30, 2013, \$750,000; Princes Town Regional Corporation: May 29, 2013, \$4,110,000; Sangre Grande Regional Corporation: June 21, 2013, \$1,170,000; Penal/Debe: \$765,000 on February 06; Tunapuna/Piarco: \$10,087,000 on December 27, 2012 of which \$7 million was used to pave 111 roads, local roads in the Tunapuna Regional Corporation. San Juan/Laventille: \$1,375,000; Siparia: two amounts, \$2,710,000 and \$2,918,350 on July 27 and September 12. Fifty-eight million dollars was sitting there and I was able to get the Ministry of Local Government to audit this, to sign off on it, so that \$58 million of additional work was done in several districts in Trinidad and Tobago as a result [*Desk thumping*] of bringing to use of these unspent balances.

**2.35 a.m.**

The Port of Spain City Corporation has not implemented one of the projects as of date and they still sit there with the \$22,646,000 to implement. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, when such accusations are made it is important that we respond with the facts about the situation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition also accused us and said that we are holding on to power for power’s sake. The PNM’s history— [*Interruption*—in your contribution.

**Dr. Rowley:** What did I say?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Go back to the *Hansard* and you would get it.

**Dr. Rowley:** When did I say that?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** The PNM’s history— [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** I never said that.

**Hon. Dr. S.: Rambachan:** The PNM’s history of holding on to power is well known; 2006— [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** Why you do not say what I say?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—postponement of the local government election; 2007, postponement; 2008, postponement; 2009, postponement—because you were afraid to face the electorate and you hid under the disguise of local government reform. [*Desk thumping*] And, while we have come with local government reform, which you will not agree with, we are not afraid to face the electorate and the Prime Minister has been consistent in calling elections when elections are due. This is why, if you read in Friday, September 06 edition of the *Trinidad Guardian* she says here:

“I will not be guided merely by political considerations.

It matters less to me whether decisions taken in your interest are inimical to my own political future. Let history judge me as being a leader who loved you more than she did pursuit of office.” [*Desk thumping*]

I have never heard a statement coming from the other side that demonstrates a leader who is content to take a decision that might be inimical to her interests but, at the same time, is great for the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. That is leadership in action. So we have the history of the PNM to compare with the history of the People’s Partnership and the leadership, in particular, of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Madam Deputy Speaker, questions were asked by many Members on the other side, but articulated, in particular, by the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney, when she asked: “How will the selection of aldermen assist in the delivery of better quality services?” That begs the question as to the roles of aldermen at the corporations. I went, at great pains, in my contribution, at the beginning, to explain how aldermen will represent specific interests. I gave the example of— [*Interruption*—watch your backyard in Laventille with ILP.

**Dr. Rowley:** My backyard?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Watch your backyard.

**Dr. Moonilal:** “All yuh laugh? Keep laughing.”

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** The role of aldermen: Madam Deputy Speaker, the opportunity is now there for aldermen to represent wider groups of stakeholders’ interests. [*Interruption*] Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to say to the Leader of the Opposition—

**Dr. Rowley:** Do not say it to me, say it to Jack Warner.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—because he mentioned that in this House. But, let me tell you something—

**Dr. Rowley:** Do not tell me.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—if anybody has any evidence against me about anything untoward, take it to the place where they are supposed to take it because I am not afraid of anyone and I would stand up against any accusations. [*Desk thumping*] So, do not come with that by me. [*Desk thumping*] Do not come with that by me. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Allow the Member to speak, Member for Diego Martin West. You may continue, Minister of Local Government.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Your blabbering and shouting would not disturb me in my contribution here this morning; it would not. Nothing would disturb me from saying what is the truth and relating to the performance of the People's Partnership Government. Nothing, nothing will derail me.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there was a question asked about transparency in the process of choosing the aldermen. But, what more transparent process do you want? The list of aldermen are given at the time that the nominations take place. The legislation before you clearly prescribes how the aldermen are going to be chosen and the role of the EBC in this process. A question was also asked as to whether the EBC is ready, or will be ready, to undertake this particular process.

In the newspaper—I have been trying to find the article—the EBC has indicated that they will be ready and that there will be no impediments to implementing this legislation in terms of the choice of the aldermen. So they are ready. So to cast aspersions on the independence of the EBC, or to cast aspersions in the sense that the EBC is going to be somehow compromised, I think, it is not the right kind of thing to do about an institution which has always stood above the politics of the country; and where the integrity of those persons have always been beyond question.

When you have institutions like that, as a Parliament, you must be careful when you cast aspersions, but you must, instead, seek to protect the integrity of institutions like that because they have a role to play in fairness and in equity in terms of the important conduct of elections in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain South—I believe it was the Member for Port of Spain South—related an incident she said, in Tobago, where the Member was approached to support the Government in terms of the

postponement of elections. As far as I remember—fellow Members might recall this—it was the Mayor of Port of Spain, Louis Lee Sing, a member of the PNM, who came out—

**Mr. Sharma:** The potential leader.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—who came out and advised his party that they should seek a postponement of the local government elections and he encouraged that the local government elections be postponed. It was Louis Lee Sing, the Mayor of Port of Spain, His Worship, who did that. There is a difference between saying that openly and articulating that—

**Hon. Member:** On behalf of whom?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** On behalf of the PNM.

**Hon. Member:** Who says?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Compared to what the Prime Minister came out and said that there was a view—not necessarily the view of the Prime Minister, a view—that local government elections should be postponed. What the Prime Minister did? Did she yield to that view? No, the Prime Minister stood by what is democratically correct and what is constitutionally correct and she called the local government elections. [*Desk thumping*]

Integrity is when you close the gap between what you promised and what you do, and the Prime Minister has always closed the gap between what she promised and what she is doing. That is what distinguishes her leadership. It is the integrity with which she operates that distinguishes her leadership.

So, let us put the record straight. It is Mayor Lee Sing who called for the postponement; from the bosom of the PNM. Who knows, he was probably put as the frontman to articulate the views of that side. Maybe that is what happened. That is probably what happened.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sorry that the Member for Chaguanas West is not here. I am sorry he is not here, but before I go there, on the other side they were saying there: do not trust the Government, do not trust the Government, do not trust the Government.

I want to tell them that there are 70,000 children and their families now in this country—70,000 children—and about 5,000 teachers and school supervisors who, by the end of September of this year, would have received 70,000 computers—

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

promised as a programme of this Government that we have consistently delivered year by year. They trust the Government because the Government has delivered. They trust the Government.

The students in this country, who are benefiting every year from the fact that the Government continues to support the textbook programme—this year they have gotten \$124 million in textbooks. They trust the Government, that the Government is delivering on these textbooks.

The Opposition went around saying that we would cut the GATE programme. The GATE programme was not cut, in fact, it was expanded. All of those who, every year, benefit from the GATE programme, they trust the Government, that the Government is not cutting down on the GATE programme.

The women who have gotten additional maternity benefits as a result of the amendments to the NIS, they trust the Government. They trust the Government. The children whose lives are threatened because they cannot get life-saving surgery; when they get the life-saving surgery, they also trust the Government, that the Government is keeping its word. The 17,000-plus persons who have been paid at the Hindu Credit Union their under-\$75,000, they trust the Government because the Government kept its word. The people of the Clico debacle who have gotten their money, they trust the Government because the Government paid out to them what the Government promised to pay out to them—\$24 billion.

The farmers who now receive lower interest rates, who have gotten agricultural access roads, who have gotten subsidized ponds and whose hard work has now led to agriculture making a positive contribution of 2.6% of GDP as of December, they trust the Government because the Government told them they were going to do this for them and the Government has done it.

The people of this country—parents, teachers and students—who have benefited from 51 new schools built by the Minister of Education and the Government, they trust the Government.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Fifty-one new schools, unquestionable.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** The buses that never ran in rural communities, that are running now, they trust the Government. The water that is now being provided in rural communities, they trust the Government because the Government said, “We are going to provide water for you.”

That includes the 29,000 persons who are now benefiting from the most recent water project that took place in the Point Fortin region. They trust the Government.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** A PNM project.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—that was left there to rot until this Government did something with it and brought it into fruition because you could not manage it because you do not know how to manage anything; you do not know how to maintain anything at all.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Point Fortin, please.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of Macaulay who for the first time in 15 years got the Macaulay River cleared and cleaned; they trust the Government. The disabled persons in this country who will benefit from the disability centre now being constructed—nearly 90 per cent complete—in Carlsen Field, Chaguanas, they trust the Government because the Government is doing something for the differently-abled persons in Trinidad.

So, too, the persons who are going to get land; the landless who are going to get land; they trust the Government. In Jacob Hill, Wallerfield, where we opened an activity centre on Wednesday evening, those people, when they walked into that centre, like the people of St. John's Trace, Avocat, and the people of La Castena, Sou Sou Lands; and the people of Caura and the people of Carlsen Field, where activity centres are being built—

**Hon. Member:** What about the other constituencies?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—they trust the Government [*Interruption*] because, while you talk about a Ministry of Rural Development, this Government is engaged in rural reconstruction and providing services for rural communities that never had it before. [*Desk thumping*] They trust the Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to tell you when hurricane Alma, I believe it was, hit the country and parts of Tobago, in particular, in 1968, in Mamoral, the community centre was destroyed. From 1968—2013 nothing was rebuilt on that site until an activity centre, 1,500 square feet, is just about being completed on that site. Forty-five years later, this Government has come and given to the people of Mamoral a centre to replace the community centre that was destroyed by Alma.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these are the people that trust the Government. These are the people that trust the Government because the Government is keeping its word where it goes out. So, when we went to Fishing Pond, down in Cumuto/Manzanilla, and we told the people we were coming in two weeks to fix the road—we were there in two weeks to fix the road and the road, will be finished on Tuesday. [*Desk thumping*] And, I can give you example after

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*  
[HON. DR. S. RAMBACHAN]

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

example. And Concession—is it Concession Lane? The Member for Port of Spain South said she was surprised when she got a call that Concession Lane was being paved.

**2.50 a.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, earlier this afternoon the Member for Chaguanas West said that he, together with myself and the Prime Minister, met with the Member for St. Joseph to bring [*Crosstalk*] the Member for St. Joseph into—as a candidate for election. I want to say categorically and put into the record of this Parliament, I never met with the Member for Chaguanas West nor with the Member for St. Joseph in any attempt to influence the Member for St. Joseph to be a candidate for the United National Congress. [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** He said so.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** I never did that, and I put that on the records.

**Dr. Rowley:** “Ah doh believe yuh.”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** “Yuh doh believe yourself.” Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Chaguanas spoke about the fact that Perseverance, Waterloo, a local government seat, the councillor resigned there about two years ago and nothing was done.

I would have loved to remind the Member for Chaguanas West this evening—this morning—that he was the Chairman of the United National Congress and what did he do to influence and prevail upon the party to hold a by-election? He was the chairman; he was the chairman of the party—[*Crosstalk*] and what was done? What was done to do that? A chairman of a party holds certain responsibilities.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. Member:** That is the Prime Minister’s solemn duty.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** He makes reference to a cabal in the Government. Cabal is an issue for—was not an issue for him when he was able to act five times as Prime Minister. [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** “Aie-yaie-yaie.”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Cabal was not an issue to him. [*Crosstalk*] Cabal was not an issue. [*Crosstalk*] There is no cabal in the Government. There is none.

**Dr. Rowley:** Listen—[*Interruption*]



**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** There is no cabal in the Government.

**Dr. Rowley:** “Ah doh believe yuh.”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** The Prime Minister stands on her own and she makes her decision on her own. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** Sexist! [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** And she does it courageously. [*Crosstalk*] If she wishes to consult, she consults inside, I believe, and outside, but that is her prerogative. That is her prerogative! [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** The Prime Minister never said that.

**Dr. Rowley:** The Prime Minister [*Inaudible*] say that.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** You know, the Member for Chaguanas said that “time longer than twine.” Well, that does not only hold for us, it holds for him also. “Time really longer than twine.”

**Hon. Member:** “Like that twine really too long.”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—but sometimes things can be different.

**Dr. Rowley:** What is her name again?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the Member for Chaguanas West referred to vehicles for the police, but would not tell you that right now 300 vehicles are being sourced and I think contracts are out for 300 new vehicles for the police.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Like the SIS?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** In addition to that, the training of new police officers is taking place [*Crosstalk*] and you can file a question in Parliament and find out where the vehicles came from and who supplied the vehicles— [*Interruption*]

**Miss Mc Donald:** “Ah guessing.”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—because this Government is a transparent Government. One of the things about this Government, it answered all the questions that have been placed here on the Order Paper, not like you who use to be taking all those questions and letting them lapse at the end of a particular year.

**Hon. Member:** It is a shame to answer.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** We have answered all our questions. [*Crosstalk*]  
We have never been afraid to answer questions. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rowley:** How many lapsed today?

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Never been afraid to answer questions.

**Hon. Member:** Three. None has lapsed.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members, please, please, please. This has been going on for a while.

**Dr. Rowley:** We are being provoked.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** It has reached the point where I am going to stand. Member for Diego Martin West, I am going to ask you to behave yourself in a manner fitting for the Parliament. Minister of Works and Infrastructure you may continue.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Two fifty-three.

**Mr. Sharma:** “De doubles man coming jus now.”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** The Member for Chaguanas West spoke about the police officer Manwaring who had passed away. [*Crosstalk*] He said he had approached the Cabinet for \$350,000 and so on to build a wall.

I believe he said here today that he brought three quotations and gave them to us. I do not know a Minister of Government has the authority or is legally correct to give contracts. I know that there is a process and if you bring three recommendations and say I recommend X for a job, I think a Minister will be very foolish to go and implement that.

**Hon. Member:** “He never bring three quotations on nuttin in his life.”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Would not do that, and I would not do that and the Government is still prepared to help Mrs. Manwaring. I spoke to Mrs. Manwaring and so too did Mr. Kenrick Castellano who visited her and when we went to deal with the wall issue there was a boundary dispute. [*Crosstalk*] There was a boundary dispute. Madam Deputy Speaker, we had the entire estimates done to do that work there.

The Member for Diego Martin North/West accused me of not wanting to do something for Jehue Gordon and said that I did not want to do it. I earlier today

showed to the Member the document of the estimates that which were done for the wall for Mr. Jehue Gordon [*Crosstalk*] and I pointed out to the hon. Member [*Crosstalk*] that on May 05, 2013—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** And you did nothing.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—this estimate was done. And then I spoke to Mr. Jehue Gordon and told him that the engineers needed to speak to him because in doing that wall there were certain risks—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** “Yuh fibbing.”

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—with the house that is higher up and that the piling might have consequences, and Mr. Gordon is away and he promised when he came back to Trinidad he will get in contact with us and we will have a discussion on how to implement it. Here are the designs and everything for the wall. So to say that nothing was done is not correct at all.

**Mr. Imbert:** Nothing was ever done.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** It was not done because we have to have a conversation with Mr. Jehue Gordon before this project is implemented due to some of the risks that are involved. You just do not want us to do work and then affect the premises of other people and put the Government into certain kinds of liability. [*Crosstalk*] That cannot happen! That cannot happen! [*Crosstalk*]

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, these are some of the accusations that were made during this debate that took place here [*Crosstalk*] yesterday and then this morning—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** “Yuh making excuses.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—and I needed to correct some of these perceptions that were unfortunately being created where aspersions were being cast on the integrity of the Government and what we are doing.

**Hon. Member:** Imbert talking about a wall.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill, and the amendment that has been presented here, as I said this morning, is path breaking legislation, it is historic legislation—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** That is wrong.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—and I am very proud as a Member of this House, in what perhaps is one of my final acts as Minister of Local Government—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** A historic moment.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—to have been the one to be given the opportunity to present this to this House because what will happen as a result of this move here in this Parliament will resonate in the minds of the population and into the future. As I said yesterday morning—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Moonilal:** *[Inaudible]* seismic proportions.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:**—in the future it will be our children and grandchildren who will stand proud and say that we brought change to a country that needed change at a time when people wanted change in terms of how they chose their representatives.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Fifty seven years.

**Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

*House in committee.*

*Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 4.*

*Question proposed:* That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Chairman—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Chairman:** Madam Chair.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, we propose in paragraph (b) — *[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, I beg to move that clause 4 be amended as follows:

“In paragraph (b), in the proposed paragraph “(j), delete the word “13” and substitute the words “12A”.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

**Madam Chairman:** Member, please, conduct yourself.

*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

*Clause 5.*

*Question proposed:* That clause 5 now stand part of the Bill.

**Mr. Imbert:** Which one? Which Bill.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, I beg to move that clause 5 be amended as follows:

In paragraph (c)—

- (a) Delete the words “inserting after subsection (4),” and substitute the words “deleting subsection (4) and substituting”;
- (b) Renumber the proposed subsections “(4A)” and “(4B)” as “(4)” and “(4A)”;
- (c) In the proposed subsection “(4)” as renumbered, delete the words “this section” and substitute the words “section 13”.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are debating the wrong Bill. [*Crosstalk*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

**3.05 a.m.**

*Clause 6.*

*Question proposed:* That clause 6 stand part of the Bill.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, I beg to move that clause 6 be amended as follows:

Insert after the proposed section 12A, the following:

<p>“Definition of party</p>	<p>12B. For the purposes of section 12A and section 13, the word ‘party’ includes an independent candidate referred to in Rule 23(1) of the Election Rules, made under the Representation of the People Act.”</p>
-----------------------------	---

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 6, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 7.*

*Question proposed:* That clause 7 stand part of the Bill.

**Mr. Imbert:** Seven? “Da’is the worst one”. The one that Carolyn debate or the one that Suruj—[*Inaudible*] which clause 7?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, are we considering clause 7?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, I beg to move that clause 7A. (c) be amended as follows—[*Interruption*]

[*Cellphone rings*]

**Mr. Roberts:** La Brea, wake up boy. It is time to travel to town. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members, please conduct yourselves.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, I beg to move that clause 7 be amended as follows:

A In the proposed section 13—

(a) Insert after subsection (2) the following new subsections:

“(3) Where the final number calculated for each party under subsection (2)(b) results in a whole number and a fraction or only a fraction, the fraction shall not be considered in determining the number of seats to be allocated.

(4) Where the result of a calculation under subsection (2) yields no seats for Aldermen, to any party, the allocation of Aldermen by the Elections and Boundaries Commission shall be in descending order beginning with the party with the highest number of votes obtained in the election under section 11 until all seats have been allocated.”;

(b) renumber the remaining subsections (3) to (15) as subsections (5) to (17);

(d) in subsection (6) as renumbered, delete the words “(3)” and substitute the words “(5)”;

(e) in subsection (7) as renumbered, delete the words “(3) and (4)” and substitute the words “(5) and (6)”;

(f) in subsection (9) as renumbered, delete the words “(5)” and substitute the words “(7)”;

- (g) in subsection (11) as renumbered, delete the words “(8)” and substitute the words “(10)”;
  - (h) in subsection (13) as renumbered, delete the words “(10)” and substitute the words “(12)”;
  - (i) in subsection (14) as renumbered, delete the words “(11)” and substitute the words “(13)”;
  - (j) in subsection (15) as renumbered, delete the words “(11)” and substitute the words “(13)”;
  - (k) in subsection (17) as renumbered, delete the words “(13)” and substitute the words “(15)”;
- B. In the proposed section 13B, delete the words “(9)” and substitute the words “(11)”

And then we have a further amendment thereto: Clause 7A. (c) to read as follows:

- C. In subsection (5) as renumbered—
- (i) delete the word “(4)” and substitute the word “(6)”;
  - (ii) insert after the words “have been allocated” the words “unless the party or parties concerned yielded no allocation of Aldermen under subsection (2)(b)”.

**Mr. Imbert:** Another one, “eh”. They just making up as they go along. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** “Go ahead all yuh bad talk it.” [*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You gave her the wording?

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Carolyn confusing the whole Government. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Roberts:** “Leave me out of all yuh bacchanal, eh.”

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 7, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 8 to 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to:* That the Bill, as amended, be reported to the House.

*House resumed.*

*Bill reported, with amendments.*

*Question put:* That the Bill be now read a third time and passed.

**Hon. Member:** No, no, no! Division!

*The House divided:*       Ayes 22   Noes 10

AYES

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar, Hon. K.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Sharma, Hon. C.

Ramadhar, Hon. P.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Seemungal, Hon. J.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

Ramadharsingh, Hon. Dr. G.

De Coteau, Hon. C.

Khan, Hon. Dr. F.

Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Ramdial, Hon. R.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Partap, C.



*Municipal Corp. (Amdt.) Bill, 2013*

*Friday, September 06, 2013*

NOES

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Hypolite, N.

Mc Intosh, Mrs. P.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Browne, Dr. A.

Thomas, Mrs. J.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

*Question agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Monday, September 09, 2013 at 1.30 p.m.; and to serve notice of course that we will have the reading of the Appropriation Bill.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 3.16 a.m.*