



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

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**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE ANNISLETTE-GEORGE
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Monday 30th July, 2018

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*Leave of Absence**Monday, July 30, 2018***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Monday, July 30, 2018*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, Mr. Esmond Forde, MP, Member for Tunapuna, has requested leave of absence from sittings of this House from July 23rd to August 30th, 2018; Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh, MP, Member for St. Joseph, has requested leave of absence from sittings of the House from July 28th to August 4th, 2018; and Ms. Marlene Mc Donald, MP, Member for Port of Spain South and Mr. Barry Padarath, MP, Member for Princes Town, have requested leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPER LAID

Notification of Her Excellency, the President, in respect of the nomination of Mr. Gary Griffith for appointment to the office of Commissioner of Police. [*The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)*]

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE
(NOMINATION OF MR. GARY GRIFFITH)**

The Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas section 123(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Chap. 1:01 ("the Act") provides that the Police Service Commission shall submit to the President a list of the names of the persons nominated for appointment to the office of Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of Police;

And whereas section 123(4) of the Act provides that the President shall issue a Notification in respect of each person nominated under subsection (3) and the Notification shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives;

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And whereas the Police Service Commission has submitted to the President the name Mr. Gary Griffith as the person nominated for appointment to the office of Commissioner of Police;

And whereas the President has on the 24th day of July, 2018 issued a Notification in respect of the nomination;

And whereas it is expedient to approve the Notification:

Be it resolved that the Notification of the President of the nomination by the Police Service Commission of Mr. Gary Griffith to the office of Commissioner of Police be approved.

Madam Speaker, once again, I take the responsibility to lead this Government into this exercise. It has been an exercise which has attracted a lot of national attention for good reason, Madam Speaker, and as a result of that, it has been exposed to a lot of public commentary, public debate as to whether in fact on this occasion, the selection of a Commissioner of Police could be had by the end of a long and tedious process or whether in fact, we should begin to build a fire service now that the house is on fire.

Madam Speaker, let me, for the clarification, take with your leave and crave your indulgence to allow me to clarify and just within the perimeter and on the borders of this particular issue which is in front of us because I know that I need to be particular to the substance in front of us, so I promise you I would not stray too far. But for clarification with respect to the public debate, let me point out how and why we are doing this.

Madam Speaker, the last time we had a Commissioner of Police appointed to that post in Trinidad and Tobago was in August 2012. At that time, after this same process that we are going through here now, this identical process, earlier on in 2010 I think it was, in 2010, we had appointed a Commissioner of Police by this identical process. And I want to repeat that so that those who want to take issue with this process now would know that this is the identical process that was used under the law under the Constitution to appoint and have in place in 2012, a substantive position held by a foreigner, Dr. Dwayne Gibbs.

And Madam Speaker, at that time, the Government of the day, in many of whom are with us here today I presume, not all of them but some of them might be, saw it necessary and expedient to terminate the contract of the substantive Commissioner, creating a vacancy. And for reasons best known to my colleagues who were in the Government at that time and were responsible for the country's

Executive, for reasons best known to them, they proceeded not to initiate the process to appoint a Commissioner of Police. Madam Speaker, this formed national conversation in the same way as it is now to the extent that by the time we came to a general election in 2015, the non-appointment of a Commissioner of Police to the post of Commissioner of Police became a campaign issue because the Government of the day had not seen it fit to get the process of the appointment, a process that was albeit convoluted and by then was deemed to be unacceptable.

Because if I may repeat, Madam Speaker, I happened to have, at that time, held the position of Opposition Leader in 2010, going forward to 2012, and on many occasions in this House and outside, I took issue with this process saying to the Government, bring an amendment to the Parliament to abolish this process and to replace it with something else and you will have our support. Madam Speaker, we never had the opportunity to support a replacement process because none was ever brought. So, by the time we got to the general election, we took it to the public and got a mandate to appoint a Commissioner of Police.

We, this Government—this Government, today—has a mandate to appoint a Commissioner of Police, because we are saying, unlike our colleagues of the past, that it is unacceptable to not have a substantive Commissioner of Police in post and to have a series of acting appointments is not the best way to run the police service. And I would not here go into any details or go in at all into the matter of the consequences of not having a substantive appointee.

So, Madam Speaker, having won the election, we got that mandate and one of the first things we did in trying to execute that arrangement was to determine, through the Executive of the country, who is responsible to initiate the process, because a process had to be initiated where you ended up hiring a firm of a certain quality identified in a particular way and give to the firm the responsibility to evaluate all the aspirants, the applicants for the position of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, and Madam Speaker, for many months, we could not determine who it was in the public sector administration was responsible for that.

I can tell you as Prime Minister, I had to be enquiring whether it is the commission who initiates it and the answer was in the negative; whether it is the DPA, the answer was in the negative. Who is responsible? And then we determined, Madam Speaker, we came to a conclusion that apparently there was no office of state that was clearly identified or who had assumed the responsibility that since a vacancy existed for Commissioner of Police that there should be a responsibility on the part of a particular office to initiate a process so that a

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Commissioner could be appointed. And that was never tested because the previous Government, since 2012 into the period of 2015/2016, had not initiated the process.

The Attorney General, in advising this Government, determined that we could look at the Order because it is the Order that has the dos and don'ts in it and we came to this Parliament, Madam Speaker, and as a Parliament run by majority rule, we amended the Order. And one of the things that we did in that Order and interfering with the Order, in our attempt to get the process started—not to get inside the process and play a role inside the process—it was to deal with this issue that the process could not be started or I should say would not be started.

In the amendments we made, we identified the Minister of National Security as the officer of state who will, whenever there is a vacancy, that the Minister of National Security will call on the service commission to start the process—good, bad or indifferent process—but start it so that we can move towards appointing a Commissioner of Police and we passed that in this House. We passed it into law and we thought that we were now starting the process for the first time between 2012 and 2018, or 2017 I think it was. 2017? And of course, Madam Speaker, immediately, the Government says A, our colleagues—[*Interruption*—2015, December 2015, yes. We came to office in September and by December 2015, in keeping with our concern and our mandate, we had actually started the process. [*Interruption*]

And I am advised, Madam Speaker, that the Legal Notice to do that was December 16, 2015. So when you hear anybody, especially our colleagues in this House saying that the Government is incompetent and “we breaching our...” and “we hiding our mandate” and “we not keeping our promises” and “the published list of promises not kept” and “one is not appointing a Commissioner of Police”, Madam Speaker, that is simply one of the normal untruths. By December, a Government that came in at September 7th, by December 16th, we had a Legal Notice published that we had made the amendments required and that we could now begin the process.

What did our colleagues do? Our colleagues put on their courthouse clothes and they went to court and they argued their law and the argument was that the Government had interfered with the independence of the Police Service Commission and that the Government wanted to do “all kinda ting” with the police, and if you allow the Government to initiate the process, the Minister will do this and the Minister would lock you up in the middle of the night, “they will take away yuh children from yuh family” and so on. All that they told the court.

And Madam Speaker, all that the Government had sought to do in this House was to identify an office of state that would initiate the process.

The judge examined all that we had done and on the 14th of July, 2016, this legal challenge came to a head when the judge ruled that he will remove the ministerial intervention and leave that with the service commission. So the work of the commission was not interfered with. What we had put in place survived the challenge. All that was moved was the Minister was removed from the process, but it clarified for the country and it put on the shoulder of the commission that you get on with it and, Madam Speaker, that is how the process was started.

The commission then went, got the resources from the Cabinet because the commission had to ask for the resources to engage the firm—that is identified in the law as “a firm”, no particular company but a firm—with certain skills, and the moneys were made available and between the commission and the DPA, they went ahead and the process was started and advertisements went out to all and sundry, home and abroad, that the vacancy which exists for a Commissioner of Police that we are now inviting persons who believe that they are suitable for the position.

Madam Speaker, we expected that persons with the skills of one kind or another and the experience of one kind or another from all over would apply and we did get some applications. But I want to make it quite clear. From the time the process started until this minute before me, as Prime Minister, the Government had no role or involvement whatsoever in the matter because the Constitution—the law—puts a barrier between the Executive, the Government. So even though the Government is running the country, in this particular matter of having a Commissioner of Police appointed, the Government was given absolutely no role. And that is not for debate, we are not arguing that, I am simply clarifying for those who believe that it is the Government.

And interestingly enough, Madam Speaker, I have heard some of my colleagues inside this House who should know the law, who make the law, saying the Government did not appoint a Commissioner of Police, even though they themselves had not touched the issue for three years, and insofar as they touched it, their position was quite shocking, and that was, from the Attorney General then, that it is better to have somebody acting in the position than to have somebody appointed because the actor will work twice as hard and get the job done at a better pace. That was their position but I mean, we always felt that was not serious but apparently that was serious. Because the bottom line is until we did what I just said, there was no attempt in Trinidad and Tobago to appoint a

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Commissioner of Police. So the commission went out, got a firm, got applications for Commissioner and for Deputy Commissioner of Police, as the law spelt out the two categories.

And Madam Speaker, the law also said, as I said before, when we did the other nominations that came here, the law spells out the only way a Commissioner could be appointed is through what is spelt out in that Act and it says that the commission, having received the work of the firm, the commission will make a merit list and that merit list, from the merit list, the person at the top of the merit list, the commission will make that available to the President, the President will make it available to the Parliament and we, in this House, will determine whether we go along or we do not go along, and it can only be done on a one-by-one basis.

So the law, the Constitution says you take the name at the top through the route and it comes here. If the House does not support it, then the commission goes back to its merit list, the same merit list, and it will then take the next one at the top. Madam Speaker, the commission, in doing so, would have established from its applicants a group of persons who qualify—qualify—to hold the post of Commissioner of Police and that would be in the documents provided to the Joint Select Committee.

When the first Notification came here, Madam Speaker, before it came to this House, there was a lot of disquiet in the public about how the thing went and all of us, in the Government and I dare say in the Opposition, came here to this House with certain qualms as to what we were dealing with. As a result of that, I, on this side, leading this side, said to this House that the House should seek assistance, and the assistance we sought was to send the Notification that we received to a joint select committee—[*Interruption*—to a special—I keep saying joint select committee—a special select committee of the House which is quite different to a joint select because the other House is not involved. That was done on Friday, February 2nd because this Government is treating with this matter with dispatch. From September 2015 to December 2015 to the start of the process and then it brought to us here, it took a long time as far as we are concerned but it eventually brought to us here, after the court challenge, it brought to us here on Friday, January 26th, the first Notification.

But then, Madam Speaker, we did not adjudicate on that Notification on that day, we sought the assistance of the use of a select committee of the House to see whether in fact what was being said in the public domain, whether it was mischief, it was truth, it was concern, that we will look at it—and the select committee met under colleague, Member of Parliament for Laventille

East/Morvant and—[*Interruption*]—Laventille West, sorry, and other Members of the House and they were able to ask questions of persons who were involved and so on. There were examinations of people under the rules of this House in our committee. Then, the committee reported and expressed to us some concerns of some of the issues that were raised.

Madam Speaker, it was clear to us that—[*Interruption*]—the committee had what?—five meetings from Monday, April 9th to April 26th or from February—and the committee’s interim report came back to us on March 28, 2018, and we had the discussion. There was a debate on the committee report and, of course, there were points of views expressed on both sides and at the end of that debate that was dealing with the committee’s report, one of the positions taken by those on the other side, while we were dealing with the committee report, the work of the committee, the shout from the other side was to “appoint de man” because it was clear that the Opposition felt that we should have appointed the person who was notified to us at that time.

It was the Government’s position that we “shouldn appoint de man” and of course, Madam Speaker, so offended were my colleagues in the proceedings of the House that they left the Chamber and we concluded the country’s business on that occasion by negating the Notification that came to us at that time, which meant that another one will come to us because the commission, under law, having observed and being informed of the negating of the first nominee, went to the list—but for a moment, let me just mention about the list, because I am seeing a lot of national discourse being led by persons, one of whom claims today that if today, the Government chooses this person who is in front of us, that it would be the most egregious act ever committed by a Government because the Government had said that there were flaws in the process.

Madam Speaker, it was not only the Government who said there were flaws, our colleagues also said there were flaws but our colleagues said “appoint de man”, we did not agree, and we proceeded then to use the law, to use the merit list to not agree to other persons. We did not agree to the second Notification, we did not agree to the third Notification and this was the process taking place. Today, we have the fourth one in front of us. So I do not think that we should be previous in determining that this one is being held under any other process. The same process that was used to negative the other three is the same process that could and will or otherwise be used today to negative this one.

Madam Speaker, how did we come to that position? We expressed our view in this House as we are entitled to, as the public was entitled to, that we will view

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this process in a particular way. There were concerns and there are concerns. This Government's major concern and I said so before—I even called it the deal-breaker—our major concern with the work of the commission in establishing its merit list, as only the commission can do, it is only the commission that is authorized under law to establish a merit list and the commission established a merit list and on that merit list, Madam Speaker, the commission placed two persons who had not applied for the job as number one and number two for the post of Commissioner of Police. We discovered that, Madam Speaker, without question by the work of the Hinds' Committee, that select committee, because may I repeat, Madam Speaker, the Government is not informed of any of these details until we come to the Parliament.

I have only now received the CV of Mr. Griffith, it is here and I will come back to it in a little while. Only as I stood up here, Madam Speaker, I came in one minute late and I was able to have this before I was called upon to speak and I am now seeing Mr. Griffith's qualification and his notification for the first time. The Government has no prior knowledge or involvement in the process of any of the nominees.

So the merit list, when we saw it for the first time, by that time we had the work of the committee and we understood and we had it confirmed because it was being rumoured. It was being rumoured that persons who did not apply for the job were in fact the persons who had been offered the job, and persons who applied for the job were, in fact, put further down the list, even though, in some instances, such persons were deemed by the commission to be suitable for the position. I spoke on that matter in here. There was a weirdness involved in it but the Government, the Government satisfied itself and fixed it because we took the position that under no circumstances are we going to accept a person who did not apply for the position into the position of Commissioner of Police.

Madam Speaker, I went further. On nominee number one and nominee number two, I said to this House that our concern was that the persons themselves in applying for the job and not applying for Commissioner of Police could do one of two things. They could be saying to themselves that they do not have the confidence to do the job and, therefore, they do not see that they should be appointed to the job and secondly, they may very well know something about themselves that they would not want to be exposed to an examination on the spotlight of asking for the post at the top of the police service. We said those were the considerations. But in any case, we will confine ourselves on this side to the nominees who applied for the job and so the next part that comes in, nominees

who applied for the job who are on the merit list because there is no other list. The law says that it is only the merit list you can use.

And Madam Speaker, when we sent this matter back to the commission, it was the Leader of the Opposition who asked what was the purpose of the debate, what is the Government's position and I intervened and clarified it. I said the Government's position is that we are sending this back to the commission for its review. That is on *Hansard* and those who do not want to hear it or "doh" want to see it, that does not matter, it is on *Hansard*, because I realized what door was being opened there. We had a debate and my colleagues on the other side were saying the debate was a waste of time because we had not concluded as to what we should do. It was clear to me, they did not know what to do but the Government knew what to do. [*Desk thumping*]

We sent it back to the commission and incidentally, Madam Speaker, in the interim, the commission was under new leadership but some of the members who were there before are still there, very interesting commission, under new leadership with persons who took part in the first process. When it went back to the commission, in writing to this House, I gleaned from what the commission said that they thought that they could review the process in a way to change or remove the merit list. The commission also sought senior counsel advice as the Government did in the interim and the senior counsel advice available to the commission, as the commission told the House, and told us in the country, is that they cannot deviate from the merit list that is established because without the merit list there is no process by which the Government or the Parliament could proceed to appoint a Commissioner of Police.

So whatever we thought before, whatever we thought, constitutionally, it is the merit list and we would be crazy to be told that and then stand on ceremony and say, "Well I did say that I did not like it and I did say I had concerns about it and I am going to do something else". I said in this House, we will do nothing in this process that will allow the Government's actions, at the end of the day, to face challenge in the court that will succeed against the Government's action and I maintain that position today. We have to follow the law and we are following the law.

So we followed the law; as of today, this is the fourth nominee. The first two did not apply for the job and the Government makes no bones about it that we are not, we were not, we now not supporting and we will continue to defend our position. We will not and we did not support those who did not apply for the position. Of course, the argument was from the other side and elsewhere, "Well

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all ah dem applied, they all in the same ball park so they were all stars”. Government does not agree to that, does not agree. Of course, there are those who will say the Government should not agree but that is the Government’s prerogative. [*Desk thumping*]

The third person, the third nominee was the nominee who is today leading the police service and has led the police service for six years. Madam Speaker, I will not go into the report that is in front of us on the state of the police service but permit me one minute to indicate that in the same way we started the process early in our tenure to start to get a Commissioner of Police appointed, we did something else. We appointed a high-powered committee under Prof. Ramesh Deosaran involving the police and other experts in the country to examine the police service under what we call a manpower audit.

2.00 p.m.

Madam Speaker, I do not know how many Members of this House read that manpower audit, a very substantial document, in two volumes. But, subsequent to the committee that received that document which we laid in the Parliament, the Deosaran Committee did yeoman service in this country—[*Desk thumping*—and presented to the Government the findings of that report. We laid that report in this Parliament and sent it immediately to a joint select committee. It is a committee on the state of the police service and I recommend it as bedside reading. If you do not want nightmares, or if you want nightmares, read that as bedside reading in the country. There are restricted volumes available.

I promise today as Prime Minister, to make 10,000 copies of that document available in this country—[*Desk thumping*—so the population could see what is the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago, and to understand why we are losing the fight against the criminal element. I keep saying and I will say it again, I have no named horse in this race, but what I want for myself, for my family and for every citizen in this country is an effective police service. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, when you read that report, and we said it here, we are not going to support nominee No. 3 who was Acting Commissioner for six years. Was it six years?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Worse than I thought, 2012—2018, because, in this case, we are looking at a nominee whose performance—and the record of the organization under his six-year tenure is not one that will change. Again, that is

the Government's view. And what I said on behalf of the Government was, make that nomination, confirm it, and the day after you confirm it, it is business as usual.

Madam Speaker, I could have said that that was unacceptable because I have read the report that is before us now that is going to come for debate early in the next term. Early in the next term we are going to debate that report that has been laid here by the Joint Select Committee on the state of the police service. And anybody who reads that and tells anybody in the Executive that we should appoint the leadership that is there now, clearly does not want any change in what is pathing for policing in Trinidad and Tobago.

I know that there are people in this country, few as they are, but who are hell-bent on locking their fortunes in preservation of what existed here in Trinidad and Tobago. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is not one of those, we want change and we want it—*[Desk thumping]*

Madam Speaker, when you read the state of the police service today, you are asking yourself: How did we get here and how are we going to get out of it? Those questions are still valid, and we started by saying that we are going to have a Commissioner of Police appointed, whose assignment—I could say to you, the report that is before the Parliament, that is going to come up for a debate, would be the work programme of anybody who is appointed as Commissioner of Police, because the recommendations are so many, so varied, so important, so urgent, so critical, that any person who walks into the office of Commissioner of Police, that will have to be the starting point of the assignment and, Madam Speaker, it is one hell of a task. It is not easy.

There are two jobs in this country that are probably the worst two jobs in the country today. One is Prime Minister, and the other is Commissioner of Police. Madam Speaker, some people are surprised that anybody makes themselves available for those jobs, but of course, we do have people who make themselves available for the jobs in the mortuaries, and they are not very pleasant, but they have to be done.

Madam Speaker, so this question of the Government “did say” the process was flawed, so what is it? There is no greater condemnation in this country than a general election. Those of us who have been in Opposition, we spend the whole period telling the country how bad the Government is, and then if the Government wins the election, what does the Opposition say, that they are not the Government? If I feel that I am wrong, and I go to court, knowing that I am right

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and I should win the case and the court rules that you are wrong, what do I say, that “I did say I was right so I am still right”?

We said, Madam Speaker, that we had concerns about the process, and the major concern we have dealt with, by not appointing people who were not applicants for the job. If there are others who have other issues on which to take their position, fine.

We said that we will consider the acting person, because he is an applicant for the job, and we considered and gave serious consideration. But at the end of the consideration, based on our understanding of the progress that has been made and that could be made, painful as it is, we had to put the people's interest before the interest of an individual. Madam Speaker, the Government had no difficulty of doing that without fear or favour, malice or ill will.

So Madam Speaker, that brings us today to the fourth nominee. And if today we do not accept this nominee, as I told you before Madam Speaker, the commission does not report to the Government prior. The commission may have no other nominee, and if they do not, then the process now ends and then we start all over again. And I presume that there are those who will tell us, we start all over again, and we have a guarantee that the outcome would not be any better.

But let me just make a comment with respect to something that I have heard. As soon as it became public that this nominee was likely, or was in line to be accepted by the Government, spokespersons for the Police Second Division jumped out and made a statement that I find quite disturbing. And the statement is this: “Dat they doh want this individual, because politics and police doh mix.” Madam Speaker, let me just for the moment examine that statement, which I find to be a very disturbing statement. Because what the police is saying is that they have an alternative to what might come out of this House, and they might also be saying that they should be left to be pleased in their own way as to who should run the police service.

Let me say something to the police today from the Parliament. Whenever there is a question mark in this country about safety and security, the person who is asked about it is the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. And if that is so, I have heard no murmurs, so I presume that I am right. “Somebody kill somebody, is de Prime Minister. Somebody break ah shop somewhere, is de Prime Minister. Policeman gambling somewhere, is de Prime Minister.”

Madam Speaker, if that is so, and I just point out to you that the Government has no say in the police leadership, but the Prime Minister of Trinidad and

Tobago is also the Prime Minister in that role, is also the Chairman of the National Security Council. And that National Security Council is a repository of information that is not made available to the public at large. I want to remind the public that there is a National Security Council in this country, like in most serious countries, and in that body, there is information that is not available, and I should say: sometimes ought not to be available to the public at large, for better or for worse. I think for better.

Madam Speaker, the police spokespersons have taken this position that they, and I will interpret it this way, will not support a nominee if it is made today in this way. That, Madam Speaker, is an unacceptable position, because first and foremost, persons who are employed as police officers in this country are not employed there for their own personal entitlement. They are employed there to carry out the duties for which they have been hired. [*Desk thumping*] And I will go further to say some of them have either carried out those duties, or failed to carry out those duties in such a horrible manner, that they have put at risk every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago. And that does not in any way, Madam Speaker, take away from us the fact that there are police officers, men and women, in and out of uniform, who are going beyond the call of duty. [*Desk thumping*]

But, Madam Speaker, this is not the first time that we would have made an intervention into the police service. I was a Member of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago when this crime story started to grow, when the first seeds of this crime explosion started, and everybody in this country was saying the way to deal with it is to bring in Scotland Yard, bring in Scotland Yard, Scotland Yard being the best yardstick of police measurement, Metropolitan Police in the UK who would come here and assist us in strengthening our police service. The Prime Minister of the day did just that, brought in SAUTT and got the support of the British Government and they sent Scotland Yard officers to Trinidad and Tobago to assist the police service in discharging its responsibility in a much better way than they were doing. And, Madam Speaker, the record will show that one of the responses of senior police officers to the Scotland Yard officer in one police station was to pull a gun on the Scotland Yard officer and order him out of his office. That is the history of this country.

So today, Madam Speaker, I take very careful note of the statement made by the officer and I hope that that is just a knee-jerk reaction because, Madam Speaker, we just cannot go on this way. We just cannot go on this way. [*Desk thumping*]

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Madam Speaker, I am not sure that ANSA McAL or OCM or any serious state company will have a management with a record like what is reported in that document which we are going to get to in about a month or two and decide that the way to do this is to subscribe to the principle of physician heal thyself. Madam Speaker, it is the view of this Government that even without this nominee or any other, the current police service is not able to heal itself. And Madam Speaker, it is on that basis that this nomination before us is to be considered by all of us.

And I say something else. I heard my colleagues on the other side today telling the media they want to know the Government's position before they could add their own. Madam Speaker, this Notification is not here to the Government. It is here to all 41 Members of the House of Representatives, and so, Madam Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to join this debate on this extremely critical juncture in our history.

Madam Speaker, the speaker before me, the Member for Diego Martin West, by my—when the Prime Minister spoke I did undertake a time-accounting exercise and discovered that the speaker had about six minutes left, by my calculation, roughly. And it was during those six minutes I was expecting the Member for Diego Martin West to indicate categorically whether you are in support of Gary Trevor Griffith Jr. to be the next Commissioner of Police, yes or no. The Member for Diego Martin West did not commit himself there, with good reason, I suspect, he did not commit himself there.

But, Madam Speaker, I will also begin with a truism that Sir Walter Scott reminded us over 200 years ago, “O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive”. And today, Madam Speaker, we are in a tangled web, and this is why the speaker before me could not take his last six minutes, because he is in a tangled web—do I accept/do I not accept?—and ended by telling us the Motion is before us and the Motion is for accepting, and the Member for Diego Martin West has begged to move a Motion standing in his name. So if he is moving a Motion standing in his name, he is moving to accept. He is moving to accept.

You see, Madam Speaker, this moment is a moment we waited. And in my time-accounting analysis, 21 minutes into the speech of the Member for Diego Martin West, the word “Griffith” was mentioned, 21 minutes, and I have a tag of

all the issues raised. But when we came to look at the CV and the analysis, the Member for Diego Martin West said: “Look, today I came one minute late and the CV is on my desk”. But it went to all of us on July 25th by email. I presume it would have gone to the Member for Diego Martin West as well. But it was the first time he saw it, so quite rightly, could not comment on the CV of the candidate before us. And there may be another reason why they were not able to do that, and I will come to that in a while.

You see, Madam Speaker, I will respond to a few matters raised by the Member for Diego Martin West. But today we are here to look at the nomination of a candidate, although we did not hear one word about the strengths or weaknesses of this candidate from the mover of the Motion who, until this time, is moving a Motion to affirm. We did not hear one word. But this is not the first time Mr. Griffith is a nominee for COP. He was a nominee in 2007 for St. Ann’s East, of the Congress of the People. So he is a second nominee.

But, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister was very clear to take us through the process and look at all the build-up and the select committee's work and all the work that we have done before on this matter and the problem with candidates.

You see, Madam Speaker, I also want to join that line that was started and left by the Member for Diego Martin West. Because, the Member for Diego Martin West did not spend time at all, although he had time, on the CV of the candidate. Madam Speaker, it was on June 06, 2018, quite recently, during a debate on the matter of that select committee, raised by the Member for Diego Martin West, that words were used. Madam Speaker, today I heard it again. The Member for Diego Martin West said:

“I have no horse in this race.”

Is it a goat? Is it crab? I have no horse and if I had a horse I would call the police, given what had happened at the commission—Madam Speaker, it is here in the *Hansard*—given what had happened at the Police Service Commission:

“...if I had a horse in this race...if I put a bet in that race, I was going to call in the police.”

—because things were so bad.

The language used, Madam Speaker, on that day is inexplicable ranking. The findings were perverted. It was manipulated by unseen hands. It is flawed.

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“...the process is flawed, how can you...accept the outcome when it is so patently capricious?”

When it gives an advantage to one? There is no rationale for the final output. We have no choice but to reject the process. We had no choice but to reject the process; not to reject the candidate on that day, the process. So,

“What we are doing here is sending it straight back to the commission and telling them what they have put before the House cannot stand scrutiny because you have not in fact followed the order.”

—meaning the Legal Order. The Prime Minister spent a considerable amount of time, 21 minutes on this matter of the Order and the evolution of this legal issue.

He went on, on that day:

“...sending it back to the Police Service Commission and saying to them follow the Order, be fair, be transparent and not have disquiet in the country, that you are manipulated by unseen hands...We are sending it back to follow the law, follow the Order and not unseen hands trying to give us a Commissioner. [*Desk thumping*]”

Madam Speaker, if the process was so bad for one, how could it be good for another? That is the fundamental issue. [*Desk thumping*] If the process was flawed, as the Member for Diego Martin West told us on that evening, the reality is that the process was severely flawed, unsafe, unsatisfactory, unsound and unreliable, the process. That process gave rise to a merit list. The candidate before us is on that merit list. If the process was wrong for A, B and C, how it could be right to have D? [*Desk thumping*] That is the issue.

Let me make the point very clearly. Madam Speaker, most, if not all of us on this side, we are known to and know the candidate, the nominee. We know him professionally. We worked in Cabinet. The Prime Minister did not say that, but he knows that. He will not say that. Those words will not be uttered from those opposite. Worked in Cabinet. Worked as National Security Advisor. Worked on the National Security Council. We know the gentleman professionally. I have said in the press, I say it again, the gentleman is a very able gentleman, very useful, hard-working, committed. We are known to each other, even socially.

He is a gentleman, Madam Speaker, you could see him at large in town—and town is not one specific place, Member for San Fernando West—at large in town, and he is known to all of us. The issues we are raising have absolutely nothing to

do with Gary Griffith specifically. It has nothing do with that. It has to with the hypocrisy of the Government. It has to do with this double standard. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, when this game started—I will use an analogy that the Member for Diego Martin West, maybe more than anybody else could understand. When we teed off for this round, the Member for Diego Martin West knew it was a dogleg hole and he knew where the flagstick was planted. And today we arrive at a juncture where the only person who knows where the flagstick is planted is the one who moved this Motion, and it is a dogleg hole, so you cannot see it. And that is why today, the Prime Minister could not use—this is probably the first time in life I have ever heard, in all these years, that the Member for Diego Martin West could not use all of his time.

Madam Speaker, when you look at the CV of the candidate—and I have read it; I do not want to quote because my time also would be limited—it is very instructive that this candidate, quite properly, puts as his major achievement, all the achievements under the Member for Siparia, Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*] I mean, all the Members would have the documents, and so on. But the candidate lists all the achievements of the People's Partnership, when I looked at the CV. This really is a manifesto document for the Partnership and the UNC.

Madam Speaker, set up the National Operations Centre, built nine police stations. It is performance-directed. This is a manifesto of the People's Partnership, all his achievements as National Security Minister, National Security Advisor. In fact, with great respect to the nominee, I did not see much achievement before 2010 at that level. But the Prime Minister will not tell you that today, it may be the Government's intention to huff the National Security Minister of the People's Partnership, to huff him. But do not praise those on this side for the performance of the People's Partnership Administration. It speaks about armoured cars being ordered, dealing with gangs, dealing with E999 rapid patrol, and so on, all the policies that the Member for Point Fortin dismantled, that were established by this candidate. [*Desk thumping*]

So, after today you will not have the moral authority to ever condemn the United National Congress on not fighting crime. [*Desk thumping*] Because if it is that your pick is a People's Partnership Minister and National Security Advisor for almost five continuous years, you cannot now accuse us of not dealing with crime.

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But you see Madam Speaker, the matter does not end there. This candidate is on public record as condemning acts of this Government as well. The Member for—what is it, he always moves—Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West made some comments about facial recognition. Mr. Griffith responded promptly to tell him effectively that he was not speaking the truth. And that is commissioner for you, to tell him that he is not speaking the truth, and the former administration had no facial recognition CCTV, and so on, that he was being untruthful. The candidate issued a press release and reminded us of the failures of this administration, as it relates to the United Nations Resolution 2178, as it relates to the National Operations Centre, as it relates to their international work. So Madam Speaker, the candidate has been an outspoken critic of this Government, and that is very clear.

But, Madam Speaker, as we move along there are a couple of other matters that are of great interest to us today. The Prime Minister spoke of the Order that they came with and they were committed to getting a commissioner of police and by December 2015 had an Order, and so on. And I like how that narrative takes its spin. The narrative deals with those of us on this side putting on court clothes. It does not deal with a judge in the High Court saying that the Order was flawed. And there is a fundamental issue here at the root. At root of this issue is that when the law was changed, it was changed to remove political influence in the appointment of the Commissioner of Police. That was the purpose of that. And the hon. Patrick Manning, deceased Patrick Manning, stated on the *Hansard* record that the purpose of that amendment was to remove the overt political influence. Madam Speaker, I put it to you today and to this country, we have gone back to the dark old days of a prime ministerial veto, where you sit in a room, cigar in hand, brandy in the next and you just reject, reject, until you get the candidate of your choice. That is where we are.

Justice Rajkumar, the effect of that judgment when read is that the judge dealt with the issue of political influence, that the Police Service Commission should not even have the appearance of being influenced by any politician, Minister of National Security or otherwise. That is the essence of the judgment. But today, we came to the Parliament, one gone; we came to the Parliament, two gone; we came to the Parliament, three gone; we came to the Parliament, half-way gone.

Hon. Member: Half pregnant.

Dr. R. Moonilal: And that is it. If the process is flawed, it is flawed. It cannot be half flawed, as you reminded us, it cannot be half pregnant. But today there is a kind of shimmy that you do not know what they are doing. But you know, they

did not reject as they rejected on the last occasion. They did not reject. But I think they are in a mood where they are scared. They are scared. They are afraid to stand up in the country in broad daylight and say: We accept Gary Griffith as Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*] They will come maybe later in the night and do that. They are scared.

Madam Speaker, there are several reasons why they ought to be, because this is a matter—I do not want to quote Michael Harris again, and so on. It was already quoted, but to indicate, Madam Speaker, that while we have no difficulty at all with Mr. Griffith, and as I said before, well known to us, worked with many, if not all on this side of the House. There are issues.

Madam Speaker, in the last week in this country, the Prime Minister, in dealing with the first nominee and the rationale for sending it to a select committee, said that the country was awash with public disquiet about all types of controversies. Madam Speaker, the last week, some of us who may be old enough to know, there is a show called the Andy Griffith Show, Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Last week was the Gary Griffith Show. Every day: “I am the man for you. I am de dis for dat”. Mr. Griffith has received endorsements from a former Commissioner of Police, Trevor Paul, I think from a former National Security Minister, Jack Warner, from columnists, from letters to the editor and a touching endorsement from Mrs. Griffith as well. So, the last week has been this show, and nothing is wrong with that. Nothing at all is wrong with that. The person is well equipped. But that was also public disquiet. So if you had public disquiet on one candidate over land matters or other matters, you had public disquiet as well. Mr. Israel Khan SC was on television making an argument.

Today, the Government is putting one step forward, but is afraid to cross a line here. They are putting one step forward because they intend to appoint a key witness in a criminal matter against a political opponent. So, that is a fact. You see, a couple of weeks ago they were circulating a scrapbook somewhere. And in that scrapbook, the first person targeted was not the Member for Siparia. The first person targeted was not the Member for Oropouche East. The first person targeted was the former Attorney General, Anand Ramlogan. But the candidate before us, I am speaking to the candidate, is a witness against a political opponent of the Government. That has certain ramifications, as Mr. Israel Khan SC pointed out. That has ramifications.

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So as Commissioner of Police he goes to court to testify against a political opponent of the Government, the Government, which today, is shaking a little bit, but appears to support him. That is a matter I put on the agenda. That is a matter I put on the table, because you are really appointing a witness in a matter against a political opponent, and that is a fact. I say nothing about the character/credibility of Mr. Griffith.

Madam Speaker, I do not want to go through all the achievements of Mr. Griffith because, as I said it is listed. I remember Mr. Griffith was very, very passionate about all matters of national security. I worked for about four years with Mr. Griffith, maybe almost five, at a level of a National Security Council and there are very few things I can say or complain or criticize.

2.30 p.m.

One I can say is that sometimes, you know, the gentleman is a bit overzealous. But that is how it happens as well, some people are like that. But there is nothing really I want to say to that.

But I want to go back—today the Member for Diego Martin West who is halfway recommending Mr. Griffith, who is moving a Motion to affirm and did not indicate as he did before that the Government will not support. I just want to ask the Member for Diego West, and I need my glasses for this one. What has changed in your mind? What has changed? Because, I am speaking to the candidate now, the candidate.

You see, Madam Speaker, in doing my research on this candidate, the Member for Diego Martin West over the years, in 2013, made startling and damning revelations and allegations and accusations in this very House, sitting opposite, and involving no less a person than the nominee before us. And I ask the Member for Diego Martin West, in that contribution on Monday, May 20, 2013 when you identified former Ministers and Prime Minister, you also identified Capt. Gary Griffith, and was quoting allegedly, purportedly, from emails sent between the former Attorney General and one Capt. Griffith, in which you are quoting, Member for Diego Martin West, I am quoting your words in *Hansard*:

“...a reporter from the *Guardian* called me...involving our boys. I need...to get your feelers out there and nip”—this—“story. Call the...Editor and threaten her with ads...”

This is what was being said to Mr. Griffith. Mr. Griffith was also replying, he was also replying to the then, allegedly: Okay, I will block the story.

“Call a meeting we need to talk urgently.”

It continued, Madam Speaker, in which the Member for Diego Martin West was raising an issue. He said allegedly an email went to Capt. Griffith; it said:

“We have a problem. Things are getting heated...Need access to taps in DPP office. I want to know...next move...”

And hear what allegedly, purportedly, the Member for Diego Martin West is saying, that one Capt. Griffith say:

“I will call SSA and get B...I will call SSA and get B.”—and deal with that.

You know what the then Opposition Leader was saying? He was saying that Capt. Gary Griffith is conspiring, accusing him of conspiring to wiretap the office of the DPP.

What changed in your mind? Stand up today in the Parliament and tell the nation that this is fake, this was a hoax, this was a political—[*Desk thumping*]—because surely, you cannot be saying to the country that a man who you are describing here, Madam Speaker, as taking instructions from Attorney General purportedly, taking instructions to:

“Do a trace”—on a—“reporter”—she—“has skeletons in”—the—“closet...post it”—on—“Facebook...”

“Do a trace”—

This—“will take...”

—and here, Capt. Griffith is allegedly responding:

“Yes boss.”

“That will take the heat off”—for—“a while...”

Madam Speaker, all I ask the Member for Diego Martin West today, do you still believe this to be true or not? [*Desk thumping*] If you believe it to be true, then you cannot, in good conscience or in bad conscience, you cannot support Capt. Gary Griffith. But if you believe this is a hoax that you yourself perpetrated—

Mr. Indarsingh: Concocted.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Then you should apologize to Trinidad and Tobago today. [*Desk thumping*] You see, you cannot in 2013 be accusing the gentleman of conspiracy to murder, to wiretap the DPP office and today stand in Parliament and say I support him for Commissioner of Police. Or, is it that you wish he would do something like that for you? [*Desk thumping*]

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Madam Speaker, this is a serious matter. This is a matter where vote or no vote, the Prime Minister must declare whether he stands by his statement on May 20, 2013, or he does not stand by this statement, and there are implications for both answers. I leave that there because I think the gentleman understands well that point.

Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Government could have simply come to the Parliament in the beginning and say “Look, we want to go back to the veto.” We want to go back to the veto. And we do not support one, two, three, we support four. We had to go through and spend millions of dollars, undermine the image of a global auditing and accounting firm, KPMG. Incidentally, that firm is now advertising on Caribbean Airlines magazine. Caribbean Airlines is—state-owned Caribbean Airlines has a whole full-page ad, with KPMG speaking about their professionalism and competence and the great job they do, while the Government condemned them in Parliament.

We undermined the Police Service Commission to get to this point, a tangled web, we undermined all of that, spent millions of dollars when all you wanted was a candidate. And if you wanted the candidate, stand up and say so. We want this candidate, this is the candidate of choice, and then who knows, we could have arranged ourselves. But every week, sine die, sine die, sine die to come back to get Gary Griffith. Sine die in Latin, I think it means “see you next week”.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Griffith—and the Prime Minister dealt a bit with the police service and some of the issues coming there. The other point, and I just put it on the table, because I said, Mr. Gary Griffith may well go on to be an outstanding and high-performing Commissioner of Police. May well go on to that. I do not think so, and it has nothing to do with Gary Griffith. Mr. Griffith will not have the human resources, financial resources and he will not have a supporting team as he did when he worked within the People’s Partnership. [*Desk thumping*] He will not.

The matter, Madam Speaker, is that it is also clear to us that this entire process has brought into ridicule institutions of the State, the Police Service Commission in particular. But this is also in a way defeating the court. Because in the judgment of the court, they asked specifically, it was in a way specifically to remove political intervention and influence. So when you come and you just veto, veto, veto and get to your candidate, effectively it is the political directorate, it is the head of Government that is doing this. So we have returned full circle to that process. It may be full circle, yes, but at least this time some of us, we can talk, it is not done in a dark room somewhere.

Madam Speaker, when we look at the candidate before us, the candidate before us will have several challenges, assuming the candidate is accepted. And those challenges came out incidentally in the reports, in the various reports. I want to just place on record in case anyone may harbour a thought—when the select committee of Parliament met, it was to consider the nominees that were given by Her Excellency the President, specifically two—Mr. Dulalchan, Mr. Phillip. At no time was a select committee there to consider anybody else. So, it would have been wrong and out of place for a select committee to reflect on Mr. Griffith or Mr. Williams or—

Mr. Charles: Repeat that, repeat it.

Dr. R. Moonilal: So that Mr. Griffith had never been the subject of a select committee of Parliament.

Dr. Tewarie: You better say that twice.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Again, let me say it the third time. The select committee of Parliament had to reflect only on what was before the Parliament—Mr. Dulalchan and Mr. Phillip. [*Desk thumping*] We could not and we sought legal advice on that matter; it was the Director of Personnel Administration who came, raised the issue—we sought legal advice. At no time did the select committee reflect on any other candidate that was not before the Parliament.

Hon. Member: Who was the Chair of that committee?

Dr. R. Moonilal: It was chaired by the Member for Laventille West. So, Madam Speaker, Mr. Griffith was never the subject of a select committee, was never the subject. But, today, Mr. Griffith is the subject before us, in this matter.

The other point that we make on this matter is that we have taken on this side a principled position from day one on this matter. We have said that while there were issues with the process and so on, the process was never fundamentally flawed. The Prime Minister has made in the Parliament, I do not know if he makes the argument elsewhere—he would be at risk to say this outside—but has made in the Parliament an argument that the only reason they have—I think it is the only reason they have rejected two nominees—is because those who were doing this, KPMG in particular and PSC, took the approach of having a core talent pool strategy. The Prime Minister says this in the House. I ask the Prime Minister if he is brave enough to say that outside the House.

They have taken this position that two citizens of this country, outstanding citizens, policemen—career policemen—have been rejected by this Parliament

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because they just did not apply for the top job. They applied for the second one. And when a talent-pool strategy was used, it emerged that they could be considered for either job. [*Desk thumping*] That is a dangerous thing, it is a dangerous rack to hang your hat. In Tobago we have that saying too.

Madam Speaker, they are hanging their hat on a rack that has woodlice—that the only reason you reject two outstanding candidates is that they just did not apply for the job, when the people have told you a thousand times it is a common talent pool. [*Desk thumping*]

So two persons rejected. One rejected because he was not a change agent of some kind. He was there a long time acting and we do not have confidence in him. Fine, and today you come today to halfway accept, because you are halfway accepting this candidate who properly applied for the position.

Madam Speaker, that has implications, in this matter all type, even before this day will finish today there are all types of lawsuits all over the place. You know, it is like who taking a lawsuit next. Who bringing out a band next?

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, your original 30 minutes are now spent, you are entitled to—

Dr. R. Moonilal: Please, thank you.

Madam Speaker: You may proceed.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So it is—who taking—you have heard of Wayne Hayde taking action against who—for leaking documents, or leaking information. You have heard of Mr. Griffith himself challenging the Police Service Commission; when we are done today you will have an avalanche of lawsuits on our hands that they will have to deal with one way or another. That is also another implication.

But you see, Madam Speaker, I just want to touch on the matter I raised earlier, and it is a matter in our documents that we had. Mr. Griffith has an advantage and some believe a disadvantage. The advantage is that he is not a career policeman. So he brings presumably a fresh perspective, a new way of thinking, a much more practical approach maybe. There are some say the disadvantage, it is in black and white as well. Some say the disadvantage is he will not have knowledge of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service—operational.

Another issue that came up is that Mr. Griffith is very strong policy-wise, he has a very rich policy attribute in his CV and so on. But, one downside was the

operational side, which some of us who know him believe that that is no downside at all, because we also knew him to be hands-on and have a great grasp for operational matters and so on. So there are challenges that will be made, unless I am mistaken, and I stand corrected, Mr. Griffith could yet emerge as the first non-police officer to be Commissioner of Police of Trinidad and Tobago. Unless I am mistaken, because Mr. Gibbs was indeed a police officer in another jurisdiction.

Those matters would have challenge. I wanted to speak a little bit about the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and their response. Judging from the statements made by leading persons in the police service and the spokesmen—really I think of the union there, the police service—they have raised problems. Mr. Griffith is a high-performance person, we know that. I believe that Mr. Griffith will have conflict with the First Division, the Second Division, the Third Division, the Fourth Division and the Fifth Division. If it have all. But that will be another challenge facing a nominee like this, to work within an institution but yet change the institution. That will be a fundamental challenge. It will be left to be seen whether indeed Mr. Griffith can cross that boundary.

Today I am pointing out, Madam Speaker, the hypocrisy and double standards of this Government, while at the same time, I am saying that the candidate can work if given the resources and supportive environment and so on. You see, in this Parliament, Madam Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East in particular would stand tall, would stand tall, and condemn journalists and columnists as being MPs and, you know, Members of Parliament and former political operatives and so on, it is no secret, Mr. Griffith is a former candidate for a general election, has been associated with political parties and so on. The Government will today tell us that they have all confidence in this nominee that he is quite able to leap over partisan political matters, leap over that and exercise authority in a fair way regardless of politics.

And while that may be a matter that they may treat lightly, it a matter that the Member for Diego Martin North/East in particular has spoken to in this Parliament and they have to speak to that. But you see the mover of this Motion did not bother to look at the CV, he said he got it a minute ago before coming in or after coming in, did not look at the CV of the candidate, which speaks to that. In fact the candidate has been very open, Madam Speaker, in dealing with some of the matters. But again, you know, the Member for St. Joseph is not here today, he is somewhere else; he is not here. But I cannot forget, you know he had a saying

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when we were in those meetings and in the Parliament, how could you have a good fruit out of what—?

Mr. Singh: A poisoned tree.

Dr. R. Moonilal: A poisoned tree. The process was so bad, but today I imagine we have a good fruit from a poisoned tree, today. Madam Speaker, our candidate before us can rightly speak to several accomplishments and there are a couple that concern us. In this debate I am hoping that the Member for Point Fortin would rise at some time and contribute, because at least overseeing the police service—falls under National Security and having Cabinet responsibility and so on, because you see, for this candidate to be successful, the candidate has to undo the bad work of the Member for Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*]

And the candidate is very clear, Madam Speaker, about the blunders and the inefficiencies and incompetencies of the Member for Point Fortin, and they will now be called upon to meet and treat with the Member for Point Fortin to implement new policies and new programmes, Madam Speaker. So, Member for Point Fortin, are we going to return to the National Operations Centre? Member for Point Fortin, are we going to reestablish the Rapid Response Unit? Member for Point Fortin, are we going to return to the counter-human-trafficking unit? Are we going to return to the National Security Training Academy? Are we going for the establishment of the energy sector security initiative, Member for Point Fortin? Most of all, are we going to reestablish the Community Comfort Patrol, [*Desk thumping*] which I want to say was really the brainchild of Gary Trevor Griffith Jr. [*Desk thumping*] And when he came to the National Security Council, we cannot talk that business, but what I could tell you is when he came to the Government he got the full support of these measures from Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] Full support. Will you support that today?

You see, the Government has to say why they would likely support Mr. Griffith. Why? The Prime Minister had six minutes to do that and could not do it. Why do you support this—“it cyah be you run out of candidates”.

Madam Speaker, when the list comes to an end, they can start over the process. But there is something about this candidate that you like. That you “jibbing”, but you want to support. There must be something about this candidate that you like, and tell us what. Is it his achievements under the Partnership?

Mr. Indarsingh: To wiretap.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Is it some allegations you have made over the years that you think those are now becoming attractive skills, those may be attractive skills that may be needed, is it that? Is it that he is in the courthouse somewhere and you think there is some attraction there? But I cannot believe that the Member for Diego Martin West moved a Motion in support of a candidate and did not tell us nothing about the candidate. And worse, tell us I saw the CV a minute ago before I started to talk. You see, Madam Speaker, oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Sounding like the CEPEP accounts.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, I am reading from the CV that was kindly, you know, presented to us. The Member for Diego Martin West did not tell us, is it because one of the achievements here—not achievement, but one of the decisive actions taken by the candidate is establishing a precedent for the provision of a security detail to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. Is it because you got a security detail when you were Leader of the Opposition? What is it? What attracts you about this candidate? That is what I am getting to. The candidate has a long history, Madam Speaker, and this is something also of good use, of dealing with international agencies and dealing with the international side of crime fighting. He has a long history; in fact he was associated with the Rudy Giuliani initiative, Madam Speaker, coming to Trinidad and Tobago to give advice and so on.

And you know, Madam Speaker, over the years, not just the Member for Diego Martin West, but several speakers on that side—it is just that I do not want to waste time with too much *Hansard* record—but many speakers on the other side stood in this Parliament and knocked Gary Griffith every time he would come here as National Security Minister, they would get up after and knock him down, everything he said, his policy, his programme, everything. Today they are sheepish, sheepish, quiet, [*Desk thumping*] looking on, you know, looking on for direction from the Member for Diego Martin West. I understand the policy was say nothing, do nothing, and see nothing until the Member for Diego Martin West talked.

So, Madam Speaker, you need to tell us why you are in support of this candidate. You need to tell us that. And I like the way the debate is approaching, the Prime Minister will lead us to believe that—look, we have the Parliament received the Manpower Audit Report from Prof. Deosaran, we have a blueprint to solve crime, “We have all these policies and ting, we need somebody to do it.” So the somebody does not really have much policy, latitude and direction and so

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on, you know. Anybody comes on this job—if the Member for San Fernando East loses a next Ministry, we appoint him. And he could do the same thing. Anybody we put there has to follow the blueprint of manpower audit and all the things that—I do not know if it is the national security committee’s doing. So whether it is Mr. Griffith or not, you know that is a way of pouring cold water on the nominee. Whether it is this nominee or not, they have to follow the blueprint—

Hon. Member: Ten thousand copies.

Dr. R. Moonilal: And I want to ask the Prime Minister, please, the manpower audit, why do you not just put it on a website, instead of printing 10,000 copies and so on? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Save money.

Dr. R. Moonilal: You already print 25,000 copies of the scrapbook and lost an election with that—[*Desk thumping and laughter*—I do not think you should print further.

So Madam Speaker, the manpower audit, quite rightly raised several issues. So the Government—is it that the Government is attempting to use the national security committee to draw up a blueprint for crime fighting and give Mr. Griffith and say, “Mr. Griffith look, implement this.” It cannot be, Mr. Griffith is quite an independent man, he will have his views, he will have views of his own. He will have, you know, his own know-how, he will have his own thoughts and programmes and policies and so on.

Dr. Tewarie: Could manage him.

Dr. R. Moonilal: And I do not know who on that side, I do not know who on that side, I am looking for the softest way to say this, but I do know who on that side giving Mr. Griffith a blueprint and say, “implement that”. He will come back with a yellow print, a purple print, a red print. Because he is an independent fellow and when he size up a story and a problem, you know, he will have his views. So I take umbrage to that approach as well; that is the point I am making—that you come to appoint a Police Commissioner who is independent, has complete control over the manpower, has financial autonomy, has control over the men and women in the service. And is there to come up with his own plan, and you say we have a plan we are producing, a blueprint, go and implement that. That again shows you that there is no synchronization.

Mr. Singh: Nice word.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The Police Commissioner has to come to you and give him your plan, and implement his plan to deal with what he has seen. You do not come and tell him we pass in Parliament 20 measures and I want you to implement; it does not work like that.

And I come now, Madam Speaker, in closing, in winding up to indicate that all that has happened today is that we are returning to the old veto system of political interference in the appointment of a Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*] It is unfair to Gary Griffith, it is unfair to Gary Griffith who has served this country as well to put him through this process and to have him selected and appointed in this manner. It is unfair. Because what you have done is you have used a political card, staying within the ambit of what you believe to be your legal authority but you have pulled a political card on a legal table and said that is the man for the job, and you place him now in a position that could compromise him; if he does something to the left it is because of this, if he does something to the right it is because of that. He got the job by this way and he will do that. If he does not do that, there is a problem here and there are compromising individuals as they go along.

By nightfall, Gary Trevor Griffith could be the Commissioner of Police of this country. But the challenge he will face is not only fighting crime it is keeping political sharks outside of his door. [*Desk thumping*] Because political sharks will come to him to do their bidding because they believe that that is the escape trick, that is the David Copperfield, Houdini, in the next 24 months. They have a Houdini trick, and they believe that Commissioner Griffith will do that. I do not believe that, I do not believe that, they may believe that but I do not, but Mr. Griffith will have to summon the strength, all the strengths that Mrs. Griffith and others spoke about, to keep at bay political predators who may seek to undermine the office of Commissioner of Police. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Next, next, next.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am surprised that given the foundation that was laid by my colleague from Oropouche that other members of the House would not have been building on it. Well, I am ready and prepared—Madam Speaker, let me read the Motion again because apparently the basis for the contribution of my colleague from Oropouche is a gross misunderstanding of the English language.

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I am just going to read the resolution, Madam Speaker; I would not detain the House with anything more than the resolution because after I read the recitals it said: “Be it resolved”—and I did say, Madam Speaker, the requirements of putting my presentation on *Hansard*, did say that the Motion is in my name. I begged your indulgence, Madam Speaker, to raise a Motion standing in my name, as Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, and then the resolution said:

“*Be it resolved* that the Notification of the President of the nomination by the Police Service Commission of Mr. Gary Griffith to the office of Commissioner of Police be approved.”

Madam Speaker, that is what I said to the House and however I comment on it or around it does not change that. Because that is the law, and the Constitution will have nothing else. All the shenanigans and all the carryings-on of my friend from Oropouche East do not change that resolution. So to get up here and say he wants to know what my position is before he can determine whether in fact the Government has a position—I have said from this place on many occasions, Madam Speaker, that the Government is clear as to what its position is. And it is a bit, you know, of self-praise for those on the other side to be forever assuming that the Government does not know what it is doing and they know what the Government is doing and doing wrong and therefore it is a problem. And now he comes here and says, to use the analogy of golf, it is a “dogleg” and the Prime Minister is the only one who knows where the flag is. Well, I always know where the flag is once I get on the tee box.

3.00 p.m.

So, Madam Speaker, he is admitting that the Government always knew where the flag is. The Government always knew where the flag is because the Government knew that the flag is by where the loss of the Government is supposed to be. Yet again, Madam Speaker, a speaker from the other side gets up and chastises the Government for following the law—he does not like the law—and here he comes again today speaking for his colleagues, my friend, the Member for Oropouche East—my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East—saying that what we should have done, the Government should have come here and said to the Opposition that the Government wants X or Y and let us find a way to end up with X or Y. Madam Speaker, that is precisely what would have got the Government into trouble because if we had come here, ignoring what the law spells out for us to do and seek to make any arrangement with this Opposition, we would have been acting in great danger and possibly illegally and I explained this before.

This Government is not prepared to hug up any porcupine [*Desk thumping*] because, Madam Speaker, the minute we had set about to pursue any course of action which was different from what the law says, it would have meant that we would get into a situation with the Opposition in trying to figure out what is to replace what exists now, and any replacement to what exists now would have required a special majority and the Government would have walked into the jaws of the Opposition which has stated publicly it does not intend to agree with anything the Government brings to this House. [*Desk thumping*] And then, Madam Speaker, if we had done that and put ourselves in a position not to be able to appoint a Commissioner of Police, then this Government would have done exactly what the last Government did and end our term without a Commissioner of Police being in office, and we say a substantive Commissioner of Police is a mandate that this Government has—to put one in office—and we keep that mandate. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I heard my friend, the Member for Oropouche West—I keep saying West—the Member for Oropouche East saying that the select committee that was chaired by my colleague, the Member for Laventille West, did not deal with anything other than the notifications of the first two nominees. Madam Speaker, I do not think that that is a correct statement and I am sure that that statement by the record of the Parliament will show not to be correct. But I will tell you, Madam Speaker, what went to that select committee were the concerns of things that may or may not have happened which were being discussed in the public domain, and it was not simply about the two individuals or three individuals who were on the notification list.

I, the mover of the Motion, I said rather than move forward immediately, I recommended to this House that those of us on this side and the entire House should seek assistance by using our process of the House to have these concerns examined in a select committee and that is why a select committee was appointed, Madam Speaker. It was largely in response to what was being put in the public domain as what may or may not have happened. I did not go into any detail as to what the specifics were. I simply invoked the use of the select committee to use—the word I used then was “assistance”. It was my colleague, the Member for Siparia, who went into detail of saying what certain specifics were, what might have been done, what might not have been done and some of it may be true or not true but, in fact, we did not join that debate.

Madam Speaker, we are responsible for our own positions in this House. We did not join our colleagues on the other side to take issue with who coach who,

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who was friend with who, who was batchmate with who. We did not do that, but we took issue with one of the concerns that we came in here with, that we dealt with. And it was this, Madam Speaker, if it is that it was confirmed that persons who did not apply for the job were, in fact, nominated for the position, we had an issue with that, and we stand with it, and any flaw that we had an issue with, we rectified it by saying that we are not going to accept any such person, and since the merit list contained such persons, then they are null and void and of no effect to the extent that they did not apply for the job on that list, and as far as we are concerned, case closed. [*Desk thumping*]

And I want to say something else too, Madam Speaker, to my colleagues on the other side about the process now being used to select Griffith if he is selected. We are suddenly now using the process. It is the same process we used to negative the first one. It is the same process we used to negative the second one. It is the same process we used to negative the third one. So there is no question of us invoking the process now when, in fact, the process was used the way it was meant to use to negative. And if they had a hundred nominees and the Government wanted the 100th one, the only way we could have dealt with it was to negative all 99 one by one. [*Desk thumping*] It is a non-argument. [*Desk thumping*] That is what the law puts in place and if it is tedious and laborious, then so be it.

Madam Speaker, I take careful note of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is for another time absent from a debate of this nature. I take careful note [*Crosstalk*] except to draw to the country's attention, Madam Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition was the leader of the Government that for three years did not see this assignment as an important one for the Government to deal with. [*Desk thumping*] So while in Government it did not make the hit parade, in Opposition—

Mr. Lee: Madam Speaker, 48(1). What is the relevance of what the Prime Minister is saying?

Madam Speaker: Overruled. Prime Minister.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I want to repeat it. While they were in Government, this assignment of having a substantive Commissioner of Police was not important enough for a Government for three years to have got a substantive Commissioner of Police appointed. So be it. That was your position. You did not see it as important, we see it as important. We are now in Government, you are in Opposition. The matter is going through the House after a period of delay, as far

as we are concerned—is going through the House—and you could not even be bothered to show up. That tells you how important it is to you all. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Standing Order 48(6). The Member is implying that there is some other motive in the Member for Siparia not being here. She is not on the doorstep waiting for you to call Parliament through the holidays.

Madam Speaker: Member. Member for Oropouche East, I heard your objections, I overruled. And remember when you do it, it is succinct. Okay? Please. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, in the contribution of the Member for Oropouche East, he did imply, and in fact stated that there was some other process that could have been used that may have found favour with the Opposition or not. I do not know what the process is. Madam Speaker, in an exercise to appoint a Commissioner of Police under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago under the Constitution, whatever you think of this process, there is no other process. How many times am I required to say that? And I wish that my colleagues on the other side would stop confusing the public who might pay attention to what you say. There is no other process. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, another major point made by the speaker, the Member for Oropouche East, is that the nominee, if selected by the House and appointed by the commission as the law would require, as Commissioner of Police, that the nominee is likely to be a witness against a citizen. I would not even mention the citizen's status as a former Attorney General of the last Government who is charged for attempting to pervert the course of justice—witness tampering—because, Madam Speaker, I find it amazing that a Member of Parliament would come into the House, and say that a person who is in line to be a police officer—regardless of whatever rank it is—could or is a witness in a matter, and that is a basis [*Interruption*] and that is a basis that the person not be in the position.

Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East—[*Crosstalk*] and he keeps—Madam Speaker, I ask for his control please. He is disturbing me. Madam Speaker, every single police officer of every single rank is a potential witness against every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, depending of any matter. [*Desk thumping*] As long as a citizen finds him or herself with a criminal complaint against you, you cannot say which officer in the police service could witness against you.

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And if we are to take the stupidity further, Madam Speaker, whatever, the particular matter he raised—the particular matter he raised is a matter which, Madam Speaker, if he was going to raise it, he should point out that the testimony of the individual who is before us is already on record, and is not going to be there as a result of him obtaining the evidence by being Commissioner of Police. That testimony is already in place prior to the election, and I will go further since he raised it and trying to put in on my doorstep.

The matter which generated that, let me clarify for the public, Madam Speaker. It was the Attorney General of the UNC who sued the Opposition Leader seeking to restrain his public speech, and when the Leader of the Opposition sought to defend his right to speak and defend the public interest, the then Attorney General discovered that there was witness testimony that would have made his lawsuit a difficult one to prosecute, and the allegation against him, for which he has been arrested since, is that he sought to interfere with that witness; has nothing to do with me, my party, my Government or my wife. Nothing to do whatsoever. It had to do with the Attorney General and his treatment of his case that he filed, and a witness that he alleged to have interfered with. [*Desk thumping*]

And may I draw to your attention again, Madam Speaker, subsequent to that, he has since discontinued the case against the Opposition Leader, because I am no longer to be restrained by him. What is my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, bringing that in here for now as something that should be taken into account to determine whether in fact this nominee should be a Commissioner of Police or not? It is to muddy the water, Madam Speaker. It is to make it murky to appear as though, somehow, we are doing something wrong.

Madam Speaker, if anybody has done anything wrong in that matter or any similar matter, he raised again, the whole question of emailgate. Let me point out something to him and to all others, who have been confusing this issue forever, this is my opportunity to clear it up. When I came to the House with those emails, Madam Speaker, I want to remind the country that contrary to what they have been saying all along—because they are past masters at misinformation—I had sent those documents to the President of the Republic, and they lie with President Maxwell Richards six months after I took it to the President. I took it to him and asked him whether it would be within his ambit to ask that they be investigated in secret by the Integrity Commission. After six months of no activity, Madam Speaker, I then took the decision, which was my decision to make, that the public should know that this matter is out there lying uninvestigated. He is coming today

to ask me for apology. I came to the House, Madam Speaker, and I made the same request of the House the same request I made of the President then—have this matter investigated.

When I took my oath of office, it never came with a caveat to have their permission as to what I should ask for investigation. [*Desk thumping*] All kinds of discussions of what I should and should not do. I did not take an oath of office beholding to you and your friends. I took it beholding to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And when I asked for an investigation, Madam Speaker, I stand by that today. I asked for an investigation. [*Interruption*] Gary Griffith, if you want to know about Gary Griffith, of all the people named in that matter where an investigation was required, Gary Griffith was the only one to have turned in his devices and asked that open access be given to his email account. He was the only one if he wants to know. So I do not know what he is talking about today. And, of course, Madam Speaker, I would not waste time today to deal with the rest of it, but suffice it to say he was the only one.

He has the temerity, Madam Speaker, to ask me what changed my mind on Gary Griffith, because when I asked for the investigation into that package of emails which came through from the President to the Parliament to the police to the Integrity Commission, he asked what changed my mind. The hon. Member asked what changed my mind as if it is a question I cannot answer, but let me answer it for him, Madam Speaker.

You see, Madam Speaker, there are things that happen in life that change very many things. I do not have to justify to the Member for Oropouche East what caused me to change my mind, but since he asked as a good reason, let me give you a good reason. Subsequent to this, this country was shown that the last Government, very quietly, within their authority, opened a programme called LifeSport. The rest of us in the Parliament did not know about it. It was supposed to be either \$6 million or \$8 million worth. It eventually turned out to be a \$400 million criminal empire that was being funded by the State. It led to murder and mayhem, Madam Speaker, and it led to a level of the criminality in the East-West Corridor never seen before in the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

Gary Griffith was a member of the Cabinet in those days, and he was in the forefront of alerting the public and standing on what he believed in against a Cabinet that was prepared to defend Anil Roberts and LifeSport in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] So if you want a reason for changing my mind, that is a good reason for me to change my mind because he stood up for the people of Trinidad and Tobago against a Cabinet [*Desk thumping*] that was prepared to bury

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and hide LifeSport. Madam Speaker, this country has not overcome the effects of LifeSport up to this day.

And what is worse, Madam Speaker, from the Opposition, I observed him in the Government becoming a pariah in the Government because he was prepared to speak truth to power. The very matter that he raised here about Gary Griffith and being a witness in a matter, Madam Speaker, the public saw Gary Griffith speaking the truth in a matter and the Prime Minister fired him. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: He was prepared to be fired in a job that they loved, but he spoke the truth to the country and if there is a legal matter going on today, his testimony is there and he will be cross-examined in the court and it has nothing to do with any of us in this room today. So that story again is functus like the speaker it came from. Madam Speaker, those are non-issues. [*Desk thumping*] They are non-issues because today, Madam Speaker, today the Acting Commissioner of Police, if he receives a report today on any Member of this House including you, Madam Speaker, a criminal matter, and he happens to be a witness in the matter, he is required to turn up in the court and give his testimony without let or hindrance. [*Desk thumping*] So what nonsense we are hearing in this House that some case could have taken place in some court somewhere. It reminds me of a former Speaker who intervened in a Motion, Madam Speaker, a serious Motion against a Minister of Finance in this country, and the Speaker in the Chair came to the House with a document and waved it and said he got this from the Judiciary saying that the matter was sub judice and on that basis the Speaker ended the debate. It turned out to be a lie and today, well since—

Hon. Member: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, please just withdraw that word. I am sure you could find another one.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, gross unadulterated untruth. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, that is what our history is. Then, of course, he made heavy weather of the fact that I did not detain the Parliament for my full 45 minutes. Madam Speaker, one thing with me, ever since I came to Parliament in 1987, January, when I have nothing to say, I take my seat. I did not try to burn out the clock, run out the clock. This is not a basketball game where you run out the clock. You have something to say, you say it or you take your seat. My friend took a long time to tell the country that I did not use up my 45 minutes and drew a conclusion from that.

Madam Speaker, the reason why I did not go into any detail about Gary Griffith's qualification is because it is circulated here. It is printed in the public domain and Gary Griffith is very well known to all of us. So I did not bother to spend much of my 45 minutes on that. I spent it on other matters that were useful to listeners but, of course, he drew a conclusion from that, that I am hiding something. I am hiding. Hiding what? What is there to hide? What is the reason for hiding?

Madam Speaker, they were in this House saying that this process that we come on a regular basis would end after a series of notifications and nobody will be selected. It did not turn out that way. If you are still going through the process, it may not turn out that way. I said so the last time. So all along when they were pretending to know what the Government was going to do, they were very wrong and now they decide to figure out that we are supposed to tell them what our position is so they could find a position. All I will say, Madam Speaker, all I will say to them is that maybe they wanted to find out what the Government's position is so they could have the opposite view, because that is how they come to a position. The Government say A, they say B; the Government say Z, they say Y; the Government says no, they voted for Stephen Williams. The Government say well no, we are not voting for Stephen Williams. The record would show they voted for the Acting Commissioner of Police to be the Commissioner of Police. We disagreed, we have the majority, we move on.

Today, our position is with us and we are doing the Government's business. We are doing the business in full public view on live television. So what is there to hide? The very Motion says—and if you do not believe us, then there is going to come a time when you are going to have to cast a vote as to whether the Motion will be supported as read or whether we will vary our position from what is read and against how we vote. But what is all this?

Madam Speaker, you know, I would not want to be in their position, because if you hold on to a position, Madam Speaker, that you will support nothing that the Government brings to the Parliament, there are going to be days like these when you will have great difficulty maintaining your position of supporting nothing. Every single time we come here, Madam Speaker, they invite us to change the position so that they could get to a position to obstruct the appointment of a Commissioner of Police. Today, Madam Speaker, we will not do that.

Madam Speaker, it is our view that of the persons on the list—I want, before I go there, let me just clear up one thing. You see this story about the Government had a position and the Government now acting against the position, Madam

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Speaker, for the last time—because the Motion ends today—we spoke about our concerns up front on day one. Whatever position we may have had on the nature of the process, Madam Speaker—and it is recorded all there—we are respectful of the legal advice which says that whatever you are saying be mindful of the fact that the merit list is still in force and that force comes from the Constitution. “Like stick break in dey ears”. [Laughter]

The force of keeping the merit list in place, even as we sent it back for review, those with the authority to review it, they reinforced a position in law that whatever you may think, the merit list remains in force and is in place. And insofar as we said no to one, two, three, it was being done against that legal position where there is no other. [Desk thumping] So where is this story about the Government changing its position? How many positions I have had?

I do not know since when whatever the Prime Minister says is indelible ink and nothing else. They do not listen to me and nothing else in this country, but on this occasion “the Prime Minister say”, “the Prime Minister say”. I am not the law in this country. I might be the Prime Minister, but the Government’s action is subject to the law and you know that [Desk thumping] because we passed a law in this country putting the Minister to start the process. You went to the other arm of the State and had it struck out, because the Judiciary said that the Commissioner of Police, even though it was the Minister, we passed it here into law, it was struck down over there, and I said that here and that is why I am not going to get any advice from you to do anything that is legal. [Crosstalk]

All those who feel that we are breaking or we have broken the law, the road to the courthouse is clear [Desk thumping] and all I would advise is that as you go there and incur expenses, I trust that you will find a way to pay taxpayers for the money you will waste when you go there, because they have a habit of incurring expenses for taxpayers and then when they lose the “dotish” cases, taxpayers do not get back any recompense. That is what they do. They make a career of that. The lawyers get well paid, the taxpayer gets the stiff. So all those who feel that the Government, in following the law, is somehow exposed to the court on any jurisdiction there that would change what we have done, the doors of the court are open.

Madam Speaker, Gary Griffith is the nominee today. Notification from the President, he is the fourth nominee. He is from a category of persons who the commission says is suitable for Commissioner of Police. He applied for the job. He is one of only two persons who applied for the job. The other one is the

current Acting Commissioner for which we gave reasons why we did not support him, and having done so, person No. 4 is Gary Griffith; a person, Madam Speaker, whose qualification is exemplary.

And, of course, there is one final point I want to make. There are persons who believe that because you were in the political arena that you should not somehow be considered because once you enter the political arena or in Government you get leprosy. That is how this country has, in fact, been governed. In other jurisdictions with larger populations, persons who managed to serve in government or any similar position, they see them as valuable but we, especially those who are not in this Government or of this party, see persons who had a political existence—persons who have to show a certain qualification to be elected—but the minute you are elected, there is a conversation in this country that having been elected that you come to serve yourself, you come to “tief”. That might be true on some persons’ part but the bottom line is, Madam Speaker, that you come with your own agenda. We do not share that view, Madam Speaker.

The history will show, Madam Speaker, that in this Government, we also do not have difficulty in putting into office persons who were of a different political persuasion.

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister, your original 30 minutes are spent. You are entitled to 15 more minutes if you require to wind up.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Yes, Madam Speaker, I will take your gracious 15 minutes offer. And for the benefit of those who have this idea that because Griffith had a political persuasion somewhere in a party other than the PNM, Madam Speaker, the history will show that there were many people who were politically opposed to the People’s National Movement in their service to the public of Trinidad and Tobago in the political arena, who under various PNM Governments were allowed to serve in other positions.

And for those young ones who may not know our country’s history, let me point out, Madam Speaker, that there was an Opposition stalwart called Ashford Sinanan. In 1956 to 1961, Ashford Sinanan was an MP for Pointe-a-Pierre. He was not PNM. In 1961 onwards, he was a DLP MP in opposition to the PNM. He was the person who under Dr. Williams’ leadership was appointed as our High Commissioner to India and our permanent representative to Geneva, an Opposition Member. And if you go to the *Hansard* it would be replete of the vitriolic opposition, but he was doing his job as an Opposition Member and he

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was not condemned or vilified or crucified by the PNM, and that was way back in the 1960s, '70s and '80s.

3.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker, even more recently, in my time I came into Parliament as an Opposition Member and I met Jennifer Johnson from Princes Town, the MP for Princes Town, opposite me in the Government. She spent five years from 1986 to 1991 as an NAR Minister, and I had the pleasure of serving on the PNM leadership, on the national PNM Executive with Jennifer Johnson from 2004 to 2008 as the PNM youth officer. As the youth officer of the PNM, a former NAR Minister, so we do not kill and condemn people because they are serving another party, it is all entirely up to you. Of course, there are some who you want no part of whatsoever. Madam Speaker, today, even more currently, even as I speak today under my stewardship in this Government, I do not know if you know or the country knows, but appointed under this PNM Government, the chairman of a major state enterprise, NP, from day one under this Government has been a former UNC Member of Parliament. That does not disturb the country because that is too much of good news for you. Madam Speaker, we do that because we do not hold people the way you hold them.

Madam Speaker, recently we appointed a former UNC Minister as chairman of the NCC. [*Crosstalk*] I am reminded, when we came into office we met a former NAR Attorney General as chairman of the country's state-owned bank, FCB; he is still chairman today. We have just appointed another high functionary of the COP as chairman of TSTT. And I do that, Madam Speaker, and I will tell you that against one background for PNM people, on the night when I became Prime Minister and the PNM won the election I made a statement in Balisier House, I said to the PNM people and supporters gathered there, I said I am Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, of the PNM but not for the PNM, [*Desk thumping*] and they cheered that statement. But understanding that, now you hire somebody from another party, and somebody say, but he belong to another party, they are in the minority. Madam Speaker, the PNM's record is a record of exemplary conduct in Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*] I do not know of any other political party that could say what I have just said.

Madam Speaker, I do not want to make this a debate on who we are, this debate is whether in fact a man, Gary Griffith, with a Master of Science in Security Management; postgraduate diploma in Security Management; certificate in Security Management Studies; certificate in standard military course for officers; who was highly trained in the Defence Force before he came near the

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political arena; who has served in positions of Executive in this country; as Advisor in National Security to our Prime Minister; who has served as National Security Minister; who has taken actions in those offices, particularly as National Security Minister to indicate the mettle that he is made from and what we can expect of him, Madam Speaker, I need not—and, most importantly, a man who stood up to his colleagues who would ask him to do wrong and do right by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, on that basis, and that alone, I have enough to ask my colleagues to do one thing. Today, before I came in here I instructed the Leader of Government Business to lift the whip on all PNM Members of Parliament. I do so now, and every PNM Member is free to vote for or against this Motion. Madam Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Laventille West, while I appreciate your exuberance, please remember where we are.

Question put.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Division, Madam Speaker.

The House divided: Ayes 19

AYES

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Young, Hon. S.

Mitchell, Hon. R.

Cudjoe, Hon. C.

Garcia, Hon. A.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Hon. C.

Dillon, Hon. Maj. Gen. E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Nomination of Mr. Gary Griffith

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Francis, Hon. Dr. L.

Jennings-Smith, Hon. G.

Olivierre, Ms. N.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Leonce, A.

Smith, D.

The following Members abstained: Mr. D. Lee, Mr. R. Charles, Dr. S. Rambachan, Mr. F. Karim, Dr. B. Tewarie, Dr. R. Moonilal, Mrs. C. Newallo-Hosein, Mr. R. Indarsingh, Mr. P. Ramadhar, Dr. F. Khan, Dr. L. Bodoë, Mr. R. Paray and Mr. G. Singh.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Notification of the President of the nomination by the Police Service Commission of Mr. Gary Griffith to the office of Commissioner of Police be approved.

EMANCIPATION GREETINGS

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House. [*Crosstalk*]

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Madam Speaker, before I move the Motion to adjourn, given the fact that in two days' time there will be the Emancipation holiday, I would like to take the opportunity, on behalf of the Government and on behalf of the PNM, to bring Emancipation greetings.

Madam Speaker, the country will once again commemorate one of the most historically momentous events in the history of mankind, the emancipation of slaves, and in Trinidad and Tobago we have a holiday that commemorates this in two days' time. It is an event marked by tremendous celebrations throughout the country, as we recall with pride, the legacy built by and bequeathed to us by our ancestors. Such an occasion, Madam Speaker, affords us the opportunity, not only to pause for a while and reflect on that legacy, but to also ask some deep and searching questions as to our capitalizing on that which we have inherited. Have we made it better? Have we deepened and strengthened the ties that bind us together. Have we made proud those ancestors who dared to hope and believe against all visible and invisible odds that a brighter and better day was possible?

While there are indeed many success stories both on an individual and communal level of successful entrepreneurial pursuits, of academic and sporting excellence, of increased ownership of our ethnic ancestral moorings, the evidence around us seems to suggest as well that in many ways we have not responded as fully as we should, as our forefathers might have hoped. Whilst there are many who have excelled, there are far too many young black males who have chosen lifestyles that are inimical to their well-being, and our nation's prisons show that.

Madam Speaker, despite our history, I believe now more than ever that whilst cynicism and apathy are choices, hope is the better choice. It is that deep-seated hope that echoed in the Negro spirituals, and would later find voice in our own storytellers, like the Mighty Sparrow's "Slave", and Bob Marley's "Get up, stand up, stand up for your rights". Trinidad and Tobago's continued, at times, sporadic march forward demands a stubborn optimism that can only come from a place of renewed hope, rather than apathetic ennui. As we commemorate the Emancipation event and celebrate our achievements, I wish to challenge the community of the descendants of slaves to note that as a community we must understand the value of the sacrifice for the greater good. [*Desk thumping*] Remember that cynicism and apathy are the guardians of the status quo, and be aware that for success as the descendants of slaves, we must have dedicated organization as the only antidote.

We thank those of the descendants of the enslaved who worked assiduously to ensure this development of our country of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The development of this country was well-propelled only when all sectors of the society accepted the reality of our present circumstances and their role in making it better. One way we can do that is to drink copiously from the legacy left by our ancestors. Emancipation, Madam Speaker, was never meant to be a static event, but an ongoing pilgrimage of freedom, growth and achievement. As we celebrate Emancipation Day 2018, I pray that we may never let the atrocities and barbarism of slavery define us, but rather live each day with the stubborn optimism of those giants who walked before us, who walked before us with pride, with dignity, and more so, with hope.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on behalf of the People's National Movement, I wish the national community a happy and hope-filled Emancipation 2018. Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Naparima. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Rodney Charles (*Naparima*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. This year we celebrate the 180th anniversary of Emancipation in Trinidad and Tobago. We show respect for, honour, and celebrate the sacrifices and the lives of those who faced untold hardships and immense deprivations, and who, nevertheless, fought for justice and the right to be free men and women, and who bequeathed to us this same right centuries later. In 1985, Trinidad and Tobago became the first country in the world to declare a national holiday to commemorate the abolition of slavery 147 years before.

Africa has greatly influenced our language, our food, our folklore, our music, our sport and culture, and has left a legacy that has indelibly shaped our unique Trinbagonian identity. Our pelau, souse, pone, cocoo, chilibibi, seasonings, callaloo, cow heel soup, and bake and shark, bear unmistakable reminders of our African heritage. But slavery brought untold hardships, the effects of which are still with us today. Afro-Trinidadians and Tobagonians were brought here against their will. Many of the 15 million or so who left West Africa never arrived. Their various religions were destroyed, however their faith in God grew and prospered. Family life was destroyed and husbands could do nothing to prevent their wives and children being sold and transported elsewhere. If a slave owner fell in love with your wife, there was absolutely nothing a husband could do, and survival in such circumstances required an emotional disconnect from one's family, and the legacy of this detachment still exists in the pervasiveness of single-parent households.

When slavery was abolished, it was the slave owners, not the slaves who were compensated. Slavery has left a legacy of Afro-Trinis, in particular males, being less family oriented than other groups. This has resulted in young Afro males existing, in many cases, without a consistent male figure, as evinced in Edith Clarke's book entitled *My Mother Who Fathered Me*. This problem was exacerbated in the 1970s when many of our women who were pivotal to the survival of local families migrated to the United States and Canada in disproportionate numbers, leaving behind what has become known as the missing generation who are the underprepared parents and grandparents of today's youth. The not-well-thought-out shift system of the early 1970s meant that many of these barrel children were not properly supervised in the secondary school system which failed to pick up the slack of the missing mothers. So if we are brutally frank—and this is what we are about today—Afro-Trinis are not represented, well represented in the top 100 performers of the SEA and other exams. We are disproportionately over-represented in our prisons, and comparatively

under-represented in business and the professions. Today, very, very few Afro-Trinis own supermarkets, hardware stores, or small, medium businesses. We are mostly missing and invisible when we speak about the immensely powerful 1 per cent. But we are strong because of our religious past and our legacy that has been left by our ancestors.

We were, prior to 1962, the schoolmasters. We were the nurses, the teachers, the public servants, the welders, the plumbers, the masons, the fitters, the tradesmen in TPD, UBOT, Texaco, Shell and BP. What has happened since? The view has been expressed that the decline of Afro-Trinis has accelerated after independence. There are many reasons for this, we will not go into it today, except to say that the time has come for all of us, all Trinbagonians to help ensure that all groups in Trinidad and Tobago prosper. The time has also come for us Afro-Trinis to remember the struggle of our ancestors. We must not see ourselves solely as victims of the system and as consumers for the latest brand. Our young must resolve to forget the “bling” and persevere in schools. Our females must appreciate that in our present circumstances we have to depend on them to help us recreate our reality to develop a new, more focused, more responsible generation. Our males must understand that they too—they have to, they must do all that is required to ensure that their offspring are mentally equipped and socially prepared to be all that God intended them to be.

Above all, Madam Speaker, we must never surrender. Our ancestors struggled too hard for us to give up on their dreams. I look forward to the time when we can hold our collective heads high and live out the dreams of those who preceded us. On behalf of the Leader of the Opposition and those on this side, I join with our Afro-Trini, Trinidad and Tobagonian colleagues, in fact, all of Trinidad and Tobago, to celebrate Emancipation Day. We look forward to true liberation and the end of mental slavery. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, Emancipation Day commemorates the abolition of slavery on August 01, 1834. In anticipation of this holiday, cultural performances and cultural works are displayed throughout Trinidad and Tobago to highlight the traditions of our ancestors passed down from one generation to the next. Indeed, it is this celebration of these traditions that serves as a reminder of the triumph over adversity by our ancestors who struggled for freedom. These freedoms, some of which later became enshrined in our Constitution, are not to be taken for granted and must be jealously guarded by all. It is also a reminder to us as legislators to continue to be the watchdogs and protectors of the most vulnerable in our society.

Emancipation Greetings
[MADAM SPEAKER]

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On this day I urge citizens to reflect upon the meaning of freedom and what it means to each of them as individuals and as a nation. To some this may mean having the ability to think independently, to others it may mean serving as an agent of change to build a better Trinidad and Tobago. But whatever the term “freedom” may communicate to us, we must also be acutely aware that concomitant with the exercise of freedom are duty and responsibility. On behalf of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, my family, and on my own behalf, I take this opportunity to wish all Members and all of Trinidad and Tobago a very happy Emancipation Day on the 33rd anniversary of this day of national observance. [*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn sine die.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 3.50 p.m.