



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

5th Session – 10th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 35 – Number 30

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Friday 17th April, 2015

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

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*Leave of Absence**Friday, April 17, 2015***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 17, 2015*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members: the hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan, Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from the sittings of the House during the period April 12—19, 2015. The hon. Winston Dookeran, Member of Parliament for Tunapuna, has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period April 16—29, 2015, and the hon. Patrick Manning, Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

VISITOR**HON. SHIRLEY OSBOURNE****(Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Montserrat)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to acknowledge the presence of the Hon. Shirley Osbourne, MLA, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Montserrat, in the Speaker's Gallery. [*Desk thumping*] She has been on a working visit to the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago during the period April 13—17.

I warmly welcome the Hon. Speaker to our Parliament.

MOTION OF PRIVILEGE**(RULING)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on Wednesday April 8, 2015, the Member for Chaguanas West raised a motion of privilege claiming that the Member for Tobago East committed contempt of this House on the grounds that she grossly and recklessly abused the privilege of freedom of speech. In essence, the Member for Chaguanas West is of the view that the Member for Tobago East brought the House into serious public odium, ridicule and disrepute.

As all hon. Members are well aware, the hallmark of the role of the Speaker is the constitutional responsibility to safeguard the powers, rights and immunities of this House. Thus, it is my duty to ensure that Members of this House enjoy the freedom to speak freely in this House and the ability to perform their duties without threat of force or intimidation, fear of prosecution or punishment and without hindrance or molestation.

However, hon. Members, as the most important parliamentary privilege, members should be careful not to abuse freedom of speech in this House. In exercising this constitutional right, the individual Member must be conscious of the importance for him or her to be trustworthy. It is the Member who ultimately will be judged by an increasingly critical public. Hon. Members would recall that I have reminded this House that parliamentary privilege carries with it responsibilities as well as rights; and those responsibilities ought to be exercised not only within the rules laid down by the House, but in conformity with the standards this House expects of its Members.

All of us will undoubtedly agree that irresponsible or reckless use of the privilege of free speech in this House can be prejudicial to the national interest, hurt persons who have no recourse within this House and tarnish the dignity of all hon. Members, as well as this House itself. Indeed, the reckless use of this right can diminish the value of the right to this House collectively and to Members individually. It is also beyond doubt that all hon. Members will further agree that the strongest safeguard against abuse is the self-discipline of individual Members.

On Wednesday March 25, 2015, during a debate in this House, the Member for Tobago East uttered remarks which have subsequently received vociferous condemnation in the public domain. Some of those remarks made by the Member for Tobago East were indeed unfortunate and unparliamentarily. The strong condemnation of these remarks published in the media has been regarded by the Speaker as reflections on this House and its Members. The Member for Tobago East may have been adjudged guilty of contempt by those persons in the public domain who have chosen to voice their opinion. However, it is this House, and only this House, that is empowered to determine whether the Member for Tobago East committed a breach of privilege by way of contempt.

Hon. Members, the Chair has noted that the Member of Parliament for Tobago East has apologized to this House on Wednesday April 8, 2015 by way of a Personal Explanation. I have also noted that the Member offered this apology to this honourable House at the very first opportunity to so do.

In Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and India, it is well established in parliamentary practice that the House may enforce the observance of its privileges by requesting an apology. For instance, in Australia, although the House may consider that a breach of privilege or a contempt has been committed, it may take no further action or it may decide, having regard to the circumstances of the case, to 'consult its own dignity' by taking no punitive action. Similarly, in India, when the offender tenders an apology, the House generally does not proceed further with the matter, whether or not the House or the Committee of Privileges has come to the decision that a breach of privilege or contempt of the House has been committed.

Hon. Members, this Chair has given careful consideration to this matter and the relevant practice referred to and finds that given all the circumstances, a prima facie case does not exist. It is also the opinion of the Chair that it would indeed be beneath the dignity of this House to have this matter investigated by the Committee of Privileges, in light of the public apology by the Member.

I so rule.

PAPERS LAID

1. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2000. [*The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh)*]
2. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2001. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]
3. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2002. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]
4. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2003. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]
5. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2004. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]

6. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2005. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]

Papers 1 to 6 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee

7. Securities (General) By-Laws, 2015. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]
8. Ministerial Response to the Eighteenth Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to inquire into and report on Government Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group 2) on the Government Human Resource Services Company Limited. [*The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

Trinidad and Tobago Missions (Status of)

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Can the Prime Minister indicate who is in charge of the Trinidad and Tobago missions in London, Ottawa, New York, the United Nations, and Costa Rica and in what capacity are they acting?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Embassy in San José, Costa Rica, the person in charge there is Mrs. Candice Shade, acting Foreign Service Officer IV: position, acting as Chargé D'Affaires. High Commission in London, Mr. Tedwin Herbert, Foreign Service Officer V, acting High Commissioner; High Commission, Ottawa, Mrs. Venessa Ramhit-Ramroop, acting Foreign Service Officer III, acting High Commissioner; Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York, His Excellency Eden Charles, Ambassador, acting as Chargé D'Affaires.

And may I take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, we opened last week, two new missions: the acquisition of property in Jamaica, Kingston [*Desk thumping*] and that is headed by Rev. Dr. Iva Gloudon and we opened for the first time in our history, a mission in Panama which is headed by Mr. Gerard Greene as acting Chargé D'Affaires. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Prime Minister satisfied that with respect to the missions in London, Ottawa, New York, the UN and Costa Rica, that these missions are properly staffed and are operating at optimal capacity?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The answer to that question is yes, hon. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Consequently, is the Prime Minister telling this House that the Government has no intention to further improve by making substantive appointments to those positions? And if so, when?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: My answer to the question previously was that, yes. The question then coming to me was whether I am saying that we will not make appointments. We will make those appointment in due course.

Dr. Rowley: If it is the Prime Minister's position, as stated, that the missions are acting optimally, are you expecting any improvement with respect to the appointments of substantive office holders as ambassadors and high commissioner?

1.45 p.m.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am always sure, Mr. Speaker, there is room for improvement in everything that we do and, yes to your question, and the answer is yes.

Dr. Rowley: Can Prime Minister confirm that no aspect of public interest has been harmed by the protracted absence of Commissioners and Ambassadors in these positions for the last many months?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, hon. Speaker. In fact, if you look here in Trinidad and Tobago you will see that the United States has not had an Ambassador here for what it is, maybe two years now since the substantive Ambassador left and there is a Chargé D' Affaires. Our relations have not been severely or adversely impacted. Work continues, work is ongoing and we continue to pursue a very vigorous and aggressive foreign policy drive with respect to Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: Having written—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I think you have exhausted your four. Remember we have a number of questions.

Dr. Rowley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence. Since the Prime Minister has introduced the United States Ambassador, I crave your indulgence to respond to that by one question, if the House will permit?

Is the Prime Minister satisfied with the situation where Trinidad and Tobago does not have for a protracted period of time no sitting United States Ambassador; and does the Prime Minister regard that as something to be proud of?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Speaker, the good relations between our two countries continue, in fact, have been strengthened. Our recent meeting with United States President Barack Obama will be committed to continue strengthening and deepening our relationships in the areas of security, energy and other common areas of interest for the Caricom and for Trinidad and Tobago.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence as well. I saw that someone has written to the President of United States, or is purporting to have written, to indicate that the President of the United States was scheduled to visit Trinidad and Tobago and that a Member of this House has written to say he should not come. Let me make it very clear, there was no proposal for any visit by the President of the United States to Trinidad and Tobago, and therefore, a letter telling him not to come here is really—and it is also a sort of, you know— Are you interested in Trinidad and Tobago or are you interested in undermining the country? [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*] spend some time with the other matters.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, but you craved indulgence—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes, she is not eating up question time. I am giving some flexibility. I now recognize the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I crave your protection from the Member for Chaguanas East, please.

Mr. Speaker: No, but you have my protection. Proceed, please.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you.

**Missions in London and United Nations
(Details of)**

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): With respect to the missions in London and at the United Nations, can the Prime Minister state what monthly or aggregate payments have been made to the last Ambassador/High Commissioners since their return to Trinidad and Tobago to conduct the UNC campaign?

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. I do not think—wait, wait, wait. Please, please, please.

Dr. Rowley: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I went beyond the end of this sentence as a matter of reflex.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please. The hon. Prime Minister. Ignore the last part, please hon.—[*Interruption*]

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): But it is very difficult so to do. [*Laughter*] It is very difficult so to do and I crave your indulgence. As the hon. Opposition Leader gets your indulgence, I hope that I will also have your indulgence to say they did not return here to campaign. That is the first point. But secondly, I wonder which of the 12 on that side, or the 13, will be the campaigning because they have all been knocked out. [*Desk thumping*] All knocked out. The answer to the question—[*Crosstalk*]

They do not have long in this House. I noticed they tend not to come even to the House. Hon, Speaker, with respect to—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, let the Prime Minister respond. Member for Diego Martin North/East, you are not on the floor.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: So that is the problem. He is worried about somebody campaigning against him. Hon. Speaker—[*Crosstalk*] I think he is scared of the one campaigning in Diego Martin North/East. [*Desk thumping*] Hon. Speaker, I said—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please! One minute. [*Crosstalk*] Please, please! Please, please, please. I know that we are heating up for the campaign. That is a manifestation of it, but let us return to the questions to the Prime Minister, and I call on the Prime Minister to respond to question two, please. Thank you.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Question two, hon. Speaker. These persons would have been paid salary and allowances due to them for any leave to which they would have been entitled. I have asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to

provide the figures. Thus far, I have not obtained those, and therefore, once we receive them we could ask the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs to provide them to this honourable Chamber. The payments that would have been made would not be within my knowledge, are just of memory, and therefore, I have to get it from Foreign Affairs. Once it is obtained, even if within the sitting, we will provide it. If not, the Minister of Foreign Affairs will provide it in due course.

**Legal Fees - Ministry of Attorney General
(Enquiry of)**

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Will there be an enquiry initiated on request by the Prime Minister into expenditures on legal fees by the Ministry of the Attorney General over the past four years?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is no. May I remind this honourable House that the Attorney General has accounted for these fees inclusive of a break down? He also indicated that 95 per cent of the cases undertaken in which external legal counsel was retained have, in fact, been won by the State. [*Desk thumping*] And further, approximately \$2 billion has been recovered for Trinidad and Tobago out of some of the matters that counsel would have been retained.

**Legal Fees - Ministry of Attorney General
(Investigation by Fraud Squad)**

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Given the amount of discrepancies associated with the \$400 million expenditure on legal fees at the Ministry of Attorney General, will the fraud squad be called in to investigate?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Hon. Speaker, the allegations levied against these fees have been related to issues of quantum, there have been no allegations of fraud. And so, the issue of fraud does not arise and the Fraud Squad. Hon. Speaker, should the Opposition have information otherwise, we will be happy to learn from them what other information they have. But thus far, in the public domain and within the Office of the Attorney General, there have been no allegations of fraud, and therefore, the answer is, no, as to calling in the Fraud Squad.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Prime Minister aware that the published information emanating from the Attorney General's Office with respect to these moneys, have attracted comments from persons and in fact the written script indicating that what has been published has not been obtained and earned by the persons in whose names the sums had been stated?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am sure.

Dr. Rowley: It has been said that certain persons have received certain moneys as published from the Office of the Attorney General, those persons have said they had not received such sums. Are you aware of any of that?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, I am aware, and in fact that was when the original answer was tabled in the House. Thereafter, the hon. Attorney General did clarify those matters with respect to persons who were double billed as it would seem to in the answer to have double payments. Yes, we were aware. Hon. Speaker, it is our intention for the hon. Attorney General to lay the corrected reply to the question in this honourable Chamber. He is out of the country at the moment on Government business and will do so on his return.

Dr. Rowley: And would the Prime Minister accept that the word "discrepancy" is applicable to these situations?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am upset—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Would the Prime Minister not agree that the word "discrepancy" is applicable to these situations?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is obvious that the original answer and the information obtained thereafter were not exactly the same. You may want to use the word "discrepancy", again the issue of fraud does not arise. Those matters have been corrected by the hon. Attorney General, but if you have allegations of fraud, please bring them. That is what I am saying. But as far as we have been advised in this matter and told in this matter, and from what the AG has done, the hon. Attorney General, there have been no allegations of fraud. And even in the public domain when there was an outcry about the quantum, as obtained in your question about the quantum, but there was no allegations of fraud. If there is otherwise, please bring it to the attention of the AG.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: I still have one more, eh.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you have one more.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Prime Minister satisfied with the explanations given with respect to the expenditure under the various subheads in this particular matter?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: At the time the answer is, yes. The answer is yes, hon. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Chaguaramas Development Authority
(Procedures of)**

Dr. Keith Rowley (Diego Martin West): Is the Prime Minister satisfied with that procedures that were followed by the Chaguaramas Development Authority to grant leases to persons and companies for lands at Chaguaramas?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): The information that has come to me, hon. Prime Minister, from the CDA and from the line Minister, and a very comprehensive press statement that was delivered, shows the following: that existing leases were properly renegotiated; that new leases were negotiated at market rates, superior benefits as in benefits to the CDA and the taxpayers, and we had in similar leases previously executed; and thirdly, that due care and attention were taken to ensure that the process of granting of leases to investors was done in keeping with the Act that governs the CDA through a transparent process which involved public advertisements. Most risk in such investments are to the count of the investor and not with us, and in that regard then, I am satisfied given the report from the line Minister and from the CDA, yes, that the procedure followed was appropriate.

Further, I make the point again, should there be information to the hon. Leader of the Opposition otherwise, we are prepared to receive that information and to act upon it as may be necessary after the review of same.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Prime Minister aware that in at least one instance, the CDA is engaged in serious litigation where it has sought to lease premises which were occupied by leaseholders who were in possession of that lease?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are asking if I know that there is litigation, if I am aware there is litigation, yes, with some leaseholder or purported lease holder? No, I am not aware of litigation. If you know, you can share it with us.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Prime Minister informed by her line Ministers of what is going on in her Government?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I think that is where the hon. Member wanted to go. There are over 300 state enterprises and it will not be humanly possible to

be told of every piece of litigation that is going on in any one or in all of these. Therefore, if that is a question that has been asked, we would have been able to seek the information and we could have answered the question to the hon. Member.

Mr. Speaker: I recognize the hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Could the hon. Prime Minister state if the long leases, those for 30 years and over, especially that for the hotel— whether those long leases came to the Cabinet for approval?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The answer to the best of my memory is, no.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplemental.

Dr. Rowley: Final supplemental. Is it now the practice of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to allow the CDA to engage in the issuing of leases, especially the substantial ones, the Convention Centre and the hotel, without the approval of the Cabinet?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, from the information provided by the line Minister and the CDA, they operate according to the Act and that Act indicates that they have that position to so do.

Mr. Speaker: All right. The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Jaishima Leladharsingh
(Racist Views Expressed)

Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Prime Minister concerned that the racist views expressed publicly by the former Board Member of the Chaguaramas Development Authority, Mr. Jaishima Leladharsingh, may have prejudiced the views of the entire Board and affected their ability to make decisions in a fair and unbiased manner?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Mr. Speaker, I thank you. I was very concerned as were so many others about the statements when I learnt of them. I was repelled by them, but action was expeditiously taken by the line Minister with regard to the issue raised. That Board consists of independent-minded individuals—indeed, I think the Member for Chaguanas West would have been on the Board's committee when the persons were recommended for placement on these Boards.

Mr. Warner: Not that Board.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: That Board consists of independent-minded individuals who are unlikely to be unduly influenced by any other single member in making collective decisions.

And so, the connection between the board's decisions and the personal prejudices of a single former member, in my respectful view, seems to be far-fetched. [*Desk thumping*]

2.00 p.m.

**National Operations Centre
(Non-payment to staff at Cumuto)**

Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*): The National Operations Centre falls under the purview of the Office of the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister state why the staff at the Cumuto location have not been paid for the last two months?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Hon. Speaker, thank you, again. The Office of the Prime Minister does not pay the staff at Cumuto nor the staff at the National Helicopter Services Limited. The Office of the Prime Minister has a contract with the National Helicopter Services Limited for services provided to the National Operations Centre. However, the payment of staff members remains the responsibility of the National Helicopter Services Limited.

The National Helicopter Services Limited then bills the OPM for services at the end of the month and no advance payments are paid. Indeed, I think it was only yesterday, some moneys were released to pay to the National Helicopter Services Limited.

**National Helicopters Service Limited
(Non-payment to)**

Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*): Well, then the next question may help you, Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister state why the Office of the Prime Minister has not paid the National Helicopter Services Limited for the last five months?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Hon. Speaker, I cannot verify at this time. I have sought the information from the Permanent Secretary as to the amount of months that you are saying they have not been paid.

You will note that the National Operations Centre was previously under the Ministry of National Security and the period under discussion. The NOC was transitioning from being under the remit of the Minister of National Security to the Office of the Prime Minister. This OPM, in that transitioning period, the Office of the Prime Minister conducted an audit and review of all payments, and that caused some delay in disbursements of payments to the National Helicopter Services. This has now been completed and payments were made as of yesterday, or releases were made as of yesterday and will continue thereafter. [*Desk thumping*]

**Actuarial Report on the National Insurance Fund
(Government's Position)**

Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Prime Minister confirm if her Government will accept the recommendations of the last actuarial report on the National Insurance Fund which recommends that NIS rates and the retirement age of working persons should be increased and changed, since it will affect over 30,000 senior citizens?

The Prime Minister (**Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC**): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last actuarial report on the National Insurance Fund is currently under review by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. Once this process is finalized, a report, along with the recommendations of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, will be forwarded for Cabinet's consideration.

**Actuarial Report on the National Insurance Fund
(Government's Policy)**

Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, according to the last actuarial report on the National Insurance Fund the number of eligible persons for NIS pension payment will increase by over 70,000 new persons. Can the Prime Minister confirm if the Government's policy to grant pension payments to pensioners will be continued?

The Prime Minister (**Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC**): Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is yes. My Government remains committed towards advancing payments to our most vulnerable in society and one such group will be pensioners. And indeed, I think we had the privilege and the honour to increase pensions—what we used to call old age pensions, the grant to senior citizens, not once, but twice since we came into office. [*Desk thumping*] With respect to the NIS payments, the answer is yes, hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Total Policing Report on National Shutdown
(Action Taken)**

Miss Donna Cox (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Can the Prime Minister state what action, if any, will be taken on the findings and recommendations of the Total Policing Report on the national shutdown on Monday, March 23, 2015?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you. Hon. Speaker. We all recall that day—that fateful Monday, March 23, when there was gridlock on our nation's roads. We had met with the Acting Commissioner of Police on the matter, and he had indicated that report will be available in two weeks. We have now received a report on the police action that caused traffic gridlock and inconvenienced tens of thousands of citizens on March 23. It is our intention to lay that report today in Parliament, this sitting. [*Desk thumping*]

We immediately responded to that matter. We asked for swift action in getting the report because of the damage that was caused to national productivity and, of course, on an emotional basis as well. The day of total policing not only affected productivity, it caused untold damage to national revenues and the commercial sector, and we considered such action unacceptable. We acted with despatch. We got the report. Three weeks, we have been able to get it done. It will be laid by the Minister in due course in this sitting.

The Government is satisfied the report has been professionally done. We thought it was important to lay the entire document in Parliament, so the public will have access to all the pertinent issues. Our Government is committed to transparency in all our activities and this is another example of our commitment to inform the population of all matters of national importance. [*Desk thumping*]

In terms of the action to be taken, if any, it is clear that any subsequent action must be taken by the police service itself, that is the Acting Commissioner of Police as well as by the Police Service Commission—the independent body which has jurisdiction related to matters under the police service.

We will recall that in the last Parliament under the former administration, we had passed the new police Bill. In that Bill and the constitutional amendment which accompanied it, what happened was that the Police Service Commission was given remit and jurisdiction over matters of discipline, promotions, appointments and disappointments, with respect to the executive of the police service, that is the men in khaki as it were, at the higher echelons of the police service. And at the same time, that amendment, which is the law of Trinidad and

Tobago, gave to the Commissioner of Police—remember there were years of saying there was no teeth in a commissioner—gave to the Commissioner of Police the powers of discipline, appointment, disappointment, promotion, relating to the men under the executive level of the police service. So, in terms of action, it is not for the Government to take action.

However, in our National Security Council meeting yesterday, we did discuss the report and we asked the police, the representatives there, the Acting Commissioner who is holding for Commissioner Stephen Williams and her deputy who attended that meeting. We indicated to them that we will be laying the report today and we asked them to indicate what areas of action they will pursue. They did advise that they will be looking at matters going to their Internal Investigations Unit and also looking towards, where necessary, disciplinary action against such officers who may have, in any way, acted outside of their constitutional legal powers, and within the regulations of the police service—the standing orders and regulations governing behaviour in the police service. So that is what they advised and so we await the action taken, that they have the power and if it is in the law, they have the jurisdiction and the power to deal with these matters. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Supplemental, please?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Hon. Prime Minister, in your capacity as Chairman of National Security Council, could you tell us approximately what time on Monday, March 23, you became aware of the total policing effort and the gridlock and what actions either yourself, as Chairman of National Security Council, or the Minister of National Security, what actions were immediately taken to make sure this issue did not get out of hand?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, that matter was brought to my attention very early in the morning and not just from police operatives, but from citizens throughout the country. Thank God for the technologies because we were getting this on the phone.

The total policing thing was from about 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. I would say, maybe about 5.00 a.m. it was brought to my attention. I contacted the hon. Minister of National Security who then liaised with those in the police service, at the top branch of the police service. And after those conversations, the order went out from the executive of the police service to cease and desist. And therefore yesterday, this is what, again, the advice—Mrs. Alleyne-Daly of the

Commissioner's Office, she was the person in charge on that day, and she said she sent out instructions to divisional commanders, and in addition, the Divisional Commanders themselves went out into the field calling upon them to cease and desist. So that by 10.00 a.m., they were able to lockdown and to free the traffic to flow again.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

EXTENSION OF QUESTION TIME

Mr. Speaker: Before we ask any further supplemental, we stop at 12 minutes past two, 30 minutes will be up, so I really wanted to give other Members who have questions outstanding the opportunity to raise. Would you agree?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, we have two more questions, I believe, to respond to and with the leave of the House, the Government would like to continue so that the Prime Minister can respond to all the questions raised by Members opposite. [*Desk thumping*] "Den yuh could run."

Assent indicated.

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Hon. Prime Minister, with regard to the answer just given, would you say that the instructions then issued by the Minister of National Security were, in fact, were followed by the police service? Because it is clear from what happened on that day, that this did not take place. And also in regard to his comments that night at the Monday Night Forum which story changed the following day, it is clear that the Minister of National Security either was not listened to or was not in control of the situation.

Hon. Members: What is the question?

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, just be brief.

Mr. Deyalsingh: The question is: is the hon. Prime Minister satisfied that the instructions given by the Minister of National Security were, in fact, adhered to by the police service?

Mr. Speaker: Right. The hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, I do not know if the hon. Minister of National Security can instruct the police. That is a very dangerous thing when a

Minister has the power and you think they have the power—and I trust you never get that job, Sir. [*Desk thumping*] A Minister cannot instruct the police service.

The Minister had a conversation with the Acting Commissioner of Police, Mrs. Alleyne-Daly. The Acting Commissioner of Police did what she thought was appropriate within her remit and within her jurisdiction.

I want to make another point—the Minister will make the statement—but from the report, it appears that it is just a very small number of officers, it was not the entire police service. So let us not blame the entire police service and paint them “in ah light”. It was just a few officers who acted on their own initiative as the report which we will lay today will disclose. So, you will get the full details of what transpired on that day, what action was taken thereafter, and the recommendations that have been made in the report.

Miss Cox: Thank you very much. Hon. Prime Minister, given the fact that the hierarchy of the police service claimed not to have known about the actions which resulted in the total shutdown of the country, are you confident and comfortable with the level of intelligence that exists in the police service?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: As I said, the report will indicate to us in full what transpired, how it transpired and how it did not transpire; who was aware and not aware. I suggest we await that report which will be laid on the table in this House in a very short while.

Mitsubishi Corporation DME Plant Contract (Conclusion of)

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has a contract for gas supply been concluded for the Mitsubishi Corporation DME Plant and if yes, what is the basis for such an agreement having regard to the ongoing gas shortage which continues to affect severely, both financially and operationally, the downstream sector?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): A gas supply contract was—indeed, between NGC and Mitsubishi, that contract has been concluded. The terms of the contract, as is the case with all gas sale contracts ever signed by the NGC, are subject to confidentiality, and that has been so within your administration and in this administration.

I further add that the current situation with regard to natural gas supply in the country, is a consequence of a period of underinvestment by the country's major natural producers between 2008 and 2010, which was a result of an unfavourable

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investment environment which was created under the former administration at that time. Since we took office, we have taken steps to encourage investment in the exploration and production of natural gas. This has resulted in a high level of drilling activity offshore by BP, BG, EOG and BHP. These projects include the BP Juniper Project; the BG Exploration in Blocks 5(c) and 5(d); the BHP Billiton Angostura Phase 3 Project and the EOG Oilbird Project. Three of these four projects will realize new natural gas supplies in the future.

2.15 p.m.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Could you be specific Prime Minister as to the source of supply of gas for this DME project?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The contract would have been negotiated with the NGC. The NGC is one of the holders of assets within the Atlantic LNG Train, together with other companies. So the gas will come from Atlantic LNG but through the contracts. [*Crosstalk*] No, from the NGC. What I am saying is: where would the NGC get it? NGC is but one of the partners, Sir.

In fact, we have seen only this year that Royal Dutch Shell is going to acquire the shares or has signed to acquire the shares from BG—before they had acquired shares from Repsol, which also gave them a share in the natural gas supply as would any of the other companies that are involved in that Train. And, therefore, NGC has a share. There will be other shares which we will get the gas from, but it will be the gas of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Rowley: Hon. Prime Minister, given the projects you have just mentioned where gas is expected to come from, is the Prime Minister aware that the supply of gas anticipated from those projects like Oil World and whatever, that anticipated gas, when it does come on, is expected only to relieve the current shortage? So, therefore, the question about the supply of new gas for the new project is still on the table and I add to ask the Prime Minister, now that you have confirmed that the contract has been signed, a gas supply contract, am I correct to say that as of now, the NGC does not have a supply of gas for that plant and we are in anticipation of new finds?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Speaker, I will not be in a position to say yea or nay to that. What I can do is to get the information from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, but let us be clear, Mitsubishi is investing a lot of money into this project and they have signed the contract, and therefore they are satisfied that Trinidad and Tobago will be able to provide the gas, to have the supply of the gas. [*Desk thumping*] Should they not have been so satisfied they would not have

entered into the contract because they are investing, as I say, millions of dollars into this project.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Another supplemental. Has this matter been discussed with the existing downstream plants like Yara and PCS and so on? Has this been discussed with them and have they been given assurances that their supply would be brought up to their full requirements before gas is supplied to the DME Plant?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Speaker, should that question be filed appropriately I can obtain the information from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and be able to provide it.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, so then what I am asking again, is the less than adequate supply to the existing Point Lisas plants, is it that the gas is to be redirected to the DME plant and not to the existing plants?

Mr. Speaker: But the Prime Minister has responded by saying that if you file a question she will respond. So let us go on to your next question No. 13, please.

**Mr. Jeff Clark
(Petrotrin's Dealings With)**

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (Point Fortin): Given the response provided during Prime Minister's Question Time on March 13, 2015, that Petrotrin advised that the state enterprise had no dealings with Mr. Jeff Clark, reports now show that this information appeared to be incorrect, does the Prime Minister intend to take action?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Firstly, the question is premised on a fact which may not be a fact, that Petrotrin had told us that the state enterprise had no dealings with Mr. Jeff Clark, but now the Member is saying that information has appeared to be incorrect based on some reports. I do not know which report the hon. Member is referring to which says this.

However, to avoid any doubt regarding the previous answer on Petrotrin and Maresca, let me clarify that Petrotrin has categorically denied that Mr. Jeff Clark is not and has never been an agent of Petrotrin, nor has Petrotrin ever authorized Mr. Clark to act on its behalf for return, recovery or direction of any of its funds to any destination accounts regarding Petrotrin and Maresca.

Earlier this week Petrotrin submitted a comprehensive report to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs on this matter. The report is being reviewed by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and once that review is completed, appropriate action will be taken in that regard.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Is the Prime Minister not aware that Petrotrin has put information in the public domain saying that Maresca which is also known as Marittima did in fact inform them, by letter dated 19th April, 2012, that Jeffery Clark had been appointed as its Trinidad and Tobago contact for that particular project?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I repeat that Mr. Clark—whatever that company may have said, if that company used Mr. Clark as their agent, Petrotrin has denied that Mr. Clark is, was, never was at any time, been an agent of Petrotrin nor has Petrotrin ever authorized Mr. Clark to act on its behalf for the return, recovery or direction of any of its funds to any destination accounts regarding Petrotrin and Maresca.

Mr. Speaker: Let us go on.

URGENT QUESTIONS

School for the Blind (Details of)

Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education, can the Minister advise why the School for the Blind has been closed for the last five months and what arrangements have been made for the students in the interim?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you. I have been advised up to lunchtime here, that at present there are about five students in the school and there are two teachers who are coming regularly.

At the close of the term 2013/2014, that School for the Blind was severely dilapidated and the Ministry of Education, together with EFCL, decided to do a total rehabilitation of this centre and it is now like a brand new spanking centre. So it is between about \$8 million or \$9 million was spent for the total rehabilitation on bringing about a new School for the Blind. But I have also been advised that there have been difficulties emanating between the school principal and the Blind Welfare Association, in terms of who really wants to be the administrator for the school.

The Ministry of Education called a meeting a few weeks ago and tried to resolve the issue indicating to the Blind Welfare Association, that it is the Ministry of Education that has the purview for appointing the principal.

Since then, the fire services report, we were waiting on it. There are about four small areas outstanding, in terms of the completion certificate to be given by

the fire services, one of which is to open four doors outside, instead of opening inside. And another issue is that the students are now—there are 17 students in the school and my understanding is that seven are attending and 10 are not attending at the moment. They want to now go home on a daily basis and we are working with the Ministry of Transport to see how we can get the students to and from the school on a daily basis. Meanwhile we anticipate that the full operations of the school will be in a week from now.

Mr. Warner: Thank you for your help, Mr. Minister. What is happening to the children now?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The children between ages seven to 17, I have been advised, there are seven students; there were some dormitories there. The students no longer want to stay in the dormitories. They want to be interacting with their families and 10 of them have elected to go with their families on a daily basis and this is where we are going to provide the transport for them. But the seven who are in school have started, I have been advised, being taught now by the teachers. I have to await the decision, in terms of the other 10 students, how quickly we can get them to and fro to their families on a daily basis, instead of weekly where they were staying at the centres, which they no longer want to.

There are five teachers; there is a Braille technician, there is a para professional, and there is a principal and two BOAs within the school to take care of the 17 students who are visually impaired.

Arima Secondary School (Details of)

Mr. Jack Warner (*Chaguanas West*): Can the Minister state when the Arima Secondary School will get its full complement of teachers?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): I have been advised by the Director of Human Resources at the Ministry that there are two vacancies at the moment, one in History and one in Mathematics. The other subject areas have the full complement.

The issue in History arose as a teacher obviously might have abandoned his position in December, and proceedings are taking place for filing the motion related to the abandonment of the job.

We sought to get people from the order of merit list to fill the position, but so far we have been unsuccessful because when the teachers there who are on the

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order of merit list see that it is only a temporary position for the time being, they are unwilling to take that position.

The position in Mathematics is almost the same. There has been a retirement, but we have students who have been waiting for positions who came out of the primary schools and got their Bachelors in Education, specialization in Mathematics, who we now have to bring into the secondary schools and we are trying to fill that position with someone with that qualification but the Teaching Service Commission has to fill the position.

As well, very few people or almost nobody really is interested in taking up that temporary position in Mathematics as well and so that is a difficulty we have as well. We have difficulty in filling vacant positions in the distant and remote areas of Trinidad and Tobago.

But as at the moment, in all our schools, the only vacancies besides the two that I spoke about, we have about 75 vacancies for teachers and most of them are emanating from the board schools, and those board schools that have the majority of teachers, like the majority of schools like the Catholics, 117 primary schools and a significant amount of secondary schools, there is a vacancy of about 20 there. The Anglicans have some vacancies and they are finding difficulties in filling them, so the Ministry is assisting and working with them because you know they have to fill the positions. But some of them are reluctant for the Ministry to fill the positions, but we are working with them and trying to get those positions filled as quickly as possible.

Mr. Warner: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, there are not two vacancies, there are four: History, English, Social Studies and Maths for the last three months. Can you give this House and the country the assurance that in the shortest possible time these vacancies shall be filled?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I have said to the House that the Ministry of Education is taking all steps to ensure that these positions are filled. But, of course, you have to understand the difficulty. From the order of merit list, no one so far has decided to take up the position in History and Mathematics.

I have been told that there is an issue on English Language but the audit on the school has shown that there are more teachers for English Language than is required within the school. So although they are claiming that there is a vacancy for another English teacher, the audit has shown that there is no need for the extra English teacher. As far as Social Studies, that was not brought to my attention on discussion with the HR department to date.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, the Government will today answer the following questions: Question No. 103. We ask that Question No. 110 to the Minister of Community Development be deferred for two weeks. Question No. 111 will be answered. Question Nos. 112, 134, 136, 137, 139, 140 to be answered. Question No. 141 to be answered. Question 143, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is out of the jurisdiction. We ask that Question No. 143 be deferred for two weeks.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**Construction of the Vessigny Community Centre
(Details of)**

- 110.** Could the hon. Minister of Community Development state:
- a) the cost of construction for the Vessigny Community Centre;
 - b) the original budgeted cost for the construction of the Vessigny Community Centre;
 - c) the total amount of money outstanding to the contractor who built the Vessigny Community Centre; and
 - d) when will the contractor be paid in full for the construction of the Vessigny Community Centre? [*Mr. F. Jeffrey*]

**Unemployment Relief Programme
(Details of)**

- 143.** Could the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy state:
- A. Whether an audit was conducted by the Central Audit Committee on the Unemployment Relief Programme during the period June to September 2013?
 - B. If yes to part (a), can the Minister state whether the recommendations included payment to twenty five (25) plus contractors?
 - C. If yes to part (b), has the approval been granted for payment?
 - D. If yes to part (c), when will payments be made to these contractors? [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

2.30 p.m.

Petrotrin
(Details re: New Vice-President, Finance)

103. Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs:

Could the Minister state:

- a) who is the new Vice-President, Finance of Petrotrin?
- b) what is his remuneration package;
- c) why was a foreign candidate hired;
- d) what experience does he have above candidates available locally?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. the Hon. Kevin Ramnarine): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The answer the part (a):

I wish to advise the House that the position of Vice-President, Finance at Petrotrin no longer exists. That position is now called Chief Financial Officer. The current holder of that office is Mr. Ronald Huff.

With regard to part (b):

Mr. Huff's monthly remuneration includes: a base salary of TT \$147,500; [*Interruption*] a vehicle allowance of TT \$15,000; and a housing allowance of TT \$28,652. That is interestingly compared to the salary of Malcolm Jones in 2009 of \$162,500, [*Interruption*] which was the basic salary of Mr. Jones and there would be other things. If you adjust that for inflation, of course, it will be much more than \$162,500.

With regard to part (c):

Given the financial and industry challenges facing Petrotrin, the company sought to acquire specific expertise in restructuring debt in oil and gas companies. As the Parliament would be aware, Petrotrin is saddled with two bonds, for US \$1.6 billion that were issued under the previous administration. He also has expertise in raising capital for oil and gas projects.

HRC Associates was engaged to conduct a search for candidates. The search identified local as well as foreign candidates. Mr. Huff emerged as the best fit,

because of the high degree of match between experience and competencies to the requirements of this position.

With regard to part (d), Mr. Huff has extensive experience in financial management in the oil and gas industry, with particular experience in raising capital, project financing, and debt restructuring. He is the holder of a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Wyoming, and is a licensed certified public accountant, in the State of Texas. He has held senior positions in oil and gas companies, as well as investment firms. He has also served on the board or directors of several public and private companies. That, Mr. Speaker, concludes the answer.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Is his package anywhere near that of the person who last occupied that position, even though the title may have been different?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: I am not aware of the package of the previous holder of Vice-President, Finance at Petrotrin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Is the question of procurement being handled by this officer holder? And if not, why?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Again, generally, and based on the knowledge I have, Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, procurement comes under the finance remit at Petrotrin. So, I know that historically that is what obtained. I cannot say with specific detail if that is still the remit of this gentleman.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: One more. Well, I am saying to you that I understand that it has been transferred to the VP, Human Resources or whatever his title may be. I am asking the question, why that may have been so, since it is the tradition that it is normally under finance?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: I do not have the information to confirm or to deny.

Mr. Warner: Minister, I have a pain here. [*Points to his chest*] Do you not consider that salary to be overly excessive, I mean, in these difficult times?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The oil and gas industry is a global industry. Petrotrin is facing particular circumstances that require skill sets that will allow it to navigate itself back into profitability. We have to attract the best talent into Petrotrin, and from my personal experience of what is paid to CFOs in the bpTTs, and the BGs and the BHPs and so on in Port of Spain, this salary fits somewhere into what those persons are paid in those companies. If one has to attract the best people, one has to pay the correct compensation.

**Agricultural Project in Guyana
(Details of)**

111. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

With respect to the Agricultural Project in Guyana, could the Minister state:

- a) when the Government made the first disbursement;
- b) the details of expenditure on work done; and
- c) the number of animals reared?

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This entire question does not apply, and it is not relevant. The Trinidad and Tobago/Guyana Food Security Programme is a programme whereby the Government of Trinidad and Tobago acts as a facilitator, for private agro-investors to invest in large scale agriculture production projects, in lands allocated by the Government of Guyana.

So, therefore, it has never been, nor it has ever been envisaged, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will make any disbursements in the form of any cash to either farmers in agro-investors. So, therefore, part (a) does not apply, and consequently, part (b) and (c) is irrelevant to the answer.

**Water Taxi Service
(Details of)**

112. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Transport:

Having noted the Minister's response to question No. 8 on January 16, 2013, could the Minister state:

- a) when the water taxi service will be extended to La Brea;
- b) the name of the contractor who will construct the necessary facilities for the landing site; and
- c) the cost of construction of the landing site?

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently there is no plan to extend the water taxi service to La Brea, and, therefore, no contractor would have been awarded the contract to construct the facilities if there was going to be a landing site. Therefore, there is no projected cost to construct a non-existent landing site.

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental. Hon. Minister, are you aware that in 2011, the line Minister of your Government had made a promise to the people of La Brea that they were going to get a water taxi.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Sometimes you make commitments and then when you review it, you find that there is an easier way to do it, and, of course, Mr. Speaker, two things with the issue on that coast, one, is the fact that the water depth is very, very shallow. Therefore, to construct a landing site there would be extremely expensive.

The more important fact though, is that the highway to Point Fortin will be completed in a very short time and, therefore, the transit time between La Brea and San Fernando, where the water taxi currently operates from, will be minutes rather than the maybe hour and a half that it takes now.

Mr. Jeffrey: Further supplemental. Hon. Minister, are you aware that with the annual increase in the number of vehicles 25,000-plus every year, that if even though you construct the highway, that will be a short-term measure, and it is going to face us with the same problem five years down the road.

Hon. S. Cadiz: There is a thing called public transport, Mr. Speaker, which we will have operating out of La Brea. Therefore, not every person travelling north will be required to drive their motor car, they will have an option to use a very efficient, safe and comfortable public transport.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you. Despite the fact that the highway to Point Fortin is being built, you did give a commitment, and you did, in fact, come down to Point Fortin to review several sites. Is that water-taxi service still coming to Point Fortin?

Hon. S. Cadiz: As I said before, the issue of that coast is the water depth. In order to berth a water taxi without doing extensive dredging, we would have to construct a jetty or a pier about 300 feet into the Gulf of Paria, which is extremely expensive. Right now the water-taxi service is subsidized to the tune of \$100 per seat and, therefore, if we take that into consideration, and very expensive landing sites on the southern peninsula, it would just not be affordable. Hence the reason you have a very modern highway system that is going into Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*] It is estimated that the transit time between Point Fortin and San Fernando when the highway is completed, would be just over 20 minutes, which would be the same transit time as a water taxi going from Point Fortin to San Fernando. Therefore, it really and truly makes no logical sense, no economic sense to have—two, more than—another mode of transport by water, which will be hugely expensive. So the highway will provide the necessary transit.

**Suspensions per Educational District
(Details of)**

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

Could the Minister state:

- a) how many suspensions has the Ministry of Education approved since September 2014 to date;
- b) the number and the nature of suspensions per educational district;
- c) what correctional measures the Ministry has undertaken in the above regard?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the year from September 2014 to the present time, we were able to get from the Student Support Services Division, that there were 3,411 cases of suspension during the period of time. As you realize, we would have given to the national population that we decided to have a zero tolerance to any issues of bullying and violence in schools.

As a result, the administration within the schools were told to bring to the forefront immediately, any question of suspected bullying or violence in the schools. So, we had a total of about 3,400 in 11 cases reported at this time.

In terms of the types of issues that we arranged, we found fighting was generally quite high, 1,017 cases; breaking classes and tardiness, 97; bullying, 160; disrespect to authority, 537; drug and alcohol use, 347; even some gambling, 176; and sexual misconduct, 152. So there were other areas as well, totaling, 3,411. In the Caroni district, there were 1,140 cases; north-eastern, 349; Port of Spain and environs, 338; south-eastern, 926; St. George East, 351; St. Patrick, 123 and Victoria, 184.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education strategy has been a comprehensive one, inclusive of and consistent with the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention approach, to treating with violence in the schools, and UNICEF's approach highlighted in its recent report, "Hidden in Plain Sight". The following five key Ministry of Education strategic level components, informed the aforementioned approaches, basically with a prevention strategy. There is an inter-ministerial strategic committee, which I will just give a few details about.

Individual strategic level, relationships strategic level, community and then societal.

Mr. Speaker, we looked at the whole question of school violence from a preventative aspect first, then early detection and then management. We had a number of preventive approaches implemented, and they are as follows: the Cabinet gave support for the increase of the Student Support Service Division; previously, we had about 200 of these in the schools. They now come to close to over 732, consistent of guidance officers, guidance counsellors, schools social workers, educational, behavioural and clinical psychologists, so they are working around the clock. Each secondary school has a guidance counsellors or guidance officer, and they are over 100 school social workers now.

We have established strong school-based management teams in every school in Trinidad and Tobago, with a principal, the deans, a senior teacher, a member of the PTA and a member of the student body. In a lot of these schools now, we have established student councils which had been elected by the student themselves.

We have established a “circle of hope” in every school. Once a week at a particular session, the teacher meets with all the students in the class, where the students express what they have in their minds, and then the guidance counsellors, guidance officers and school social workers identify these students, and that is creation of a positive student/teacher relationship.

We have trained thousands and thousands of our teachers in ADR, Alternate Dispute Resolution, and Mediation. We have partnered with the Ministry of National Security and we continue to do so in the reduction of violence in school, what is the ROVIS strategy. We are partnering now with the T&T Police Service, in the delivery of programmes addressing the violence in the schools. We have close to 100 police youth clubs across the country. *[Interruption]* They also treat with the out of school children.

We have a citizen security programme. We are working with the Ministry of National Security. The Ministry of National Security has over 200 mentors that go into our schools, in our mentor/”menteeship” programme. We are partnered with the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, on their parenting programme, a programme geared to general parenting, which is shared by the Ministry of Education as well.

We have established the National School Code of Conduct, which the principals have always been told to bring to the attention of the teachers. *[Interruption]* You asked a question.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have a remedial programme where there are 280 remedial teachers in the school, 148 in the primary and 132 in the secondary. We have substitute teachers in the schools. We have 80 substitute teachers so that no class is left without any—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. Yeah. Please, if you could just wrap up because you have gone beyond your five minutes, and if you would just wrap up, you know, it would be good. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: According to my colleagues the bell has rung, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*] All right. We have girl guides, cadets, martial arts, [*Crosstalk*] after school study centres, “Dial-a-Teacher”, student hotline, a discipline matrix, local school boards, school board programme, and we have the strong school base. We have the parenting in education where we have conducted over 282 parenting workshops across Trinidad and Tobago having 12,500 parents. In terms of—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: All right—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am just finishing, half a minute again. Half a minute.

Mr. Speaker: We will take supplementals now. We will take supplementals. The hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, please.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Could the Hon. Minister say that despite all the various measures that he has just regaled us with, that the number of suspensions has decreased since 2014?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Education.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We are trying to get the information, for sure we do not have any information to 2007, 2008, 2009. When we came in we started asking for the information, the Student Support Services began to do its work. We got some information for 2010, but they were not very conclusive because some of the districts still did not provide the information.

My understanding, we have for 2012, 2013 and 2014. I was not able to get that full information yet, but, because we introduced a zero tolerance to it, the

figures may appear to be increasing, but in fact the major areas, the issue of bullying and violence in school, is really decreasing. So, we are moving more to a preventative approach rather than to a treatment approach.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Could the hon. Minister state how many of those suspended in 2014 have not returned to school? How many students suspended in 2014 have actually not returned to school?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is a difficult question to answer at this time. I do not have the figures on it, but I have to sign the—as the Minister, I have to sign those that have extended suspensions. I do not recall signing more than about 50, but, in any case, my understanding is that they all return to school, or most of them, probably 99 per cent, because we now have introduced a Student Enhancement Centre where these students now go for counselling with their parents, and we have educational, behavioural and clinical psychologists attending to them during the seven-day period, so at the end of it they are now returning back into the classes. Previously, they were just left and sent home and nothing was done, but now we are bringing them to the Student Enhancement Learning Centres. We have established three already and we want to have one in every education district, and we are getting the full support of the clinical, educational and behavioural psychologists in this area.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Could the hon. Minister state if there is any follow up action and any way of monitoring those students who have not taken up the facility of attending those correctional programmes? And what happens to them? Where do they go? And do we know what has happened to them if they have fallen through the cracks completely?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Education.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The school social workers are now engaging the wider community and trying to get to the parents and going into the community themselves, but the legal framework for going in and doing things is, of course, limited and we will have to have a change under the Education Act, as far as that is concerned. Because, previously, we had some truancy officers but the school social workers are now doing a tremendous job, we have about 100 of them. So, we are identifying the students who are falling out and bringing them back in within the system, and we are getting tremendous support from the wider communities, their guardians and their parents.

Completion of Plaisance Road

136. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

Having noted the Minister's response to question No. 140 on June 16, 2014, could the Minister state when the Plaisance Road in John John, Piccadilly Lane, Clifton Street and St. Paul Street will be completed?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member would like to find out the status of roads in her constituency, Plaisance Road in John John and Piccadilly Lane. Refurbishment works for Plaisance Road in John John were originally carded for the first quarter of the fiscal year 2015, and on June 16, 2014, the Member would recall that was what I indicated in my answer at that time.

Presently, we are in fact reviewing the whole programme, and that road is now carded to be done in the third quarter of fiscal 2015. With respect to Piccadilly Lane refurbishment, works will also be undertaken in the third quarter of fiscal year 2015.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, the Hon. Member.

Miss Mc Donald:—Minister, we have Clifton Street and St. Paul Street also.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Clifton Street, again, work was originally carded for the first quarter, and, again, I had mentioned that in my answer on June 16, 2014, but now it is, again, going to be undertaken in the third quarter. With respect to St. Paul Street, those refurbishment works in St. Paul Street were completed on April 04, 2014.

Picton Dance Theatre (Completion of Construction)

137. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) asked the Hon. Minister of Community Development:

Having noted the Minister's response to question No. 143 on June 16, 2014, could the Minister state when construction of the Picton Dance Theatre in East Port of Spain will be completed?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Winston Peters): Thank you very kindly, Mr. Speaker. Consequent on a review by the Ministry of Community Development for its capital projects for 2014/2015 fiscal period, priority has been given to facilitate works under the Ministry of Community Development, Community Centre Construction and Refurbishment Programme. Currently, work is ongoing in 15 community centres, 11 are between 60 to 98 per cent completed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Community Development, I asked specifically, about the Picton Dance Theatre. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for—

Hon. W. Peters: I told you specifically, exactly what we are doing without calling the name. I told you exactly that, and that is a question that I answered before. Let me just answer you a little more to tell you that even though this particular Picton Dance centre is not completed, within a radius that is very accessible to everybody there, more than 20 community centre facilities there—
[Interruption]

Hon. Member: We did not know that.

Hon. W. Peters: I am telling you that now, and we are working on them. So I am saying to you that, without being specific, by mentioning the dance theatre name, it does not make a difference, I am telling you what we are doing. I also mentioned here before that we have taken inventory of all our community centres to prioritize them, and here I am telling you that between 60—15 centres are under review, what we are doing, and they are between 60 to 95 per cent completed. That is what I am saying.

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

**Eastbound Lane of St. Joseph Bridge
(Details of)**

139. Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh (*St. Joseph*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

Could the Minister state with respect to the east bound lane of the St. Joseph Bridge:

- a) the completion date;
- b) the name of the contractor; and
- c) the project cost?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for St. Joseph would like to enquire about the east bound lane of the St. Joseph River Bridge in terms of the completion date, the name of the contractor, and the project cost. The completion date for this project is July 2015. The name of the contractor is KJS Enterprises Company Limited, and the contract sum, inclusive of VAT and contingencies, is \$15,424,291.74.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Supplemental.

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

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, are you aware that in a consultation held at the La Joya Complex—we were in November 2013—we were told that the project would have been completed by February 2015, so my question is, are you going to enforce any penalty clauses for late delivery of the project?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: There is a contract between the company building the bridge and the Ministry, and, of course, there are liquidated damages in that contract, and, if necessary, and if the contractor is found to be negligent, it will in fact be applied.

St Joseph Police Station (Details of)

140. Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh (*St. Joseph*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Having noted the Minister's response to question No. 124 on May 09, 2014, could the Minister state with respect to the St Joseph Police Station:

- a) the reason for the delay;
- b) the completion date; and
- c) the project cost?

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

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. Carl Alfonso): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members, the response to the House of

Representatives question, No. 124, relating to the construction of the new St. Joseph Police Station. In May of 2014, the then Minister of National Security informed the Parliament, inter alia, that the anticipated start date for construction of the station was August 31, 2014. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has now indicated that the actual start date of construction was February 23, 2015. The delay in the start of construction was due to continuing design reviews, finalization and approval of the building footprint by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

On finalization and approval of the building footprint, town and country approval was sought and subsequently received, permitting the commencement of the construction. The project is scheduled to be completed by January 16, 2016. The value of the successful bid was as indicated in the response to question No. 124, May 2014, \$31,417,535.80, however, the final project budget is \$40,445,149.84. This differs from the value of the successful bid since it incorporates the following additional costs which were deemed, subsequently, to be associated with the overall management of the project: project development cost, \$375,500; consultancy services, \$1,814,879.50; ancillary civil works, water and electricity, \$225,000; construction contingency, \$3,029,918.69; project management fees, \$3,582,315.85. That concludes the answers.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

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

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Sir. Hon. Minister, you stated that the late construction start date of February 25, 2015, was due to the concerns by the police service; I believe that is what you alluded to?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Is the Minister aware that on the second occasion of Prime Minister's Questions, the hon. Prime Minister, herself, in response to my question, again, stated that those concerns were already addressed. The hon. Prime Minister said in October 2014 that construction would begin two weeks after, which would have been the end of October 2015. So those concerns by the police service were already addressed back in October 2014, could you tell us now what has happened?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: And the question is? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: The question is what new concerns—

Mr. Speaker: Please. Please. Please. One at a time, please.

Mr. Deyalsingh:—what new concerns now, after the assurance by the hon. Prime Minister that the concerns of the police station were addressed in October 2014, what new concerns have now accounted for a late start date of February 2015?

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

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: Well, I have my concerns, of course, but I am not going to challenge what the hon. Prime Minister has said.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, it is not your concerns I am asking about. I am asking what new concerns has the Commissioner of Police raised about the police station after the hon. Prime Minister, in October 2014, said to this House that the then concerns were already addressed, and that constructions would have started within two weeks of the middle of October 2014, what new concerns has the acting Commissioner of Police raised?

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

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: Let me see if I understand you; what new concerns that the Commissioner of Police have? That is what you are asking me? I have no idea. I need to talk with the Commissioner of Police and find out what his concerns are. [*Laughter*]

3.00 p.m.

Mount Hope/Mount Lambert Community Centre

(Details of)

144. Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh (*St. Joseph*) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development:

Having noted the Minister's response to question 125 on May 09, 2014, could the Minister state with respect to the Mount Hope/Mount Lambert Community Centre:

- a) the reasons for the delay; and
- b) the hand-over date?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Winston Peters): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to make it clear that he, the Member for St. Joseph, would not have too many supplementals. Let me say—he asked me the

reason for the delay and the handing over date? So, I am going to tell you what they are right now.

Variations in the Mount Hope/Mount Lambert Community Centre construction projects were identified and have since received the approval of Cabinet. Consequently, construction work continues and the Ministry anticipates that this facility will be completed and commissioned by the end of the third quarter of fiscal 2015.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Supplemental. Thank you, hon. Minister. Is the Minister aware that in response to a question on May 09, 2014, this Chamber was told that the community centre was 90 per cent completed and would be handed over September 2014? Are you now saying that a project that was 90 per cent completed now has variations which would require a completion date one year later? What was the nature of these variations?

Hon. W. Peters: Well, I comparatively speak and I could tell you about other community centres—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deyalsingh: I am talking about this one.

Hon. W. Peters: I could tell you about other community centres that were 95 per cent completed and we had to go back because they reverted to be 60 per cent and 40 per cent completed, that we had to go back to them. So to answer your question and ask, what was so critical about the completion of these things that I tell you, you know, that they looked at other variations.

I am sure that you are aware of what variations mean. Sometimes when you are doing something on a construction, you have unforeseen things that would come up. For me to come and tell you exactly what they are, would be telling you things that, I mean, I cannot be quite sure of. But I told you that they had variations, and these variations were identified by the relevant people, meaning the engineers and the people who were designing it and all of that. There might have been design flaws and that kind of thing, and that is why it was pushed back.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, just to be clear. You had spoken about variations for other community centres. I am speaking specifically of the Mount Hope/Mount Lambert Community Centre which was 90 per cent completed when the first question was asked in May 09, 2014—the Mount Hope/Mount Lambert Community Centre?

Mr. Speaker: A question, please. Yeah. The hon. Minister.

Hon. W. Peters: Yes, Sir. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thought that my honourable colleague from St. Joseph was listening to the second part of my

answer. Apparently he was not. I said to you that there were variations, and that is why it reverted to that. Okay? Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Let us go.

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

Mr. Speaker: You want to ask a question? No. Well, before you go to your written, I think the hon. Member for St. Joseph—the Member for Chaguanas West rather—would like to—[*Interruption*]

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I crave your indulgence. I have 10 questions for written answer. All the dates have passed, some as late as March. Can I have some advice on when these answers would be given?

Mr. Speaker: Before the leader responds, I think the hon. Member for Port of Spain South wanted to raise a point.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Chaguanas West took the words from my mouth because, [*Crosstalk*] I stood up to ask about the 16 outstanding questions for written answer and they have all qualified. Question Nos. 98, 106, 107, 108, 109, 122, 123, 124, 125, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135 and 138. All have qualified. I am just asking the—so I want to find out what is the status and whether they will be circulated today? Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the House, would you be kind enough to respond?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Sure. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We intend to circulate today written answer to question No. 108—that is one of the many from the Member for Chaguanas West; written answer to question No. 109 from the Member for Chaguanas West, again. We also have with us today, I think, another—we have the response to, I think, it is a question to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, a question from the Member for Chaguanas West, Question 123.

Mr. Speaker, the other questions on the Order Paper are Question 106 to the Minister of Works and Infrastructure from the Member for Chaguanas West as well, I think we have. Do we? [*Crosstalk*] We will be able to answer 106 as well. The other questions, we will ask that these questions be deferred for two weeks to properly prepare the written answers.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I know time is tight, but I would like to invoke Standing Order 29(3) because I think that the answers to these questions are very important and they have been delayed before.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. But which question you would like to—because I do not see any question in your name.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes. There are—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: You have question No. 135.

Miss Mc Donald: I am looking at 128.

Mr. Speaker: No. No. No. How many questions you have asked?

Miss Mc Donald: I have one question on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: Well, you can only speak for yourself.

Miss Mc Donald: So, I will speak on behalf of myself, and the Leader of the Opposition will rise on his question.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I rise to invoke the relevant Standing Order with respect to question No. 128 to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, and question 130 to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. Mc Intosh:—I rise to invoke the relevant Standing Order. Question No. 133 to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: 132.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: 133.

Mr. Speaker: 133. Yes. Okay. Anyone else? Let us go. [*Crosstalk*]

**D. Mahadeo and Sons Ltd
(Award of contracts)**

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of **Mr. Jack Warner** (*Chaguanas West*):

106. Could the Minister of Works and Infrastructure state the particulars of all contracts awarded either directly or through any of the Ministry's agencies to D.

Mahadeo and Sons Ltd, including the method and amount of contract award for the period April 2013 to present inclusive of, but not limited to:

- i. National Infrastructure Development Company Limited;
- ii. Programme for Upgrading Roads Efficiency;
- iii. Community Improvement Services Limited;
- iv. Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited;
- v. Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited;
- vi. Unemployment Relief Programme; and
- vii. Highway Division of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure?

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Report on “Total Policing” Investigation

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. Carlton Alfonso):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we all recall that March 23, 2015 was a significant date in our memory, in our history. You will recall that immediately after she saw what was happening, the hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, mandated that immediate steps be taken to: one, identify the source of the police road blocks; two, undertake immediately to put a stop to those road blocks; and three, clear our roads so that citizens could either continue to their places of work and school or return home.

I complied immediately as Minister of National Security. I requested that an immediate investigation be launched into what caused this massive and sudden exercise by the police. This investigation was carried out and a report from Asst. Commissioner of Police Vincel Edwards was presented to the National Security Council.

Having considered the contents of the investigation report and in keeping with our commitment to the people to provide answers for the level of frustration that they experienced, it is fair that it should now be presented to the House of Representatives. This is why I am here this afternoon. I, once again, want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak to our citizens through you.

Mr. Speaker, the report found that on Monday, March 23, 2015 between the hours of 4.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m., some officers —some officers—embarked on a

nationwide road block. This negatively affected people who were caught in traffic entering Port of Spain, the entire East-West Corridor, San Fernando and Tobago.

The report found, in part, that some of the police officers who participated in this exercise described it as a total policing day which was a directive of the police executive. Other officers said it was part of the police crime plan of 2015 which was initiated by the Acting Commissioner of Police—and that is Mr. Stephen Williams.

The members of the public, however, took a different view: some suspecting that the road block exercise was as a direct result of unsettled negotiations, salaries negotiations between the police service and the Chief Personnel Officer.

Following on an apology from the Acting Commissioner of Police at the time—and this is Mrs. Ann-Marie Alleyne-Daly—she instructed Assistant Commissioner of Police Edwards to pursue an immediate investigation. The report, Mr. Speaker, found three causes for the exercise and made six recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, this investigation was commenced by contact from officer Edwards, ACP Edwards, to the senior superintendents of the nine police divisions. The senior superintendents of the central, southern and south-western divisions reported that no road block exercises were conducted in their areas of charge or responsibility.

The senior superintendent of police for eastern, north-eastern, northern, Port of Spain, western and Tobago said that road block exercises were, in fact, carried out. It was also discovered that officers from the Guard and Emergency Branch, commonly known as GEB, from the Port of Spain CID and one officer from the Special Branch participated in this exercise.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that members of the public have called for information on the outcome of these exercises, and in keeping with the Government's commitment in responding to those calls, I give the following details.

The eastern division from the Sangre Grande Police Station: A road block was carried out at the Turure Junction—I hope I have the pronunciation correct.

Mr. Deyalsingh: What?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: Turure. T-U-R-U-R-E. [*Crosstalk*] Turure—I am not from Grande—and was authorised by Inspector Thom and supervised by Acting Sergeant Sookdeo. The result—no fixed penalty notices were issued; no arrests were made.

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[SEN. THE HON. BRIG. C. ALFONSO]

Inspector Thom said in his report in this investigation that he felt he was taking “a proactive” approach to prevent crime. He said that this followed an incident on March 21, 2015 where a police officer was shot and wounded. He also said his actions were in response to the mandate and strategic plans of the Acting Commissioner of Police.

The North Eastern Division: North Eastern Division road block exercises were carried out: Santa Cruz Police Station and Bourg Mulatresse, authorized by Inspector Jacob; San Juan Police Station at Saddle Road, Santa Cruz, authorised by Acting Inspector Ramlogan. Four fixed penalty notices were issued with no arrests; Barataria Police Station at the corner of the Priority Bus Route and Morvant Junction was authorised by Acting Inspector Ramlogan. There were no arrests. Morvant Police Station at Eastern Main Road, Barataria, was authorised by Corporal Richards. There were six fixed penalty notices and one person arrested.

Acting Inspector Ramlogan said in his report that his actions were the result of a mandate given to station commanders by the senior superintendent of the North Eastern Division.

Northern Division: At the Piarco Police Station, at the corner of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and the Piarco traffic lights, authorised by Acting Sergeant Moona. Fifteen fixed penalty notices were issued, 15 stop and search forms were written up and three persons were arrested.

Pinto Police Post, at the corner of Churchill Roosevelt Highway and Pinto Road, was authorised by Acting Sergeant Thomas. There were 15 penalty notices issued, 12 stop and search forms were written up and one person was arrested. Cumuto Police Station at Cumuto Main Road, authorised by Acting Corporal Gordon, six fixed penalty notices were issued, 137 stop and search forms were written up and five persons were arrested. San Rafael Police Station at San Rafael Junction, authorised by Acting Sergeant Williams, three fixed penalty notices were issued and 25 stop and search forms were written up. At Maloney Police Station at the Priority Bus Route at Red Hill Lights, authorised by Acting Sergeant Greene, 15 fixed penalty notices were issued. La Horquetta and Arima Police Stations, at the corner of De Freitas Boulevard and Churchill Roosevelt Highway, authorised by Acting Sergeant Waldropt, 15 fixed penalty notices were issued, 144 stop and search forms were written up.

3.15 p.m.

Arouca Police Station at Five Rivers Junction, authorized by Acting Sergeant Joseph, nine fixed penalty notices were issued. St Joseph Police

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Station at Priority Bus Route and Eastern Main Road in the vicinity of TML Primary School, authorized by Acting Sergeant Peters, one fixed penalty notice was issued. Acting Corporal Rampersad said in his report that the exercise was in keeping with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Anti-Crime Strategic Plan for 2014 to 2016. Acting Sergeant Joseph said his actions were geared towards apprehending wanted persons and dealing with persons violating the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act.

Port of Spain Division: Central Police Station at Beetham Highway, Lighthouse, authorized by Acting Sergeant Seepersad, seven fixed penalty notices were issued. Acting Sergeant Seepersad said the exercise was as a result of the Commissioner of Police's operational plan for 2015.

Western Division: Western Division Task Force at Western Main Road, Cocorite, authorized by Acting Corporal Nurse, five fixed penalty notices were issued and 48 stop and search warrants were written up. Acting Corporal Nurse said the exercise was carried out to recover two stolen vehicles reported on March 21st and 22nd.

Tobago Division: Roxborough and Charlotteville Police Stations at Windward Road, Goodwood, authorized by Acting Sergeant Williams, 13 fixed penalty notices were issued, 101 stop and search forms were written up. Scarborough Police Station at Claude Noel Highway, Orange Hill Road and Milford Road, authorized by Acting Sergeant Alleyne. Acting Corporal Sebros was also present, 12 fixed penalty notices were issued. Moriah Police Station at Big River Hill, authorized by Acting Sergeant George, one fixed penalty notice was issued. Old Grange Police Station, authorized by Inspector Powder—he was not acting he was just inspector—13 fixed penalty notices were issued and seven stop and search forms were written up.

Acting Sergeant Sterling indicated in her report that the exercise was carried out to curb an upsurge of incidents of larceny of motor cars in that district. Inspector Powder said he decided to conduct the exercise. Acting Sergeant Alleyne and Acting Corporal Bishop said the exercise was the result of a "Total Policing Day Exercise".

Guard and Emergency Branch: Officers of the Guard and Emergency Branch conducted roadblocks at Gasparillo in the vicinity of the flyover and were authorized by Acting Sergeant Ogunshaye. The following officers were involved and efforts were made to have Acting Sergeant Ogunshaye submit a report on the nature of the exercise. Those personnel were: Acting Sergeant Ogunshaye, as I just mentioned; Constable De Govia; Constable Breed; Constable Pierre;

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Constable Reid; Constable Crawford and Constable Charles. Efforts were made to have the acting sergeant submit reports on the nature of the exercise. To date, no report has been submitted.

CID, Criminal Investigation Department: the Criminal Investigation Department/Criminal Records Office Operational Unit conducted a roadblock on Independence Square South in the vicinity of the Cathedral—the Roman Catholic Cathedral. This was authorized by WPC Collette. One person was arrested.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear on the concept of total policing as described in this investigative report. It is a crime fighting initiative of the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Police operations, Mr. Harold Phillip, who mandated that divisional commanders, in a memo of January 19, 2015, will conduct, I quote, “total policing day” each day, with effect from January 19, 2015. The memo stated that these exercises should include: roadblock exercises, stop and search exercises, ticket exercises, search warrant executions, targeting of priority offenders and priority crimes as well as targeting gang members. On completion of such, the divisions were instructed to create and submit reports by noon of the following day. This memo was followed up with another memo entitled, “Police Visibility Patrol”.

Mr. Speaker, this report also highlights media reports which expressed the outrage of citizens who were put through this ordeal of traffic gridlock. Within these media reports the issue of industrial action was addressed in the context of the suspicion that the incident on March 23, 2015 was because of disagreements over wage negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, the investigative report had this to say:

While there may be a correlation between industrial action and the police roadblock exercises in Trinidad and Tobago, there is really no evidence to substantiate this view.

Mr. Speaker, however, as the investigative report continues, three specific areas were highlighted as causes for the roadblocks, and these reasons are:

1. Malicious obedience;
2. A breakdown of systems with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service; and
3. A breach of paragraph 131(2) and (3) of the Police Service Regulations 2007.

On the first point, the report states that on total policing days, malicious obedience to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago generally means that exercises are

carried out, and I quote “without any regard or concern for the plight of the general public or even to maintain a relationship with the public”.

On the second point, the report states the activities of March 23, 2015, are a clear indication of the breakdown of some of the systems of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

The third point quotes the sections of the police service regulations which were found to be in breach.

Further, Mr. Speaker, the investigative report stated and I quote:

“The reports obtained from the First Division officers in charge of the divisions, indicated that they were unaware of what was taking place in their divisions.”

The report also states that:

“For a brief moment between 4.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. on March 23, 2015, First Division officers in charge of six police divisions, and Second Division officers who were in charge of six named police stations lost control of their divisions and stations respectively, to a small group of junior officers.”

And, Mr. Speaker, the report also cites the astute leadership of the then acting Commissioner of Police, Mrs. Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly and her deputy, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Harold Phillip and Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Glen Hackett. These officers intervened and took control of the situation. Recommendation is, in light of the findings of this investigation, the report has also put forward recommendations which I now share with you, Mr. Speaker, and the hon. Members, and through you, the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is proposed that a conference be held with First and Second Division officers to refresh their minds on the provisions of the Police Service Regulations and to reprimand them.

The second proposal is that serious consideration be given to the relationship between the officer who co-hosts the television programme “Beyond the Tape” and the police service. His views on the matter were contrary and the exact opposite to the position taken by the acting Commissioner of Police, Mrs. Alleyne-Daly. Indeed, he praised the position taken by certain members of the police service on March 23, 2015.

The third proposal is that officers who did not participate in this exercise be commended publicly for not pursuing a measure that caused tremendous frustration to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Statement by Minister

Friday, April 17, 2015

[SEN. THE HON. BRIG. C. ALFONSO]

The fourth proposal is that a commission of enquiry be held into the activities of these officers on March 23, 2015, especially given the nature of public sentiment by many who felt they were victimized by these officers.

The fifth proposal is that Acting Sergeant Waldropt of the Special Branch, who performed roadblock duties dressed in police uniform be re-aligned or re-assigned for his participation in this exercise. The Special Branch is there to provide support and intelligence and avoid participating in situations like these. Yet in this case, the officer in question did the exact opposite. It should be noted that according to the investigator:

“The Head of the Special Branch was not helpful. She was more concerned with her seniority over me and refused to provide me with any information.”

Indeed, no report was forthcoming from the Special Branch.

Mr. Speaker, additional measures have been undertaken by the acting Commissioner of Police, which include matters referred to the Police Complaints Department.

And the sixth proposal is for a formal apology to the nation by the Commissioner of Police and his three Deputy Commissioners of Police.

However, Mr. Speaker, as was demonstrated on that day and on previous occasions, the Government has a duty to defend and uphold the freedoms and liberties of the people of this country. There is no one more serious, I submit, about this duty than the hon. Prime Minister herself. [*Desk thumping*] That duty, I submit, will never be compromised, nor will we ever allow the compromise of the democratic rights, liberties, freedom and safety of our people. This is a Government that respects independence and honours the tenets of autonomy of the different protective arms of the State, but as we have proven and will boldly prove again and again, if we must, we will not tolerate any threat to the peace, stability, liberty or well-being of the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay this report in the honourable House and in so doing, I wish to also refer this report to the Joint Select Committee. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The Joint Select Committee on what, hon. Minister of National Security?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: National Security.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

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Mr. Warner: Mr. Speaker, am I not allowed to make a—

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you are allowed to ask a question.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Sir. Mr. Minister, you are quoted as saying that this total day of policing will never happen again, were you correctly quoted?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: I was assured by the Commissioner, after he had spoken to his divisional commanders and his senior people that this will never happen again. I feel it will never happen again. I really believe this sort of thing will never happen again. [*Desk thumping*]

PAPER LAID

9. Report on “Total Policing” Exercise on Monday March 23, 2015. [*The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. Carlton Alfonso)*]

To be referred to the Joint Select Committee on National Security.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

(LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN)

[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [March 30, 2015]:

Be it resolved that this Honourable House censure and condemn the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West;

And be it further resolved that this Honourable House express its lack of confidence in Dr. Keith Rowley as the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Tobago West, Minister of Tobago Development. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Tobago Development (Hon. Dr. Delmon Baker): [*Desk thumping*] Well, Mr. Speaker, let me thank you for the opportunity to join in this debate.

[Members of the Opposition leave the Chamber]

Perhaps, let me say that while the Members are still in the precincts of this Chamber, that it is a difficult thing to see men who are preparing themselves, in the event that something goes wrong at the next election, to take charge of this country’s affairs, are afraid [*Desk thumping*] to come to the reckoning of their own actions in the past.

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[HON. DR. D. BAKER]

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3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion before us is:

“*Whereas* the reckless conduct of the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West has given rise to serious concerns in the public domain about his judgment”—and I underline the word “judgement”—“and the exercise of his discretion;”

I will skip quickly to the fifth paragraph, Mr. Speaker.

“*And whereas* the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Diego Martin West by this conduct and other reckless acts has brought the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and the House into public odium and disrepute:

Be it resolved that this Honourable House censure and condemn the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West;

And be it further resolved that this Honourable House express its lack of confidence in Dr. Keith Rowley as the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West.”

Mr. Speaker, the fact that we are here today engaging in a debate of censure and no confidence in a Member, who by right can claim Tobagonian heritage, who sits in the office of the Leader of the Opposition is of concern to me, a Member of Parliament sitting for the constituency of Tobago West and myself as a Tobagonian.

You see, Motions of no confidence have such gravity, that the entire House almost pauses its normal business to consider the actions or the behaviours of an individual office holder in the performance of their individual duties. A Motion of no confidence, alternatively a vote of no confidence, censure or a no confidence Motion, by definition, is a statement which indicates that this person who holds office has committed an act by the person or persons who speak on the Motion that brings this House into odium or public disrepute. And I must state out of hand early, that this Member for whom this Motion is brought is the nephew by marriage of my own grandmother.

So entering in this debate, Mr. Speaker, is a matter not just of conscience—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Does he admit that?

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: I must say, when you have an interest, you must declare your interest. That is the principle of the conduct of Members of this honourable House. [*Desk thumping*] The intent of these Motions is expressly brought to the fore when a person who in this high office falls short in some respect of his duties and his responsibilities.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, a censure Motion is brought to show the collective disapproval of the other Members of this House on such an action. So the gravity and the weight of this kind of Motion cannot be taken frivolously or in frivolity and this cannot be taken out of vexation, because such a Motion carries such a heavy weight, that the person or persons who speak to it must be absolutely clear as to why they are speaking and on what matters they speak, and as to the substance of the matters that have been presented before this House. I must say, in furtherance to those general principles that censure Motions and Motions of no confidence, in stating those reasons, must call all the Members of this House to take a collective decision on the actions of the person to whom the Motion referred.

It is interesting with such a gravity, Mr. Speaker, when similar Motions were brought before other Members in this honourable Chamber, that not a single Member on this side abdicated their responsibility to this House or to the people of the nation and stood their ground and sat in the Chamber and presented and deliberated on every single matter presented to them. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Twenty-seven hours.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: In fact, the Government after preparing and presenting on each of these matters, in defending all of the colleagues that were brought before this honourable House, presented a case to the nation that was the direct opposite of the person or persons who brought the Motion against them. But today the table turned, not today, the last two sessions on this Motion, the table turned. The persons who beforehand were bringing the Motions themselves, faced one single Motion on the first occasion. Fire came, pressure came to Members of Parliament who were seeking lofty office.

Mr. Speaker, imagine if in 2016, these men and women who are pretenders in the public space were to sit in a Cabinet, and a serious matter faces Trinidad and Tobago, perhaps an economic crisis, perhaps a strike that shuts down the entire country for 16 or 17 days—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Natural disasters.

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Hon. Dr. D. Baker: Or natural disasters, a hurricane or an earthquake, are they simply going to abdicate their responsibility to the citizenry and walk out of another Parliament or Cabinet or finance committee meeting, because they do not agree with the subject matter being presented? Is that the kind of leader or leaders that we would want to see for this nation, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Speaker, there are several examples when Motions like these are brought before other Houses in the Westminster system and those models. And in fact, a motion of no confidence in the Westminster system became a historical fact:

“...in March 1782 when”—under that parliamentary system—“following the news of the British defeat at Yorktown in the American Revolutionary War the previous October, the Parliament of Great Britain voted that they ‘can no longer repose confidence in the present Ministers’”—that led the Government in Great Britain in 1782.

“Prime Minister Lord North responded”—to that vote of no confidence—“by”—advising the—“King George III to accept”—the resignation of all of his Ministers and therefore they were forced to go another general election in Great Britain.

And over time this new idea of a motion of no confidence in a Government came into the political space in Westminster-type systems of Government.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, such Motions are equivalent to a no vote on supply of money bills passed usually in the Lower House in Commonwealth nations. So that if a Government is found not to be able to pass its budget then it being by virtue of that hamstrung, is obligated to leave graciously and to ask the population to select a new team of leaders.

Mr. Speaker:

“In India, a Motion of No Confidence can be introduced only in the... (Lower House of the Parliament...). The motion is admitted for discussion”—and must have—“a minimum of *fifty* members”—before it is considered for debate on the floor.

There are other examples in the Westminster type system and models, and usually, of course, such a motion over time has been seen to be brought by an opposition party or members who are outside of the government’s power structure, in order to bring a reckoning on either the entire government’s functioning or on the functioning of one of the officers in a superior position in the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, in Australia, by another example, a motion of no confidence before it is tabled on the floor of a Parliament requires at least 76 votes before it is considered for a debate. So such motions by the nature of the development of our Westminster traditions are serious and do require the consideration of all of the members of a House.

Mr. Speaker, with that being said, one must also understand that in the development of politics, administration and governance in general, that sometimes actions in vogue in modern times require an unprecedented kind of response. It is a remarkable type of leadership that in response to unprecedented action must stand up to give a similar kind of a response, and I have some picong.

Tobagonians in general, Mr. Speaker, are known as, God-fearing and hard-working people. Further to that, I am also to disclose that we have a tendency to exclusively support each other, particularly when we are out of our Tobago elements and out of the Tobago space. So that perhaps because of strong family relationships, once there is a charge laid against a Tobagonian, in general, all the family blood comes together and we support each other. The expressions of “ah we boy” and, of course, the calypsonian who sang the song—Nelson’s song, “All Ah We Is One Family” and certainly if per chance say, a squabble occurs in the public space, we describe that squabble as a Tobago love. And those in Trinidad tend to stay out of those kinds of squabble because we leave it for Tobagonians to treat with their issues independently and individually.

In that regard, it is most unusual therefore, though necessary, that such a Motion against the Member of this House who has the same kind of genealogy and lineage as I do, receives the support. A Motion like this, receives the support of both myself, Member of Parliament for Tobago West and my lovely and hon. colleague, the Member of Parliament East. [*Desk thumping*] So “ah we boy and ah we girl” are here to bring into the public space some interesting facts that should bring into question both the judgment and the decision-making process of the person who holds the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when I first came to this House, within the first week, this was the first time I had met my cousin by marriage. I have lived in Tobago for many years and spent quite a bit of time in my grandmother’s house in Mason Hall. His uncle was there. I have never, ever seen him on any occasion in the space of my grandmother, so I did not know him before I came to this House. And in crossing him I got a little nudge on the shoulder and he said to me, “Bakes, I hear you have the finest parentage and pedigree”. Because of course, by that time he would have heard that somebody else in his family, even by marriage,

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had entered into the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, even then as the Leader of the Opposition, he for some—could be two seconds—recognized his “Tobagonianess” and reached out to me, his colleague from Tobago West. I must also indicate, that he also ran for the seat of Tobago West at one point. I think it was in 1981, and of course the people of Tobago made a decision as to his fitness for this seat at that time.

3.45 p.m.

Of course, he never actually held this seat in the Parliament. He became a Trinidadian by practice and eventually ran for the constituency of Diego Martin West.

So with that background, when one sees the advertisements on television now that are running, talking about living in Tobago, being raised by his grandparents, one sees this well-polished young-looking, bright Tobagonian-type politician running for the Office of Prime Minister, and that brings a bit of sensitivities and pride, of course, to the people of Tobago who are looking at the television, seeing this Hollywood star, and this star comes into the Chamber well dressed, I must add, with a scarf around his neck, well-polished, Mr. Speaker. One would never have imagined that the same polished individual who appears on the television nowadays is the same man, year after year, in his incarnation as Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, who lodged several vicious attacks on the Members of Parliament for Tobago West and Tobago East while they were supporting the most important motion for internal self-government for Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]*—polished like a Hollywood star!* In fact, when I looked at the television insert I would think he would get the award for the best actor for somebody pretending to be a Tobagonian.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member of this august body in real life, one is expected to stand for principle and to act without fear or favour in the service of all of the citizenry and in the best interest of one’s constituency and the Republic. The nation’s motto calls for us collectively aspiring to achieve noble ideals, that we do so by bringing our people together.

In fact, that motto says: “Together we aspire, together we achieve”, and therefore, even in our contributions in this House or in the public space, the person who wishes to lead this nation has to take a tone that is conciliatory, that seeks to build bridges, that attempts to bring people of different ilk, religion, races, classes, together in the search of achieving these very noble ideals. Brought to that context and brought into the context of this august Chamber, each Member here, individually and collectively is responsible for the maintenance of what we

call, the State. So that collectively we look at our budget, collectively we look at the national security issues, collectively we look at crime and health care and bring to bear on the discussions in this House, a position that forces the best policy and legislative framework forward in the interest of all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, as an MP, the propagation of the best and current legislation is what we are hired here to do, regardless as to whether we are Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition. Additionally, that fore process and order that the functional roles granted to the further privileged few is not simply a mere elevation, but the casting of greater responsibility to those office holders.

So to my mind, as an MP we sit in this House, when we consider legislation as equal and to that fact, when one speaks as Leader of the Opposition, one is, in fact, a functionary, equivalent in role to the Prime Minister, equivalent in role to the Leader of Government Business in the House, equivalent in role to the Opposition Chief Whip. These are functional roles of responsibility cast to provide this honourable House with greater order. So the principle we are making and the statement we are making here is that each of these roles, each of these positions, are fundamental to the preservation of order in this very House, and how each functionary fills these roles either brings this entire House into odium or lifts the respect that the general public has for each of us, individually. It is all for one, as MPs, and one for all, Mr. Speaker.

So as a young MP operating in the Westminster construct, all of these offices, to me, all of these functional roles are equivalent, and therefore, based on that, a pragmatic approach, and the progressive thinking would therefore mean that the same level of censure that could be brought to the Office of Prime Minister, can be brought to every other office in this honourable House of Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] We must not be afraid. You see, not having a thing done elsewhere does not prevent us in this honourable House from having that thing done here if it is in the nation's good. [*Desk thumping*] There was never a Motion of No Confidence before 1782. If they did not do it there, then maybe the practice would not have spread to where it is today. So today, in Trinidad and Tobago, we are setting precedent for the rest of the British Commonwealth. [*Desk thumping*]

Bermuda, I think, followed us. So you see already we are setting precedent in other jurisdictions, as we have done with the pan, as we have done with our discourses and discussions that led to the International Criminal Court, as we have done with our work on the buffalypso and the scorpion peppers, which are—I think we are second with that—now internationally renowned.

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Mr. De Coteau: Keeps you warm.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: This is Trinidad and Tobago leading the world sometimes—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: “Trini” chocolate.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: And, of course, my Prime Minister said “Trini” chocolate, but I would contest it and say it is Tobago chocolate [*Desk thumping*] that I found in Brussels. The best chocolate in the entire world comes from Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, having researched the track record of the second longest serving Member in this august body, I must declare that I am not impressed. Having grown up in the mature days of Pamela Nicholson and ANR Robinson who, by their speech, efforts, formal dispositions and actions, cultivated a polite forthrightness, Tobagonians are known to be both polite and forthright. So forceful but without being so—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: Belligerent.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: I will be nicer. [*Laughter*]—without being so coarse that there is no room for further discourse at the end of the conversation. Mr. Speaker, Tobagonians are not known simply for putting on the “lights, camera, action” modality in their operations, but in following up the optics with speech and with action. The gentleman from Diego Martin West simply does not measure up. He is no ANR Robinson, and the scarf does not a gentleman make. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, quite the contrary, the public utterances of the Member for Diego Martin West on the singular issue that is at the back of the minds of every Tobagonian, the issue for the struggle for autonomy, self-government or greater internal self-government, whatever the expression that the generation that is discussing the issue calls in vogue is—because there are several ways to express the same idea based on the generation you are speaking to—he publicly declared, when Robinson came to the House to debate this Motion in 1977—soon thereafter—that he was ashamed to be called a Tobagonian.

In fact, he, in his public utterances, indicated that Robinson was only fighting up, fighting up, because he was seeking to accrue to himself power, reducing the upgrade, Mr. Speaker—and I must point these things out—of the Scarborough Harbour to the construction in Tobago as a duck pond, widely known in the public space. He claimed that the new Scarborough port was an attempt by the then Prime Minister ANR Robinson, post 1986 election, to mamaguy the people of Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to say—because the phrase used is called “Bussing Mark Keith”, and you are Speaker Mark. I did not want to put a pun in place to bring the Speaker any offence at all.

He even called the ANR Robinson Airport a cowshed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Oh, very sad.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: These were principal infrastructure projects that would have developed Tobago on a sustainable platform. And even if he did not agree with the nature of the politics in the past, as a Tobagonian, he should have understood that these projects would have been in the interest of the people of Tobago and found some way to either defend them or say nothing of them at all.

Mr. Indarsingh: What he said about the harbour project?

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: He called it a duck pond. From 1956 to 1986, 30 years, Mr. Speaker, if you looked at the PNM manifesto you would have seen some of the very same projects to improve the lives and livelihoods of the people of Tobago. Year after year in the manifesto of the PNM they placed the projects of improving the port and improving both seaport and airport, promising the people of Tobago that they would do these in their budget presentations, and not even having the single time and finding the funding so to do for the benefit of the people of Tobago.

In fact, that was then. If you bring him up to today, two days ago there was a discussion on developing Trinidad and Tobago’s energy capacity, developing our hydrocarbon sector to which the Leader of the Opposition was an invitee to the energy chamber. Mr. Speaker, he went to Ghana. He spoke about creating links with Ghana. He spoke about bringing potentially hazardous petro-chemical plants, again, to the land space in Trinidad. In his entire presentation, there was not even—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Tobago West has expired. Would you like an extension?

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member of Tobago West and Minister of Tobago Development be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to go a little faster. Time is flying by so quickly.

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Mr. Speaker, he further reduced the office—sorry. No part of his discourse to the energy chamber included the development of the hydrocarbon sector around the island of Tobago. It was not even in his mind when he presented before the energy chamber. If he cannot even conceptualize those things or ideas while he is yet the Leader of the Opposition, imagine where his mind will be when he is so busy and has so many other issues to treat with, where would his consideration for the people and the issues that are relevant to Tobago be at that time, Mr. Speaker?

Dr. Griffith: In the golf course.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: He will have no golf course time, trust me.

4.00 p.m.

Who is the man that went about with his party cohorts after the hon. ANR Robinson was presented with the signature honour and was made Chief of Ile Ife—how do you pronounce that? [*Crosstalk*] He called him Chief “Coonoomoonoo” in the public space. That is disrespectful, Mr. Speaker. The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West now gives us context for his conversation that he had in the public space about puppies and kittens in reference to a sitting Prime Minister of being nice. He has been known to be aggressive, disrespectful and arrogant. The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West is no ANR Robinson. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning reported in the *Trinidad and Tobago News.com* Reporters, April 25, 2008, said this:

He sat in a press conference by himself after the dismal of the Member for Diego Martin West from the Cabinet and—“said that he fired Dr. Keith Rowley because of unacceptable ‘hooligan behaviour’ at a meeting of the Finance and General Purpose Committee”—Meeting—“and not because of his corruption allegation.”—which he had brought into the public space about UDeCOTT.

Mr. Manning went to pains to indicate that Rowley’s alleged temper tantrum fiasco at that meeting, was the single cause for which he at that time had to make the decision to remove him from his Cabinet. Mr. Manning said that he did a random poll of five of the members who sat in the Finance Committee at that day and found that out of the five, four of them noted that Dr. Rowley was out of line, that his conduct was poor and that he had a responsibility to protect the order and decorum within his Cabinet.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Manning indicated in the Parliament on October 22—that is on the *Hansard* record of 2009—that Rowley becomes a

raging bull. While he was contributing on the Validation Report of UDeCOTT. Prime Minister Patrick Manning launched his scathing attack on Diego Martin West MP, Dr. Keith Rowley, in the Parliament, saying that when he faces opposition he behaves like a raging bull. And that is perhaps why he has to remove almost seven of the 12 sitting MPs—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Nine.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: Nine of the sitting MPs on the eve of a general election, because he simply does not wish to have any opposition when he becomes leader, or if we put God out of our thoughts and make him the Prime Minister of this country.

Mr. Speaker, if Mr. Manning could give us this warning in 2009, if the people of Tobago West understood those dictatorial tendencies in 1981, and if the Member of Parliament for Tobago West can stand today and warn this nation that should we take God out of our thoughts and make the wrong choice, trouble will come to this nation. There are strong forces, he continued, that are making it their duty to make sure this commission of enquiry does not succeed. This is Manning speaking.

“The minute”—Patrick Manning continues—“you oppose my good friend, he gets very, very angry, and if you oppose him strongly, he becomes a raging bull. You do not know the trouble”—this is Mr. Manning—“I”—have seen—“I have had to live with that for 12 years.”

This is a man who was in pain for 12 years, sitting as the Prime Minister when the honourable gentleman was a member of his Cabinet. Imagine the members of Cabinet that will sit if this man gets a chance to sit as the head of that Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Manning continued. When he presented a photo of hon. Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, he said:

“I see hate. ...bitterness. ...acrimony. ...animosity. I see a man completely out of control.”

This was the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, former Prime Minister, the boss of the then Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, worked with him for at least 12 years.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be in a coalition Government led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*] If managing one political party was difficult, imagine taking the helm in 2010 of four. Today because of her grace, her tenacity, her openness, her vision, her servant leadership and humility, the Government is now five weeks from completing its first term in office. [*Desk*

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thumping] And I must remind you within his first iteration of Opposition Leader, he said the Government would not last what? Six months? But now we are within five weeks of completing our first term—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Five years.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker:—five years. We made five years within our first term.

Mr. Speaker, in contrast, over the five years Tobago received sufficient funding to complete the long awaited Scarborough Regional Hospital, [*Desk thumping*] to the tune of over \$700 million. With that, we will see the addition of the new cardio catheterization facility—Minister of Health—costing over \$25 million to the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The seaport has been upgraded, the ANR Robinson International Airport and runway was repaved, new lighting added, [*Desk thumping*] all under the leadership of Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*] Additionally, close to—was it \$300 million spent on Magdalena Grand alone, the signal piece in the development of room stock on the island of Tobago. The Government created the loan guarantee programme to safeguard several hotel rooms and hotel infrastructure on Tobago, that preserved many Tobagonian's jobs—small hotel. [*Desk thumping*]

Additionally, my own Ministry has been given the task of investing close to \$70 million on the creation of the new metrological facility in Tobago, right next to the now being upgraded ANR International Airport and we could say more. WASA—we had laid and improved the water delivery infrastructure in Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] to give Tobagonians perhaps the best water service or supply than the rest of the country has. That is a Government that is performing for the people of Tobago and Tobago West in particular. [*Desk thumping*] We have also added on Cove, the Cove eco-friendly is using natural gas, power facility that soon if manages well, can become the single power supply for the people of Tobago and provide additional power for those in Toco. [*Desk thumping*] That is development. That is people-centred development. In fact, no other administration in the history of Trinidad and Tobago has done this much and has spent this much in five years for the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, one could never forget when in 2013—in fact, I was teasing, it was close to 37 years later we brought back into this House, the Bill to give Tobago greater internal self-government, that sought to elevate the Tobago House of Assembly into a legislative body, granting Tobagonians for the first time—the members who sat in the Executive Council—the right of assent of assembled legislature directed by the President without first coming to a Cabinet for approval and then to Parliament for discussion. That was signature legislation that even

ANR Robinson himself, in his life, thought that had we taken those steps, we would have moved this constant struggle light years ahead.

The one person who would have been the most—in fact, he is the second longest person sitting in the House of the Tobagonian heritage and birth, who would have found this issue most important, because he was here longer than I or my sister from Tobago East, and therefore, he would have been in this struggle over its many iterations, and saw the people of Tobago being frustrated at every step of the way.

One could not imagine that when the opportunity came to elevate the status of the people of Tobago, that Keith Rowley would turn his back on Tobago East and Tobago West and leave the people of Tobago with the sourest taste of politics that we have ever had in the history of this twin island republic. He will never be forgiven for that, Mr. Speaker. The people of Tobago will never forgive him for failing to grant Tobago greater internal self-government. At the same time, with his dubious duplicity, he has never said anything whilst sitting in his oversight function about serious matters in the Tobago's space. What was his comment of the multimillion dollar Shaw Park Cultural Complex, the cost of the project ballooning from \$194 million to 552?

In fact, in Reggie Dumas's article, in the recently released report of 2006 Auditor General's Report, where he had found that the Auditor General's Report on the THA's account for 2003, 2004, 2005 contained virtually the identical language of dissatisfaction with the Assembly's financial behaviour on the virtue of non-use of the accrual basis for the preparation of this accounts, it means that they have not been using a reporting mechanism that respects the Assembly's responsibility every year.

Chief Secretary Orville London, Dumas says, well understands what should and should not be done. Here he is speaking to the first ordinary sitting of the THA 2001, telling Hochoy Charles that he will ensure that what he was doing before that Orville will not repeat. Was there any statement made in public space condemning the actions of the THA by the Leader of the Opposition? Absolutely none! Wanton waste and megalomania in the Tobago's space and there has been not a single word of censure by the leader of the PNM, the leader who stands responsible for the PNM in Trinidad and the PNM in Tobago, not a word in defence of the people of Tobago.

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

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of the Arts and Multiculturalism.

4.15 p.m.

The Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism (Hon. Dr. Lincoln Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to say that I am happy to join in this debate, but I understand the seriousness of the matter that is before us, and I understand that this is an honourable House of which you remind us. Every so often, you take the opportunity to remind us that this is an honourable House. So, when we bring motions of no confidence in any particular Member, we understand that it is a struggle for all of us, this is what we do and we do not take these matters lightly. I do not take it lightly, Mr. Speaker, because it is a reflection on this honourable House. So in some ways, it is with a kind of pain and “ah heavyish heart” that I enter the debate. But, my responsibility to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and in particular, this honourable House that I must speak, and I must declare how I feel about this matter of no confidence in the Leader of the Opposition.

A motion of no confidence, a vote of no confidence, tells us about someone who cannot govern, who cannot manage, who is no longer deemed fit to hold the position. It is about someone who does not have the credibility or the ability to deliver on the expectations of the people and what they have put that person there for. So, this is quite “ah bit”—well, it is bitter to be able to talk these kinds of things. I really would not want the nation to be able to ponder on these things, but talk we must because the very soul of our nation is at stake. The man is promising to be a leader of a major political party in this country and so we must speak.

You know, when we think of confidence, we are often—we deal with the issue of trust, of ability, of capability, to deliver on the expectations of people. When we talk about confidence, we talk about people putting their trust in you. Sometimes, the word is used in the reverse like “when you talk about ah con artist or you talk about ah conman or you talk about ah smart man”. Not that I am implying that the Leader of the Opposition is “ah con man”, far be it from me to make such implications. But if you understand the idea of a con is like when somebody gains your trust, they get close enough to allow you to feel that you can have confidence, and that you can rest your trust in them, and then in the final analysis, what you receive is a breach of that confidence. “It is ah no confidence,” and it is quite a sad thing.

One can say that many constituencies or the constituencies that the Leader of the Opposition represents, have been conned. I would not say that, some people might say that. In other words, their expectations—well, probably I will talk about that a little later on in the dialogue about how people have placed—because that is what an election is. You place your confidence and you would choose someone

that you think can represent you. I think the Member from Tobago was at pains to talk about the expectations of the people of Tobago. Well, you know, when you see your colleague in a position of power, you tell yourself “yuh business fix”. You place confidence in that person and then nothing happens. You have been conned. Your confidence has been thrown aside. Your expectations and your hope of a better day and of a brighter tomorrow and of things looking great, suddenly are dashed. So, this is the kind of situation we are discussing today. It is a kind of confidence trick where your desires and your hopes and your aspirations get defrauded.

So, it brings me to my position on the hon. Member, Leader of the Opposition, and why this issue of no confidence—you see, at first, when I had to talk about this matter, I was struggling “ah lil bit” because it was about the issue—I, thinking it in terms of a loss of confidence. But after meditating for a while, I realize that I have not lost confidence in the Leader of the Opposition, I never had any confidence. There was nothing to lose. I lost no confidence. This is a no confidence Motion. I do not have any confidence. I do not have any confidence in the Leader of the Opposition, you know.

If one reads the Motion, and I want to read it again, because sometimes as a nation, we tend to forget. The Motion says:

“...the reckless conduct of the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West has given rise to serious concerns in the public domain about his judgment and the exercise of his discretion;”

And I want the national community to take note of these words:

“about his judgment and the exercise of his discretion;”

As we go along, you will see the exercise of the discretion. Remember, we have been told that discretion is the better part of valour. The ability to choose what is the appropriate words and behaviour in particular situations.

“*And whereas* the Leader of the Opposition had a duty to exercise the power conferred on him...”

That is like the trust conferred in the Member when I was talking about the loss of confidence. He had a responsibility to:

“...exercise the power conferred on him under Section 6(1) of the Police Complaints Authority Act, Chap. 15:05 to nominate a Director of the Police Complaints Authority (“PCA”) impartially, free from bias...”

We all signed that swearing thing to be free and fair.

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“...free from bias and in accordance with the Code of Conduct laid out in the Integrity in Public Life Act, Chap. 22:01...;

And whereas there was a real possibility that the Leader of the Opposition was biased when he exercised his power under Section 6(1) of the PCA Act;

And whereas the Leader of the Opposition, in making the said nomination, abused his office or could be perceived as abusing his office, by failing to comply with the Code of Conduct set out in the IPL Act;

And whereas the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Diego Martin West by this conduct and other reckless acts...”

And we are going to show that there have been reckless acts and conduct.

“...has brought the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and the House into public odium...”

Odium is “ah nice word”. [*Interruption*] I did not say opium. Although one might think that something went to the brain, but we are talking about odium which gives you the idea of odour, like “ah bad smell”. So it has brought this:

“...House into public odium and disrepute:

Be it resolved that this Honourable House censure and condemn the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West;

And be it further resolved that this Honourable House express its lack of confidence in Dr. Keith Rowley as the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West.”

Now, let me say at the onset, this is not a personal thing between—you know, we are both bald-headed men and whatever the meaning of that is. [*Interruption*] Well, in spite of the fact that they have been trying to re-polish him, redress him, reorganize him, re-language him, re-shine him up and stuff like that, in spite of all of that—[*Interruption and laughter*]

Hon. Member: We are going to reject him. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: This is not a personal thing. In other words, “I kind ah like the guy”. In other words, even after the speech, he calls me and say, “Aye, Douglas, how yuh doing?” I would say, “Aye, how yuh doing, man. Yuh all right?” I mean, if he wants a cup of tea, we will share a cup of tea. So it is not a personal matter.

But I have, I want to be clear, after careful observation and due research and diligence and real thought, I have no confidence in the Leader of the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley I have no confidence in him as an Opposition Leader I have no confidence in him as a Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West I have no confidence in him as a leader of one of the major political parties in this country I have no confidence in him aspiring to be the Prime Minister and I feel a little more threatened by this one, I have no confidence in him as aspiring Prime Minister of my Trinidad and Tobago. I do not lack confidence, Mr. Speaker, I have no confidence. None whatsoever.

So I am clear that it is not a personal thing. I am reminded in the *Bible* that I read that it says, rejoice not when thy enemy falleth and do not take any joy when he stumbleth. So I am not going to jump up and down and have a good time about this, but it must be said. So, I am speaking about the lack of confidence.

I mean, I am on—our Member here from Tobago went into a lot of pains to talk about—and you could hear the passion about Tobago, its expectations, its expectation of having a son of the soil here to speak on your behalf or to advocate on your behalf and finding those expectations unrealized. And even recently, Mr. Speaker, being the Chair of the committee for internal self-government for Tobago, we brought this self-government issue to the forefront, our People's Partnership Government. We delivered on our manifesto promise to bring Tobago closer to internal self-government. And what do we find? Under the leadership of this Member, we have no support, none whatsoever. We are not even aware that he makes any kind of contribution other than oppose.

Hon. Member: Fit for opposition.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Probably, we should just leave him there. I think he should be left there. The People's Partnership Government subcommittee was appointed. We had meetings to date. We have representatives from Tobago. We have been meeting and discussing this issue of internal self-government. What do we find? Not a solitary word or comment. Man says absolutely nothing, nada, to say, well, you know, he is hopeful, he is willing, "Go guys, you all work together, help out the situation", to see a little rise that gives you some enthusiasm that this man is working on your behalf. Anything, Mr. Speaker? Nothing. Not a solitary word. He does not even—well, I do not know what he is thinking. So even in Opposition, where he has an opportunity to support something that might be meaningful to his—I do not know how to call it—to his area, where he claims he grew up, we find no sense of support, encouragement, guidance, even discussion, dialogue, nothing whatsoever on the issue. I do not understand that at all.

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Secondly, the man says nothing. There is a lot of dialogue going on about people who are close to him—I did not call no name—who sits next to him, about certain issues that are going on. Do you hear this man make any comment, Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Speaker: Not the man, the Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Sorry, Member for Diego Martin West. Does he make a comment? Does he say, “Well, we are going to look at this matter, investigate it, research it, and put some kind of thought towards it?” Nothing, he continues on as if there is nothing to say; as if hiding from the reality; as if hiding from the truth will give him some sense of credibility, as if having nothing to say is “ah value”, as if silence as a leader gives you some kind of prestige. This is “ah nothing Member”. [*Laughter*] I would not say “nothing man”, I would not say that.

So, as Leader of the Opposition—and I do not know whether these things are true, but you have to let people know, as a leader and as a leader of the party, that you are looking at these matters very closely because they deal with issues of governance, with integrity, with the way people participate with people, with transparency, with accountability. You as a leader, you must demonstrate that you know these things that you are interested in these things, that these things are the hallmark of what you believe. But to the extent that we hear nothing, to the extent that we see nothing, to the extent that we experience nothing, well, this is “ah nothing Member”. How can a man have no position on matters that are critical to the governance of his State and yet is aspiring to be a leader?

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about leadership, we talk about vision, the ability to inspire people towards a goal, the ability to mobilize, to organize people, and drive them towards a common destination, but we are seeing none of that. As a matter of fact, the opposite might be truer—the opposite is true as we experience a kind of separation and dissonance on the part over there. I suspect that this walk out is a strategy because of the level of dissonance and discrepancy and lack of solidarity, that exist on that side. Mr. Speaker—cannot face his own people, so what you do? You remove them from the decision-making process so that they will have to make a decision. Well, I mean, I am sure the Members themselves might be happy with that, you do not want to stand and speak against your—we faced that similar situation here, not once but twice and we all stood here.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the House has to make a decision. At this time, we will pause for tea. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before we went to the break I was talking about “The Silence of The Lambs”. “Yuh know dat movie, Mr. Speaker, where you have a very vicious man that is technically a cannibal, cannibalizing people but everybody is quiet, nobody knows what is going on?”

We are talking about the hon. Member, the Opposition Leader, and his silence on what is going on. When many allegations are brought against Members that are close to him, he says not a word by his silence, and not even making any contribution to the development of Tobago, causing my colleague here so much pain as he continues to fight for the ongoing development of the people of Tobago. So we are saying Dr. Rowley has no moral authority to preside over matters of transparency, over matters of accountability. Even though we have continually demonstrated the accountability and the transparency of our Government, he continues to cast aspersions, yet not dealing with matters that are right under his nose.

Dr. Rowley, as a Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, I have been informed from speaking to the people of Diego Martin West, about his delivery over the years. Someone sent me—quite a few of them sent me, some things to address—must account for his delivery, and he must—over the years he has spent as MP for Diego Martin West, what were his achievements? Has he ever spoken of these achievements, or is this another case of silence?—but case is an authentic silence. He has nothing to say that represents his achievements. It is the People’s Partnership Government that has undertaken a number of major infrastructural works in Dr. Rowley’s own constituency of Diego Martin West and the surrounding constituencies of Diego Martin Central and Diego Martin North/East.

When you think about the development of Macqueripe Bay, when you think about the long-awaited Carenage Health Centre, my colleague next to me here is working feverishly on that; almost finished. How long has this been there just languishing and the people of Diego Martin West unable to access?

The now famous jewel of the West, the Chaguaramas Boardwalk, all of these things were there all the time, within his own constituency, for him to address as the representative, as a Member of Parliament, as a senior Member, one of the longest serving Members inside of here. Has anything been done? Nada, another case of silence. In this case because he has nothing to say, nothing to say that is meaningful.

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The new Diego Martin Highway—Mr. Speaker, you just have to go and look at this new Diego Martin Highway. I went down there and I did not know how to get around because there were so many new developments and roads and places to go that could lead you in and out. How long have these things been there? You would think that it could never ever happen. You would think that these things were impossible feats. You would think that these were feats of great—they probably are but the People’s Partnership Government has demonstrated that we can do great feats. But the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West has been there for such a long time, and has made no significant inroads and development for the people, and so they write me and they send me—

The new Paramin RC School, I am sure the Minister of Education is not here, but he would remind us, that has been finally addressed after years of neglect by the previous administrations. All of these projects, and I could go on, were undertaken in the last five years and demonstrate that the Member for Diego Martin West is a silent representative. Well, he is not so silent when you oppose him strongly. As his own past leader used to say, then you see a horse of a different colour, not that I am suggesting he is a horse. That is how my mother used to say it. He is a horse of a different colour if he is opposed strongly.

Mr. Speaker, I have said right from the beginning that I have no confidence in his ability to lead and it demonstrates his lack of vision. When have we stood here and been enthralled by the vision of the Member for Diego Martin West? When have we stood here and listened to him speak about great ideas of development? I always hear them talking about “dat was we idea”. That is what he says: we had that idea. So it is a representative that is “ah ideas man” and unable to turn ideas into reality, unable to create a vision so strong that he can mobilize his own people and move them towards that common vision.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this is not only a lack of representation but sort of an abuse of the office of the Leader of the Opposition. He should be here in defence of freedom, monitoring the performance of state institutions, but he has used his post as leader and his parliamentary privilege to tread on very dangerous grounds, tread in dangerous places, deliberately presenting false information to the Parliament on many, many occasions.

Take, for example, this emailgate as they call it. I mean, this is a travesty of magnanimous proportions. “Ah mean, how could a man come to this—?”
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, Member.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: How could this Member—thank you, Sir—come to this auspicious House—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: August.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: —August House, and bring a list of things of grave accusations against your colleague? Even though they are not on your side, you must have some issue of reflection. You must have some—these are grave things about people trying to kill people and people trying to do—you must have some limitation to say: “nah boy” as we say in Trinidad and Tobago “nah boy”, we have to seriously check these things out to make sure that they are factual. Even if they are moderately true, you do not want to bring that in here. You come in here with pains because this is our August House. This is what we do for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We want to understand that if you bring down any Member here in this House you bring down this House, Mr. Speaker. So you come here cautiously. You come here at pains to do something like that, and yet you come with a list and list of names and all kinds of things, email, Mr. Speaker, that anybody could do anywhere.

Any child sitting anywhere could construct, reconstruct, figure and reconfigure these things. This is the simplest and the easiest of things to do, you must think that “naah” let us pay more attention to this. Let us be more careful before we throw this out in the public; unless your intention is to create dissonance, unless you are a weapon of mass distraction and destruction, unless you have no care for the country and for the people of this country and for this House. How could you do something so clandestine, so easy, without even checking, without checking seriously? Mr. Speaker, this has to be—I mean this has to be one of the biggest abuse of this House. So now we are finding all of these things are not true.

I was reading Michael Harris the other day and you know he says this is so reckless, irresponsible, a hand so badly played. It is a bluff. He says: simply put, Dr. Rowley must have been aware of the fissionable material which those emails represented and should have understood that it was his absolute responsibility to make every effort to substantiate the veracity and the authenticity of those documents as far as possible before throwing them into the public domain.

Where is that? This is like the blue fish. You know what is blue fish, when you try to hold a blue fish it just spins a set of blue into the atmosphere so that they can get away. It has to be something like that, that this Member feels threatened, or is so desperate or is so at a loss, or is so unable to mobilize his people, that you have to find an extreme enemy that does not exist and create all

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this mass confusion, occupy pages of newspaper with falsehood—Falsehood, Mr. Speaker?

And so we continue, as the Motion rightly says, this lack of discretion, this quickness to a kind of volatility. This eagerness to speak without any knowledge has to be something that must be denounced. And so we cannot tolerate that in this House. He must have known that these things were not true, and yet continues to cast aspersion on a sitting Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, even though you are in Opposition, we must have regard for the offices of this land, that is why I came here cautiously. That is why I came here in trepidation, because in reality you have regard for the office because we have children, young people, people who depend on the veracity of this House to guide and to lead this nation. So you do not want to pull the rug from under the very feet that you are standing on. You do not want to dislodge the place that you call home, and yet we find things like these.

So, what can we say? Google has declared the information as false and that the email addresses quoted by Dr. Rowley never existed. “Ah mean, these are simple things to check. All yuh have tuh do is send ah email to it.” If you think that there is someone sending an email just send back an email to it, it would bounce back to and tell you such a person does not exist. Not even that! How reckless can one man be? Not even that. “All he have tuh do is send ah email.” It does not take any high level of knowledge. This does not take rocket science. “Yuh doh have tuh go tuh town. Yuh doh have to lie on a bed of nails or stand on yuh head upside down under water to send an email. Yuh could send it from yuh phone tuh whoever yuh think it belongs to”, a simple check. And the Member refuses to do something as simple as that, comes to the House and presents this in some flamboyant and flashy manner, only to find out—cost us a lot of money, a lot of time, a lot of energy, dislodges the nation, brings this House into odium and disrepute.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot support this type of behaviour, abuse of parliamentary privilege, attacking Members of Government, trying to destabilize the Government and the country and the Parliament, false claims, innuendos, outrage, a kind of unsettling type of aggressiveness, uncomfortable environment created in here on this and in the nation, based on false—we cannot have confidence in a leader that “gran charges”. Mr. Speaker, you know “gran’ charges”? “When we in school long time and yuh want tuh get in a fight, yuh gran’ charge. You call the person nickname. Yuh tell dem things about dey bredda, dey mudda, and dey fadda. You create ah upsetting situation.”

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired. Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, would you like an extension?

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West and Minister of the Arts and Multiculturalism be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. “Is ah gran’ charger!”

Hon. Member: What?

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: “Ah gran’ charger”, is where you really do not have the quality, you do not have the substance, you do not have the truth, you do not have the facts, you do not have the boldness, you do not have the energy, you do not have the fight on your side, all you have are words and lies and hypocrisy and “ah stance”. All you have is “ah stance”, Mr. Speaker, as if you can do something, but when you are called upon to do something, “yuh run, and yuh hide yuh tail between yuh legs”. Well, that is “kinda” referring to like how dogs do it, you know. [*Laughter*] I am not by any chance calling the Member for Diego Martin West a dog, or anything of that sort.

We cannot have a Leader of Opposition, and a man aspiring, aspiring you know, to be a Prime Minister, and is “ah gran’ charger”, that uses lies, innuendoes, half-truths and misrepresentation as if it is truth. This is a failed leader, and continues that failure which started with his previous leader, by trying to exorcize from his own party anybody who has differences with him. The disarray that exists over there, good people, but they might not see eye to eye with you. One thing we know of good leaders is that they are not just looking for followers, they are also creating leaders, but these people are dispelling leaders. If the Member for Diego Martin Central shows “ah lil difference to him, he gone”.

Hon. Members: “He gone ah ready.” [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Yesterday morning I was listening to him on TV, Mr. Speaker, and he was almost in tears trying to justify why he should be returned, and being a nice guy, and the amount of support he has in his community, “buh he gone”! [*Laughter*] Because this is not—this man is not about—the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West is not about creating leaders to guide this

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nation. This is contrary, you know, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the People's Partnership Government. We continue to make leaders here, who are able to address the issues for the running of this country. [*Desk thumping*] So various Members, "dey gone". Sorry, Member for Diego Martin Central. He is gone.

Not only that, there is a purge going on over there, and they have enshrined the purge in a walk out. They have enshrined the cowardice in a refusal to face the music. You know, you face the music when you know you can dance, but if you cannot face the music, you have to scurry and hide in "ah corner", because "nobody doh wanna see yuh fallin' all over yuh feet". What we have on this side here, is "ah group" of people led by a coward himself, who cannot face the music. Go and dance in the back room or in the corner or hide in the shadows.

We sat here, Mr. Speaker, 27 hours, I remember it. "Cyar go brush my teeth", [*Laughter*] I just had to sit and take it, in defense of our Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister sat here and took it too, and they went on, they went on, and we took everything that they threw. The Prime Minister sat there and took everything that they threw. Face the music! Because our Prime Minister could dance, Mr. Speaker, she could face the music and still deal with the issues that are relevant. So they have gone.

There is a purge going on over there, is being enshrined in "ah walk out", as they call it, while we stand here and do the business of the people. Of all the glorious speeches, motions, et cetera, have you heard anything, anything over there about issues and concerns from the Member for Diego Martin West? Have you—of his speeches, are they representative about concerns for his people? If you listen to the Member for La Brea talk, say what you want, every time he talks, there is a passion about his representation.

I am challenging this House, what have you heard—how much have you heard from the Member for Diego Martin West, about genuine concerns about what is going on in his constituency? Think about it. Have you heard him say, you know, what is going on with this? Every time you listen to the Member for La Brea, he wants jobs for his people, he wants, you know, roads. He wants smelter, as misguided as he might be. He wants these things and you hear there is a concern, a burden, a passion, but "he gone too". He cannot face the music either.

What percentage of the Opposition Leader's speeches addresses issues of concern for his own constituency? None! As a matter of fact, when we checked, there was only about 5 per cent. That is a 5 per cent passion man, and the Member for his constituency, Mr. Speaker. So he has failed, not even representing—"and

doh even talk” about the issue of Mr. David West. That is a clear, blatant and flagrant issue of—you know, dishonesty of—lack of discretion. Dr. Rowley has suggested as an Opposition Leader that he has no regard, I get the impression for proper constructive use of his discretion, and has instead retreated to use all kinds of legal mumbo-jumbo, you know—that the proper use of discretion. I keep using those words, you know, Mr. Speaker, because that is in the Motion. Other reasons I have for lack of—well, not lack, for no confidence in the Opposition Leader. He lies, lied about—“ah could say lie”?

Mr. Speaker: Please, no, no. Withdraw!

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker. There was a minimum of truth in a statement he made concerning the Attorney General. I mean, this is a completely fabricated story, when you come here with a completely fabricated story. This is an inability to check again?

How about one time when the Prime Minister—there was a coming storm, and the Prime Minister put measures in place, and he said “dah is ah passing cloud. Wah all yuh making dah big fuss for”? Is that concern, “ah man who is aspiring to be ah leader”, showing concern for his people? How about coming into this House and waving “ah piece ah pizza receipt”, and talking as if this is information that I have—“when yuh check it”—how about his disregard for authority and for leadership?

The Member from Tobago talked again about calling a man like ANR Robinson “ah coonoomoonoo”? Mr. Speaker, you know what “ah coonoomoonoo” is? When we growing up, ah coonoomoonoo is ah completely dotish”, stupid person that you think is completely “dotish and stupid. Yuh say buh yuh is ah coonoomoonoo or what”? How could he call a man of the integrity of ANR Robinson, who has served this country in so many ways, both locally and internationally, and you call that man “ah coonoomoonoo”? Even if you think so, because sometimes “ah lot ah things does rush to yuh brain in ah moment, buh what happen between yuh brain and yuh mouth”, has to be guided by some kind of discretion, but there seems to be no guard, between the brain and the mouth. No check! So what comes out is constantly “ah denegation”, but “de *Bible*” says, as your heart, so “yuh mouth does speak”.

So that is why it is easy for the Member of Diego Martin West to call children in this nation “duncy head”. Now, when he is confronted, he says, he did not say “duncy heads”, it was “duncy head”, singular or plural as the case may be. You know, to call the Prime Minister all kinds of names publicly, and it is not the first

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time, this recent spat that we had from the Member for Diego Martin West, the Opposition Leader. It is not the first time that there is a mad rush of nonsense to his brain, and instead of checking it, it comes out.

I mean, this is a Member who has called young people and girls in this country, refer to them as hyenas in an African jungle, talking about “dem fighting”. Instead of showing compassion and saying, you know, well, as the Prime Minister did. Remember even when that young girl went on Facebook or whatever it was, and said all kinds of things about the Prime Minister, she did not say what, this is like Africans in “ah” hyena jungle! Or hyenas in an African jungle! No, she showed compassion, and even forgave the girl. He referred to the people like these kinds of things, you know, Mr. Speaker, I mean, and this is a Member who is aspiring—“ah keep saying dis”—to be the leader of this country. I mean, think about it, you know. Stood in “ah public meeting”, and said I have given to the President, 25,000—a complete fabrication, something that is lacking in any veracity whatsoever—make this up out of thin air.

Referring to students as “duncy head”, heads, head, you know, and it goes on. “Ah mean, ah have ah list here, buh ah doh really” want to go through it, Mr. Speaker. So, I want to say today that I agree with this Motion, that there is a lack of confidence because it is displayed on many occasions, and not just in passing, has been reckless, unable to exercise discretion, showing bias, failure to comply, bringing our House into public odium, disrepute, and so, even though there is a move on to shine. I want to compliment him for at least taking the shine, to rub “im down—ah give him ah lil props for dat”, for re-imaging. One must wonder what sought of leader, needs that level re-aligning, redressing, re-addressing, re-imaging, repositioning. I could see “ah whole university working to reorganize and to make him. In spite of that, every so often you see the reality of the character coming out, and they are trying to hold back that raging bull. They are trying to stop that “wajang. Wat, ah could say wajang? Dey trying to stop that hooligan”. “Not I said that”, the Member for San Fernando East said that.

We had a song this year called “I is ah hooligan, hooligan”. Remember, that, Mr. Speaker? [*Laughter*] He was prophetic in his behaviour, with trying to manage those kinds of things. I am crediting him for taking “ah lil training and ah lil management”, but it will not be that this can be done to the extent, where the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, and the Leader of the Opposition, brings himself to a place where he can get past these behaviours that seems to be entrenched, seems to be deep, seems to be instinctual to him, that he continues to be a tirade to this nation, or continues to show off these behaviours, and continues

to accuse left, right and centre, and have limited truth in his conversation on many occasions, and bring this House into odium and disrepute, by carrying on with these things that could be simply checked, Mr. Speaker. I have to, unwilling so, admit that I have no confidence in the Opposition Leader.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Member of Parliament for Caroni East. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Mr. Speaker, I join this debate with my colleagues, collectively, in this Motion of No Confidence in the Member for Diego Martin West, as he currently holds the position as Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I joined the parliamentary arena in 2001 as a Member of the other House and then re-joined again in about 2004, in the same place, and then from 2007 in this Lower House. So before that I had been following the politics for a while.

When you look at politics and governance, and responsibility, you have to look at it particularly for Trinidad and Tobago. Let us picture what has happened from since 1962 when we became independent, and even following that in 1976 as an independent country, and we would perhaps go back to 1956 when the elections were contested then, very hotly, between Dr. Eric Williams and the DLP, in those days. When we look at Prime Ministers and Opposition Leaders, we would see that this country has a rich heritage of people of capacity and capability.

Mr. Speaker, the history of Caribbean leaders is strong—the Bustamante, Norman Manley, Errol Barrow, and, here in Trinidad, Dr. Eric Williams, and then, subsequently, Mr. Panday, Mr. Manning, and our own, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. But we look at history of Opposition Leaders in Trinidad and Tobago since we achieved independence; it has been a very significant one, and that position plays a key role in the progress and development as a democratic country.

The role of Opposition Leader is a very important one. That position is a Prime Minister in waiting, and when we look at the Member for Diego Martin West, we all come to the conclusion that he will have to wait for a very long time, because he, obviously, is not a Prime Minister in waiting. And that position of Opposition Leader is a de facto main watchdog of the Government, and, therefore, must demonstrate, adequately or credibly, his or her suitability for the

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task of governance of the country. This is the reason that we have filed the Motion of No Confidence in the Member for Diego Martin West.

It is not only our thinking alone and our belief, as I would show, that people have lost faith in him as the Leader of the Opposition, they have lost faith in him as a Member of Parliament representing his constituency, and they have lost faith in him as a person who can bridge the divide and bring this country together and the people together.

Let us look at the history of Opposition Leaders since 1962 and until 2010—until 2010, I stop there, Mr. Speaker. We have had an impressive array of Opposition Leaders, all pioneers in their professions and in politics, and in the 1960s they included the internationally acclaimed intellectual, Dr. Rudranath Capildeo. They included nationally revered jurist, Vernon Jamadhar, the great labour leader, Basdeo Panday, even the hon. Member for San Fernando East, Mr. Patrick Manning. We have to give him credit that when he was defeated soundly between 1986 and '91, 33-3, he rebuilt the Opposition and, of course, our own, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, whose work in the social, legal and political arenas have been ground-breaking and history-making, and who famously toppled a PNM regime just mere months after being elected Opposition Leader.

That is the calibre and the capacity that have come through this country as Opposition Leaders, including our own when she served as Opposition Leader from February to May in 2010. Mr. Speaker, it is against this backdrop of illustrious leaders that the Member for Diego Martin West stands, and this is how we have to juxtapose him in the history of the country and where we are going for the future. This Parliament will record, and it is recorded that this is the first time in our 53-year history that an Opposition Leader faces a Motion of No Confidence.

Mr. Speaker, we have a country of unique diversity in religions, in ethnicities, in culture, in geography, and in sensibilities. To serve Trinbagonians you must understand their diverse needs, the differences that make them stand out, and the common histories and values that unite us to lead a country like ours—1.3 million people, with 40 per cent of one ethnic origin, 40 per cent of another ethnic origin, and 20 per cent of a mixed population.

With so many different religions, I, as Minister of Education, have to interact with 18 major stakeholders; meaning 18 different religious bodies contributing to education. So, to lead a country like ours, with people like ours, one must possess the capacity and the will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence.

Can we say that the Member for Diego Martin West inspires the character, inspires the confidence for our people and demonstrates the character? The answer is a resounding, no, Mr. Speaker. Just compare the Member for Diego Martin West with our honourable Prime Minister of this country, which he is aspiring to be. Our Prime Minister has held five different political parties for nearly five years, unprecedented in this country's history, and has brought calm and collective goodwill and harmony in our population because of her charm, and because of her dignity, and because of her ability that she has been able to mobilize all people of Trinidad and Tobago into one common purpose, which is national development.

But when you look at the Member for Diego Martin West, people ask the question, "Is he a person that can do such a thing?" When you look at what is happening in the political situation now, to contest the general election, you would see that even his own people, nine of them, sitting on the Bench today, he has thrown them out and no longer wants them to be with him. Where is that thinking that we have to bridge everyone together—bring everyone together? People may have difficulties, and they may have supported different people in the past, but I would come to that in a while. We will compare what he has been doing with what our hon. Prime Minister has done.

So, Mr. Speaker, when one aspires to lead a progressing democracy like Trinidad and Tobago, in this age of globalization, one must—if I put it colloquially—"yuh mus come good". You must have a host of characteristics and personal behavioural traits and attributes that make you worthy of the people you seek to represent. Let me just give a little quote, the words of Max De Pree:

"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality."

Sometimes you believe that the Member for Diego Martin West is not here at all, he does not understand what the reality is:

"The last is to say thank you."

Does he ever say thank you? His characteristic and his behaviour as demonstrated in this House for a number of years, now as Opposition Leader and previously as a Member of Parliament, has never brought that out as one of his strong characteristic features to say thank you, ever.

In between the reality and the thank you, the leader is a servant. Can we say that this Member for Diego Martin West is a servant? Of course, not. When you hear my colleague speak about the work. That was required in his own

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constituency of Diego Martin West, where he has been the Member there for about 21 years or 22 years, you will ask, “Did he really represent his people?” Of course not.

I just want to quote what Bill Gates said, and I quote:

“As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.”

Can we say that the Member for Diego Martin West, as Opposition Leader, empowers others or he inspires others? He does not understand the basic element of leadership, far less to exhibit the characteristics of leadership.

As another quote says, as Jim Rohn says:

“The challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude;”

And what we see exhibited, from time to time, from the Member for Diego Martin West is a certain degree of—in colloquial term—rudeness.

You must—“be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully;”

—what we see emanating from time to time from the Member for Diego Martin West. His own former political leader described him—and just a while ago the Member for Tobago West read a description of what his former Prime Minister said about him. He had to deal with him for 12 years, and it was a pain to him to have the Member for Diego Martin West around him.

As Jim Rohn says:

You must—“be thoughtful, but not lazy;”

So many times in this House when there are important issues to debate and discuss, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West is missing in action, whether playing golf or going somewhere to buy suits and clothes for himself to pretty up, and so on. That is fine, you want to be leader, but do not miss the important debates in the House. There are times you can do it. So, how can he be described? Possibly, being lazy.

You must—“be humble, but not timid;”—you must—“be proud, but not arrogant;”

And it is not us who say it, but the general public believes that there is a degree of arrogance that is being displayed, from time to time, from the Member for Diego Martin West.

You must—“have humour, but without folly.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask this honourable House, through you, and, by extension, the national community, to look at the two leaders of this House: the Prime Minister, who was once Opposition Leader, and the present Opposition Leader, and it is very simple and easy to tell who possesses these qualities and who does not. You see, a person's track record says a tremendous amount about who they will be when given power.

Our Prime Minister is able to hold a multi-ethnic team, a multi-religious team, a multiparty team, together for five years, and managing this country to the best, an unprecedented development that has taken place. Which other person we could speak such volumes about? If we contrast what our political leader and Prime Minister has, even when she was aspiring to be Prime Minister and when she was Opposition Leader, compare and contrast the distinction and the similarities between what we have now as Opposition Leader, and what we had then as our Opposition Leader.

5.45 p.m.

Dr. Rowley—the Member for Diego Martin West's track record speaks for itself, as being mentioned by some of my colleagues, in representation of his people. The Carenage fishing depot, long wanted by his people, never materialized. Where was he during the flood when we had the biggest flood in Diego Martin when the Prime Minister put on her Wellington boots and she was out there on the day that she was sworn in as Prime Minister? Not even a sight of the Member for Diego Martin West. He abandoned his people.

As my colleague, the Minister of Health now has to build the Carenage health centre for the people of Diego Martin West, for 22 years which he represented and was not able to do anything for his people as far as that health sector is concerned. The Diego Martin recreation ground, he has not been able to improve. What did he do about creating possibly a highway from Port of Spain down to the west? Nothing. A jetty that was supposed to be built was not done with him. He was inaccessible to most of his people in Diego Martin West. He had a closure of farms in Chaguaramas under his watch, and 680 daily-rated workers were sent home when he was Minister of Agriculture. That happened during his ministerial office.

What about the community centre in Bagatelle? Not done, and houses broken down. Dr. Rowley had promised to rebuild those houses, but it was never done.

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What did he do about helping the security in his constituency, about the crime situation in his own constituency? He cannot tell this country that he has done anything about it. Even I as Minister of Education just recently built the Carenage—the Point Cumana RC School in Dr. Rowley's constituency, the Member for Diego Martin West which he had not been able to do even when he was a Minister of Government, for 21 years he sat there and has not been able to do it. It took Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar's Government to build a school in his constituency, and to build a school in the constituency of Diego Martin North/East, the Paramin RC, and to build a primary school in the constituency of Port of Spain South. That is the thinking of a leader that must serve the entire country and move through the entire country and be a Prime Minister for all the people, for every part of Trinidad and Tobago. This is just an example of contrast between somebody who loves people first; who has the interest of every citizen and every child in this country, as opposed to someone who does not seem to care, does not represent anybody.

He has been absent from Parliament on many occasions during critical debates—whether people say he has been playing golf. When there were national disasters he was out. What did he do with Chaguaramas? Is he not the Member for Diego Martin West? The Chaguaramas area—did he make any advancement for the people down there? Did he help the Chaguaramas Development Authority, the CDA?

This Government has water lines down in his constituency. Did he try to do it for himself? He in government did nothing for his people. He is not concerned with the needs of regular people, normal people. How many questions or motions—we have a governance issue, we have a parliamentary agenda. Someone in Opposition will move a number of motions and ask a number of questions. Now, he is asking questions to the hon. Prime Minister, but how many motions or questions did he file in the past?—very few.

So we ask, what representation did he make for his people and for his constituents while he was Minister? So no development has taken place under his watch for 21 years and he wants to be the Prime Minister in waiting.

We would all remember when he made allegations against the former Attorney General, that he went to New York and made comments that the Attorney General made racist comments in New York, and possibly subliminally he knew that was not true. But being the type of person he is, he was creating mischief. And from his mischief, when he was detected, he had to come back and

apologize. That was one of the few times that I have seen the Member for Diego Martin West apologize. I could scarcely remember any other occasion because it was so glaring that he had to apologize then.

Let me go again on a point of his stance as an Opposition Leader on the issue of our Prime Minister supporting the UN resolution on the issue of ISIS. I want to say, Dr. Rowley was against warning that People's Partnership Government has put the lives of citizens including those abroad at a greater risk by co-sponsoring a United Nations resolution aimed at tackling global terrorism. Our Prime Minister had made the decision to co-sponsor the resolution at a meeting of the UN Security Council, chaired by United States President Obama at the UN Headquarters in New York at that time.

At the Diego Martin West constituency annual conference at the Point Cumana Community Complex in Point Cumana, Dr. Rowley accused the Prime Minister of wanting to take on the terrorist Islamic state of Iraq and Syria, describing her actions as wild and reckless. He said and I quote:

That action by the Prime Minister has put every citizen at greater risk both home and abroad.

When the population went against him for making those reckless statements about the Prime Minister's support for the UN resolution and co-sponsoring the UN resolution, he even went on to say—I quote from the *Guardian* published Monday, October 06, 2014. He was saying that we:

“...should have refused to support...Resolution against the terrorist group.”

But that resolution, Mr. Speaker, sought to build the global partnership in the international community to meet the mounting challenge of terrorism. We see ISIS everywhere now. Just today or yesterday you would have read where ISIS was found in Mexico, 9 miles from the American border.

So, here it is our Prime Minister co-sponsoring a resolution against that type of terrorism, global terrorism which is threatening the lives of every individual in the world. And here it is the Member for Diego Martin West attacking the Prime Minister for co-sponsoring such a resolution. How in God's name could this individual want to be a Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker? He does not know what nationalism is. He does not understand the issue of international terrorism, or he just wants to sit there and just attack for attacking sake. He does not seem to care about the people. What would he do if somebody comes into this country having been with ISIS and begins to give an onslaught on our population? How would he

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feel? Mr. Speaker, the role of him as Opposition leader leaves a lot to be desired. He does not fit the picture. He cannot fit the picture, and he must understand for himself and he should probably step down from that role as Opposition leader.

His thinking then was backward. It was anachronistic for any potential leader to say that this country has to be careful to walk among the gears and do not get crushed. It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that he has no idea of foreign policy and he has no vision for Trinidad and Tobago beyond our shores. He does not fit the picture. A Prime Minister must understand the international scenario where we are posed as a small country, and where our allegiances must be and where our alliances must be.

So, he slammed the co-sponsorship of the Security Council Resolution and he went on to say:

“When people behead someone ‘little Trinidad and Tobago has to be careful to walk among the gears and don’t get crushed,’ ”

He also went onto say:

Trinidad and Tobago should “...have passed up on the occasion.”— because it could not afford to declare war on terrorists.

Our Prime Minister has declared war on terrorist’s right here in Trinidad and Tobago. She has declared war on international terrorism. This is why our Prime Minister moved expeditiously over the last few years to move the motions that—the United Nations on small arms trade and the war on small arms trade, Mr. Speaker. This is why the hon. Prime Minister ensured that the Minister of Foreign Affairs host a conference here recently bringing 82 nations together on the war against small arms, that is the strength of our Prime Minister. Can he ever move close to her? Can he ever think about following in her footsteps? This is the comparison that we must make. This is the contrast that we must make between citizens and competent authorities, and leadership versus non leadership and no vision, lack of vision.

Dr. Rowley’s suggestion was that Trinidad and Tobago should have attempted to dodge or hide from that resolution, and it amounted to a callous attempt to politicize a grave issue that has destroyed millions of lives around the world. He continues to fail to understand that leadership is not about creating mischief and using his personal, political prejudice to divide people, but actually requires taking a stand for freedom, social justice and the security and well-being of people.

Despite the reality, an open threat to all countries, he seems to still fail to understand that the fight against terrorism is not a responsibility that can be ignored or avoided or politicized in petty arguments. In fact, his position has the potential to favour terrorism, not fight it, as described by our hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I want to bring you to another situation. You know that Trinidad and Tobago is supporting one of our colleagues, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie for the position of Commonwealth Secretary General. As a nationalist and as somebody who is at the forefront of governance and responsibility for a nation, you know disappointingly that the Member for Diego Martin West—*[Interruption]*.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Caroni East and Minister of Education, your 30 minutes have expired. Would you be interested in an extension?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member be extended by 15 minutes.

Question put and agreed to.

6.00 p.m.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. *[Desk thumping]* I want to bring on the issue of the support for our local candidate for Commonwealth Secretary General. You know that position how it could help Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean, and 52 commonwealth countries around the world, as Commonwealth Secretary General, and right here in your own shores you have a very competent and capable person in the character of Sen. Dr. Tewarie.

But he went on to support Sir. Ronald Sanders, another person from the Caribbean, a person who has questions circulating around him. So, that is the type of thinking and the positioning of the Member for Diego Martin West. We would remember the Commission of Enquiry into Landate spoke about “Rowley lacks discretion”. Those were the comments from Justice Anisette Sealy in the quote. The Commission of Enquiry said in 2004 that, “the Landate should be investigated for larceny”. He is associated with that Landate issue. These are questions that have not gone explained. He was responsible for building houses in Tobago, which have not been occupied and we must remember that.

Mr. Speaker, when we had the Procurement Bill, and after one and a half years of the Joint Select Committee on that procurement piece of legislation to come forward, he and the Member for Diego Martin North/East abdicated their

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responsibility and went into hiding for an entire year. When the people of Trinidad and Tobago began to say, “if you want transparency, and accountability, and probity in the management of contracts we have to bring on the procurement piece of legislation”—he went into hiding, and he deliberately frustrated the work of the committee, and it is only when the pressure by the population on him and the Member for Diego Martin North/East, that he decided to come back and probably save face.

Today we ask, what has he done and what has the PNM done on the issues of procurement, transparency, accountability, integrity, and probity in all contractual obligations in Trinidad and Tobago? He refused and he ran and hide. He refused to collect hampers in Preysal. When hampers were given for his own people he refused to collect the hampers.

Mr. Sharma: For poor people.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, for poor people, and my colleague spoke about how he spoke about the students like hyenas in a jungle. Is he in a political conspiracy with other people?

Mr. Speaker: Member!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I will take that word back, Mr. Speaker. His association with others in public, in the T&TEC issue. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre may remember that—what is the name of that issue when T&TEC—the pension plan.

Mr. Mc Leod: Oh, 1995.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: 1995, the pension plan. He is the same person who went against his own Prime Minister and Calder Hart, and now he is saying they are good.

You remember when in south, he went on and gave a beautiful speech about Mr. Manning. What hypocrisy? Is that somebody we can trust, two sides of the face? You say one thing one day, you condemn him and then you come and say, “Boy you are a nice guy and you are beautiful”.

Mr. Sharma: Two tongue.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is two tongue—and Calder Hart. He wanted to build houses in Chaguaramas at one time when he was Minister and now he is locking arms with farmers against building houses.

He attacked public officers calling them—you remember the Central Statistical Office, his attack on the CSO and all the people who were working who

really did not have the proper environment to conduct their work, and Minister Tewarie was fighting to get a place for them? He attacked those CSO officers. He wanted to close down the local government Ministry, we must remember that—and when the people began to ask, “why would you close local government?”, he come back bolt-a-fast and he said that he would keep the local government Ministry. Would that not have cost jobs?

When he was Minister of Agriculture he closed down a number of mega farms, and there is a strong alliance between other guys. Where is the due diligence when he was a Minister in housing? And then, I would not want to go into it, but his conduct over a period of time, one issue provoked widespread criticism from a wide spectrum of the society. The National Women’s Organization called for an apology and withdrawal, but he stuck to his guns, and with a slap in the face to these very valid voices, he refused to even apologize.

Mr. Speaker, a true leader aspiring to run a country of such diversity must be willing to have humility and accept that when he offends someone, a group, a gender or a sector, you must apologize. My colleague did apologize. Did he ever apologize for those harsh and vicious, and most derogatory comments that he made to come from the words of a human being, you cannot even contemplate it, far less saying it? Is that a leader? Is he a leader? Of course not, Mr. Speaker.

You see, leadership is about respect for the people you aspire to lead. So, if it is his attitude now, what can we expect? God forbid, if he ever gets into office. It is said that we all know the jargon, the phrase, “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely”, and you could imagine what would happen then. His colleagues try to rebrand him all how, and, as my colleague said, with a scarf around his neck and a white scarf would not rebrand the person.

Mr. Speaker, Aristotle once said:

“He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander.”

And Stephen Covey said:

“What you do has far greater impact than what you say.”

Perhaps we should have heeded this warning of his former leader, Patrick Manning, who would have truly known him best, having given Rowley all his political and public worth in power. I was present that night when his Prime Minister spoke about him. And you could see that he was hurt and he was in pain when he described him as a raging bull and quick to anger. How can you aspire to lead a country of such diversity as we have here, where crises arise every day from business, labour, NGO and even criminal sectors, with such a temperament as displayed from time to time?

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Devoid of reason, heedless of the opinions of anyone else, perhaps most telling though is how you treat your colleagues and people beneath you. Look at how many of his colleagues on the other side have bitten the dust and are now in the final days of their political lives under the Rowley-led PNM. They bit the dust for just being selected by their former political leader, and despite giving him unwavering commendable support in the past five years, and in spite of his many, many failings, yet he cuts them down, due with no acknowledgement, no consideration of their support.

Compare that with our leader? At her opponents during her internal campaign, even I myself was on the other side, and our Prime Minister made us ministerial colleagues, many of us. She has grace, and sense, maturity, insight, and wisdom to understand political process, but out of a pure heart and love in her heart for all her people. We feel the love from our hon. Prime Minister. We feel the passion from her for her people and for her children. We see when she is pained when things happen. Is that exhibited there at all? No way, Mr. Speaker.

And if he treats his own like that, what would he do to the many sectors and constituencies of this country which do not support him? “Crapaud” smoke their pipe. The warning is there, they say their “coocoo” cook, God forbid.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on to speak about—how much time I have again, about eight minutes?

Mr. Speaker: You have four minutes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Four minutes. And we can go on to look at the *Sunday Express* editorials of Sunday, March 22, 2015, and the opinion said:

“Surely, however, the PNM leader, with ambitions to be the next Prime Minister, should do more and better than to play to the gallery of his own supporters. It would be woodenly insensitive of him not to recognize that”—the comments he made—“gives offence to a national constituency far wider than his own gung-ho cheerleaders and party-line apologists.

But he should not underrate the disappointment keenly felt by citizens observing that a leading contender for highest national office would so drag political discussion and debate in the mud of discredit and even degradation.

Certainly, politicians seeking leadership positions must be aware that they will be critically scrutinized for adherence to those obligations, and to meeting the requirements of common decency, in word and deed.”

And Friday, March 19, 2015, again, on the *Express*, “He must be stopped”. President of the National Muslim Women’s Organization said Dr. Keith Rowley:

“should be stopped before he makes more unsavory comments and apologize to Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar’...”

And the newspapers were filled with comments that he should go and apologize. Gail Alexander in one of her columns said, mostly it is also confirmed:

Rowley unleashed is a handler’s headache and it’ll continue to fuel concerns on the type of PM he will be. As a result, increased scrutiny on PNM’s leadership offering already perceived as lacking certain national appeal (which dexterous Carnival wining didn’t...)

Mr. Speaker, the newspapers, the talk shows, the whatever, they are filled with these comments.

So, in conclusion, it is our duty to expose this country to the weaknesses and disparities of the man aspiring to lead us. This is the country that our children, grandchildren and those of our friends and families would inherit, and we all have a right, and I have a right as well, as a Member of this House, to warn this population of who they should choose for their leaders. It is said that management is about arranging and telling, leadership is about nurturing and enhancing. An American President, John Quincy Adams, once said:

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

That is totally absent here, Mr. Speaker, and devoid.

So, in a few months this country has a choice to make as to who will be the next Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. The question is this, do you want a man to lead you who has no proven track record of performance? Of grace? Of compromise? Of all inclusiveness? Do you want a man who engages in vendetta politics against his own PNM faithful, who dismisses valid feminist and humanitarian concerns from the population to feed his misguided ego? Or do you want a leader like the Member of Parliament for Siparia, to continue along a road never before paved? One of unbridled and unprecedented progress and development for all citizens of every walk of life? A leader with a vision and a compassion and a sense of justice and true love and patriotism, never before seen in our history of leaders?

Mr. Speaker, the people of this country will do the right thing, and, like me, say, we have no confidence in Dr. Rowley as Opposition Leader, so we can never have

confidence in him even trying to become a Prime Minister to lead us into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development (Hon. Stacy Roopnarine): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I must say that as a Member of this House I am always very happy to participate in debate.

Today, however, as we debate this Motion, I must confess that I take little pleasure in participating in such a debate, and let me tell you why. I feel that the office of the Leader of the Opposition is indeed high office in this land. It is one that many persons look up to.

6.15 p.m.

The reason that we are here is because the holder of that office, the office holder of the Leader of the Opposition, that office holder who is also an aspiring Prime Minister has now brought that said office into disrepute. And that is why I take very little pleasure in joining this debate as we debate this Motion of censure against the Leader of the Opposition.

And so, Mr. Speaker, many have asked the question, on the other side, as to why we are doing this debate over the last couple of days? I want to tell you that every one of us here as elected representatives, as elected Members of Parliament, we have a duty to serve those who elected us to office. And therefore we have a responsibility to ensure that we bring into the public domain issues that affect the population.

And that is why we are bringing this Motion over the last couple of days; that is why we are debating this Motion. And I believe that the people of this country deserve accountability and transparency. As a matter of fact, the hon. Prime Minister has always stood for those principles of good governance, accountability and transparency to the people of this land. So that is why we brought this Motion here so that we can account to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

In the same vein, Mr. Speaker, I must express my disappointment, that this is the third occasion that we have seen Members of the Opposition choosing to abandon this Parliament. I do not understand why. The Parliament is where we come to debate, that is what we do. The Government articulates one view; the Opposition articulates another view. And therefore it seems very nonsensical that the approach chosen by the Opposition Members is to just pack up their bags and leave the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is a total disrespect to this House. It is a total disrespect to the people of this land who elected us to serve. It is a disrespect to the constituents of those PNM MPs. And so I condemn that act openly, and I ask them to explain to the population why they have chosen to abandon the Parliament.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it is almost like a spoiled child approach, you cannot get your way, and so you run off and cry. I have not seen adults behave in such a manner. This is where we account to the people and I think that as responsible Members of Parliament we have a duty. We have a responsibility to sit in the seats that we were elected to serve in and answer to the population. But no, they do not like the issues being brought up so they run off and cry.

I do not understand, Mr. Speaker, why we have not heard the Leader of the Opposition get up and defend himself as yet. What kind of leadership is this? How are the young people of this land supposed to look up to a leader who runs? It is a cowardice approach and, to me, it is very disappointing.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, you would recall that in 2012 this same Leader of the Opposition brought to this House a Motion of no confidence against the hon. Prime Minister. And what did we do? We did not say, well, we do not agree with their Motion so we abandon the Parliament. We did not run, we stood here, Member after Member stood in this House and we defended our position. And you would recall that the hon. Prime Minister, Member of Parliament for Siparia, got up and defended herself. That is leadership; that is being a responsible parliamentarian. So today I say, for the third time, that the Opposition Members have acted in a very irresponsible and reckless manner.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall again in 2013, the Opposition brought a motion of no confidence, again, in the hon. Prime Minister. We sat here for three days, Mr. Speaker, you were here. We sat here for three days and we articulated our position, we defended our position, we defended our Prime Minister and the Prime Minister defended herself. Nobody run.

I do not understand. I do not understand what they are running from. It is simple, issues are being raised, issues that are important to the public, get up and answer the issues, but they chose to run. I do not know, is it that he is afraid to defend himself or is it that his Members are not prepared to defend him? I do not know, Mr. Speaker. But if they are not afraid, get up and speak.

If this is their approach being in Opposition, can you imagine what would ever happen, God forbid, that they become the Government of this country? Can you imagine? In opposition they do not want to answer you, what will happen if

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they ever form the Government of this country? What will happen if they are Cabinet Ministers—they will not answer to the people of this land?

Mr. Speaker, I think this is indeed the hypocrisy, because I saw, when we came to the Parliament today, we had Prime Minister's question time. And so, Members of the Opposition came here, question after question after question to the Prime Minister. As a matter of fact, the Leader of Government Business had to expand the time for Prime Minister's question time to allow them the opportunity to ask the questions to the hon. Prime Minister so that she could respond and so the people of this country can benefit.

And then after that, question after question after question to Ministers of Government. Ministers got up and they answered. But we bring one Motion to get the answers to an issue in the public domain and they refuse to answer. That is the hypocrisy of the PNM, Mr. Speaker. So they run, time to answer, they run.

So the Motion before us today is indeed one of serious concern, and I really want to go back to the matter before us, and that has to do with misconduct in public office. And that is why we brought the Motion in the first place to deal with issues of misconduct in public office by the Leader of the Opposition. So the Opposition has described this as a frivolous Motion.

The Member said we are wasting parliamentary time and so on, but I want to remind this House, through you, Mr. Speaker, that to date they have not answered some very pertinent questions. So I will ask those questions here again. Let us remind this House of the issue that is before us, because the people of Oropouche West, they want the answers. They want the answers by the Leader of the Opposition in the matter regarding Mr. David West's appointment as PCA Director.

Mr. Speaker, this issue you would recall, that this particular post is appointed subject to the recommendation of both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. And you would have heard before in this debate as well, that a recommendation was made to the hon. Prime Minister and she then consulted with the Leader of the Opposition who agreed to the candidacy of Mr. David West to be appointed as PCA Director. Then, the Prime Minister would have advised the President on this agreement and Mr. West was subsequently appointed.

That is the simple part of it. But that was not all, because what transpired thereafter, is really the issue that we are dealing with today and it really is still indeed very mind boggling, because we have not gotten the answers that we require from the Leader of the Opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, it was discovered after the appointment, that Mr. West was a witness in a personal defamation matter before the court to the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West. The Leader of the Opposition would have failed to disclose this fact in keeping with the practices of integrity, in keeping with good ethics and just general goodness that one would expect of someone who holds such a high position in this land. And that is the issue here.

It is an issue of conduct in public office and not abusing said office for any personal gain. And so I ask the relevant questions again, as Members on the Government Bench have asked before: in the matter involving the appointment of Mr. David West, why did the Leader of the Opposition not disclose to the President when he indicated his support for Mr. West to head the PCA, that Mr. West was also a witness in a private matter for the Leader of the Opposition? Why?

Is this the level of ethics of one holding such high office? Did he not have a duty and a responsibility to disclose this, Mr. Speaker? The people of Trinidad and Tobago deserve better. Or, was it that he deliberately hid the fact, and in doing so, did he then use his office for personal gain? And if so, did he breach the Integrity in Public Life Act? Mr. Speaker, these are the questions that remain unanswered to date. And that is why we come to this Parliament to ask these questions, but they run, they refuse to answer.

Mr. Speaker, to date we do not know if the Leader of the Opposition knew that Mr. West was a witness as he blamed his lawyer who he then fired. So the population is waiting with bated breath. They are waiting to get the answers to these questions which I have asked and which so many others in this House have asked, and we will continue to ask the questions in the best interest of the people of this land, and so I ask for an explanation. The Member for Diego Martin West should at least answer to his constituents, the people who put him to sit in that seat which he abandoned today, again.

Mr. Speaker, what type of leadership is this? It is to err is human nature. We know that we are all human beings before we are parliamentarians. And therefore, we are all subject to making mistakes, but it is how you treat with those mistakes that really make the difference of a true leader.

And so one has to look at the leadership style of the hon. Prime Minister, Member for Siparia, who, to date, has always acted and she has always answered whenever a matter arises in her Government. In fact, she has taken tough decisions without fear or favour. She has even removed Ministers of her

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Government when wrongdoing would have occurred, and this is the type of leadership that the people of Trinidad and Tobago so rightly deserves: one who stands for accountability, one who stands for transparency, one who can lead by example and one who continues to lead this nation.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we have in the Member for Siparia, and perhaps the Member for Diego Martin West can take a page out of her book and learn to answer to the people of this land. You know, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition does not have to answer to us parliamentarians, you know, but he has a responsibility to answer to the people, and this is one such place that he can do that. We took an oath of office here to serve without fear or favour and we all need to live up to that and, therefore, when something occurs or something arises, we need to come here and explain to the population. And if you fail to do so, Mr. Speaker, in my view, you have certainly failed the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

And I really have to wonder if the PNM Opposition is really serious, eh, because in the Parliament we discuss the people's business and the people's business is indeed serious business.

I heard the Member for Diego Martin North/East in his contribution, at the end of his contribution when he slammed down his papers and made a big scene in the Parliament. He said, you know, you should come outside. Well, I mean, it made a very catchy song which is playing on the radio now, but it really made no sense whatsoever. This is where we deal with issues. This is not a fistfight. This is a debate. We articulate one position; you articulate another position. So come outside, for what? You are afraid to sit in the seats that the people elected you to sit in.

And you know what is the funny thing, they will come back this year and ask you to vote for them again. So they cannot sit in the seats that they were elected to sit in and represent their constituents, but they want to come back now to ask you for your vote. Because why? They are aspiring to form the next government.

So they cannot answer in Opposition; they cannot sit in their seats in Opposition, but they have aspiration to form the next Government of this country. It is senseless, absolutely senseless.

6.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand in this House, as a young person and as a Minister of State in the Ministry with responsibility for youth and children, I have to say that I

am extremely disappointed in the manner in which the young people of this land have been treated with by the Leader of the Opposition. The record will show that the Opposition Leader has little care for the children and youth of this land. You would recall on the last occasion I spoke in this House, I was interrupted by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant—now rejected candidate for that constituency—who quickly came to the defence of the Leader of the Opposition. He is not in her defence today, but she came to his defence. The matter that I raised then had to do with a referral that the Member for Diego Martin West had made with respect to the children of this land, and that was that he had referred to the children of this country as “duncey heads”. So I have the *Hansard* today, Mr. Speaker, and I will quote from the *Hansard* of September 14, 2010. I quote Keith Rowley:

“On this explanation, the Minister of Education has a laptop for you. He thinks you are a ‘duncey-head’ first former.”

How can you refer to the children of this land as “duncey head”? First former being “duncey head”? Those children are the future of this land and we, as leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure that we continue to motivate them, that we continue to put the resources into those children so that they can lead this country tomorrow. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Could you quote the date of that *Hansard*?

Hon. S. Roopnarine: September 14, 2010.

But they do not like that. They do not like that we are investing in the education of our children, in their growth and in their development. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition openly indicated that the PNM was not in support of the laptop programme. I refer to a *Newsday* article, Friday 27 August, 2010 which headline reads: “Rowley: PNM not supportive of laptops for students”. And the article goes on to say:

“The opposition, People’s National Movement...is not supportive of the move by the Government to provide laptop computers to all Secondary Entrance Assessment...students entering secondary school in the new school term beginning in September.”

It goes on to say:

“Opposition Leader, Dr. Keith Rowley made the statement to members of the media yesterday at this constituency office in Diego Martin...”

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And it goes on to say:

“We are of the view that this was not the best way to spend the money in the education system’.”

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the question today. If you become Prime Minister, are you going to take away all these laptops? Are you going to stop the laptop distribution programme? To date, the Minister of Education has distributed over 90,000 laptops.

Mr. Indarsingh: Over 95,000.

Hon. S. Roopnarine: Over 95,000.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And teachers and principals.

Hon. S. Roopnarine: So, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Education have distributed some 95,000 laptops to the children of this land. That is where we are putting our investment, in the education sector. These are the leaders of tomorrow. The investment which we make in them today, we will reap the benefits later on. Generations to come will reap that benefit.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is not the only time that the Member for Diego Martin West has insulted the children of this land. You would have listened earlier when, I think it was the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, and then the Member for Caroni East, spoke about the referral of the Opposition Leader to our schoolgirls as hyenas in an African jungle. I do not even know what to say about a comment like that. It is so disappointing. Mr. Speaker, violence in schools and bullying in schools is a serious issue. We cannot simply just condemn our children for it. We cannot say, “Well, you are bad because of it”. We have to put the resources to help them!

That is why, under this Government, we have treated with that issue by launching the “Respect Me, Respect You Programme”. The Member for Moruga/Tableland was very instrumental in this programme, and this is really to treat with the issue of school bullying and violence in school. The programme promotes a caring environment and promotes anti-bullying on a nationwide basis as one of its priorities, using a rights-based approach to ensure equality, justice and dignity for all citizens. So while we are putting the programmes in place to fight bullying in school, the Opposition Leader chooses to condemn our students for this type of behaviour. As I said before, we simply cannot just put our children down when they do something wrong. We have a responsibility to help them; we have a responsibility to motivate them, to encourage them and to help them to do better. That is our role as leaders.

So, this Government's policy is one which involves investment in our young people, because they are the future and their growth and development is proportional to the growth and development of our nation, and this is why we continue to invest—the hon. Prime Minister continues to invest in the education sector. To date, some 95 schools were built under this administration.

In the area of tertiary level education, more and more young people are able to go on to tertiary level education because of the expansion of the GATE Programme which now includes the technical and vocational training. And you will remember, Mr. Speaker, that when we now took office, the PNM indicated that we would close down the GATE Programme. They created fear and havoc in the minds of our young students, and that is not the case. We have expanded the GATE Programme, and you would have also heard that we would have aimed for a 60 per cent participation rate in the tertiary education sector. Today, we have surpassed that target and we are now at approximately 65 per cent. So more and more students continue to get an education under this Government.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Tertiary education.

Hon. S. Roopnarine: Tertiary education, under this Government.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to expand campuses of UWI, UTT, COSTAATT, MIC, so that student intake can increase. But while we are doing that, the Leader of the Opposition continues to condemn any plan of this Government for the benefit of our youth. You would recall, Mr. Speaker, that when we decided to build the University of the West Indies Debe Campus to make it easier for persons in both south and central Trinidad to benefit from easier access to tertiary education—you would recall that the Leader of the Opposition, again, did not support this plan.

I refer to *Guardian* article of Tuesday, January 25, 2011, and the headline reads: "Rowley against UWI campus in Debe". This article goes on to say:

"Opposition Leader Dr. Keith Rowley is objecting to the proposed establishment of a Debe campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI). Rowley was responding to an announcement by Attorney General Anand Ramlogan in Parliament last Friday. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, Fazal Karim, told the Senate days before that the sod-turning ceremony would take place on May 24, the first anniversary of Kamla Persad-Bissessar's election as head of Government.

Rowley, speaking during a news conference at his Charles Street office yesterday said, UWI was a regional institution and consultation was necessary before any such development could take place. Rowley said the Government

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was expected to meet with UWI officials next month to discuss the proposal but a sod-turning date had already been made public. Questioned about the reasons for seeking to expand the institution in Debe, Rowley said it was an election promise, but he said that area was not the most appropriate for citizens of T&T.”

Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with Penal/Debe? What is wrong with putting a university in Penal/Debe? Well, I am from that area and I say that nothing is wrong with putting a university campus in Penal/Debe, [*Desk thumping*] to ensure that the students of south and central can benefit from getting tertiary level education.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many instances that I can speak to with respect to the insult of the Leader of the Opposition to the children and youth of this land, but I think that the biggest one, the one that stands out in my mind the most, has to be the refusal of the Leader of the Opposition and the PNM Members of Parliament to contribute to the Children’s Life Fund. You would recall that the hon. Prime Minister set up this Life Fund so that the children of this land can have life-saving surgery. Ten per cent of her salary goes into that, 5 per cent of the Government MPs’ salary goes into that fund, and a number of other institutions and other bodies contribute to this. To date, we have had quite a number of children—I think about 100 children or so—who have benefitted. Over 100 have benefitted from that Fund and we continue to be very proud that we have given new life to the children of this land. But I remain disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition and his PNM MPs have refused to contribute to that Fund. Mr. Speaker, they have failed the children of this land. I do not know. Is it that they do not like children? I do not know. I have to ask the questions. And if they were here, perhaps they could answer these questions.

Mr. Speaker, young people deserve to be promoted into leadership positions. They deserve to be given a chance to excel and leaders must afford them that opportunity. The hon. Prime Minister has continued to appoint young persons in leadership positions, whether it is at the level of the Parliament, at that the level of State boards, at the local government level. She has continued to give that opportunity to the youth of this land. But when you look at the PNM, one has to ask the question of the policies with respect to young people. Look at the track record of the PNM. They have a youth officer who is in his 50s, Mr. Speaker. You mean to tell me they could not find one young person to serve as the youth officer of the PNM?

Miss Ramdial: The youth officer applied for NIS, according to the Member for Couva South. [*Laughter*]

Hon. S. Roopnarine: Mr. Speaker, it is mind-boggling. Or I have to ask the question now: Is it that they just do not like young people? Is it that they do not like young people to serve in positions? Is that the issue? I have to ask the questions. I have also taken note of the rejection of the very young Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: Yes.

Hon. S. Roopnarine:—the rejection of his candidacy, perhaps because he is young and bright and perhaps a threat to those in senior positions. I do not know. I am asking the questions.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has kept its promise to the young people of this country. You would recall that we gave a commitment in our manifesto of 2010, that we would review the National Youth Policy which governs young people. Mr. Speaker, that policy was reviewed as promised. The hon. Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development, Member of Parliament for Moruga/Tableland, led that charge and today a National Youth Policy, 2012/2017 continues to be implemented. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Ramdial: Well done.

Hon. S. Roopnarine: And a part of this plan is to have a National Youth Commission formed which would allow for the inclusion of more youth groups and, therefore, more youths overall.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that I can talk to you about with respect to—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Oropouche West has expired. Are you interested in an extension?

Hon. S. Roopnarine: Yes, Sir.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Roopnarine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is so much I can tell you about the delivery for young people under the leadership of the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. I will just outline a few. I want to make mention of the National Youth Mentorship Programme which continues under the Ministry of National Security, as we treat with the issue of youth and crime.

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You see, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the social aspect of crime and the social challenges that we face, in particular, with our young people. This national youth mentorship programme is actually a first in Trinidad and Tobago and it is hoped that it will continue to guide the nation's youth in becoming socially, psychologically, emotionally and economically balanced, and, hopefully, they will be able to contribute positively to society and make Trinidad and Tobago a more peaceful place.

Mr. Speaker, there is also the National Youth Volunteerism Programme of the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development which strengthens youth participation in the involvement of community projects such as the beach cleanup campaigns and so on. We have also made it easier for young people to become homeowners. Under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, they have implemented a 2 per cent mortgage programme for persons earning up to \$10,000 a month—which was previously \$8,500—and they can qualify for properties up to \$850,000. This was previously \$625,000. So by increasing that monthly allowance and increasing that property value, you now have more young people that can qualify for a low mortgage rate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention away from youth and focus on another aspect which I feel to be very important, and that has to do with the aspect of women and respect for women. I feel that the Leader of the Opposition has certainly shown a high level of disrespect to the women of this land by the comments that he has made with respect to the PNM meeting that was held in Brazil on March 17, 2015. I have no intention of repeating those comments in this very august Chamber but, to date, I wish to state that those comments are certainly not befitting of someone aspiring to be a Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, women have struggled for equality for decades. We have toiled to overcome the gender bias from generation after generation after generation, and today you have a leader who can make such derogatory remarks, and this is coming from a career politician. This is not coming from somebody who now come into politics. He is perhaps one of the longest serving Members in this House, and therefore, I feel that he should have known better before making those statements.

Therefore, I have to say that this is the true colours of the Member for Diego Martin West. This is the man aspiring to be a Prime Minister and I have to ask again, I asked it on the platform, but I have to ask in this House: what is the policy of the PNM with respect to gender? How will you treat the women of this land,

God forbid, you ever become the next Government of Trinidad and Tobago? How will you treat them? What kind of respect will you give the women of this nation?

I think the Leader of the Opposition has shown his true colours, and today, I say that the Leader of the Opposition and the PNM have failed the women of this land. How can we have trust and faith that you will allow the women equal opportunity if you ever form Government?

Let us look at his own track record in his own party. I have taken note that he has rejected two very strong women in the PNM. He has rejected their candidacy. I speak about the current Member for Laventille East/Morvant and I speak about Miss Penelope Beckles.

It is no secret that the Leader of the Opposition does not like opposition, and so I have to ask: is it that he is intimidated by these women? Is it that he is intimidated by a strong woman or is it that he just cannot deal with persons who are opposed to him? I do not know. I just have to ask the questions. Maybe both. We saw examples earlier from, I think, the Member for Tobago West, of him not being able to deal with that opposition, and perhaps that is why we are seeing that in the lineup of the PNM for this general election, we are seeing the washed up politicians coming back and we are seeing some yes-men joining the fold. It is quite interesting, but I have to ask what type of leadership is this?

This leader, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the PNM, who was described by the former leader of the PNM as out of control, he wants to do what he wants, when he wants, how he wants. He does not like opposition.

When you look at the current Prime Minister and Leader of the People's Partnership Government, Member for Siparia, you see a leader who leads by consensus. Not only does she allow different views in her own party, but she also allows the different views amongst several parties and it is not easy. You have many different views, whether it is individual views, whether it is party views, and at the end of the day, she allows those different views and then takes a decision in the best interest of the country. That is leadership. That is leadership with humility, open-mindedness, fairness, vision. That is great leadership.

Mr. Speaker, global research tells us that if we continue at the same rate of promoting women in politics, it will be some 50 years before gender parity is reached in politics, and this means that in order to expedite that, political parties have to make an extra effort to promote women in politics. Today, only 22 per cent of all parliamentarians internationally are females. Trinidad and Tobago remains quite fortunate as we have 29 per cent female participation in the House of Representatives.

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I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that under the leadership of the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Member for Siparia, men and women are treated equally. She has always said that women hold up half the sky and she has always given women an equal opportunity to serve, whether in the Parliament, state boards, local government level, and I can show you many ways as well that our policies continue to promote women, and that we continue to do what we have to, to help the women of this land.

One such instance is the implementation of the baby care grant which was conceptualized [*Desk thumping*] to help the mothers of this land, especially the single mothers, as we understand it is very difficult in some instances to provide for their children. So, we really want to give every child of this country equal opportunity to success, and that is the vision of the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development continues with programmes to assist women, such as the Women in Harmony Programme, to empower single female heads of households and to help with the challenges of socio-economic problems. We continue work on the gender policy. It was this Government that increased the maternity leave for women to 14 weeks in keeping with the ILO standards. It is also no secret that women and girls continue to be victims of domestic violence, and that is why we implemented the setting up of agencies such as the Children's Authority to oversee the protection of our children, both our boys and girls, and we are also in the process of implementing the national commission for women's empowerment and gender equity.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity very recently to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the United Nations high level event on Women in Power and Decision-Making in Chile, and I want to share the words of UN General-Secretary Ban Ki-moon, in delivering closing remarks, where he urged member states to expedite their efforts in bringing about gender equality. He says:

"...not next year, not tomorrow,"—but—"right now."

He goes on to say and I quote:

"Now is the time to take a stand, to close gaps, to remove obstacles, to invest in women and girls, to move from deed to action?... 'We cannot fulfil 100 per cent of the world's potential by excluding 50 per cent of the world's people.'"

And so, we have to continue to help promote women in leadership, and I give you the assurance that the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar is committed to this task, and she has certainly promoted women in leadership position and she continues to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have shown you how the Leader of the Opposition and the PNM have condemned the children of this land, the youth of this land and the women of this land. I say that they have failed the people of this country overall. They have failed the children, they have failed the youth and they have failed the women.

I say that we certainly have no confidence in him, as Leader of the Opposition, and I ask again as I started, that they come to this House and they give us the answers that the people of this country so rightly deserves. Not the parliamentarians, we do not need the answers. It is the people, it is the population, those who elected us to serve, that deserve the answers. So I ask again, that they come to this House and they give us those answers. Failure to do so is indeed failing the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 53, I beg to move that the debate on the Lack of Confidence Motion in the Leader of the Opposition be adjourned.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Motion No. 2, the hon. Minister of National Security.

POLICE SERVICE (AMDT.) REGULATIONS, 2014

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. Carlton Alfonso): I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that the Police Service (Amdt.) Regulations, 2014 be approved.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to make these very brief remarks in this most august Chamber, on these most important amendments to the Police Service Act, Chap. 15:01. As a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and in my capacity as a former head of this country's Defence Force for a number of years, and now as this country's Minister of National Security, I have always maintained a keen interest in matters of national security especially as it pertains to the welfare, and the morale of our uniformed officers from all our law enforcement and protective services.

When our Government assumed office in 2010, it was with the full knowledge that the road that lay ahead in terms of restoring confidence in national security was not going to be an easy one. It was with acceptance of this fact that we took a

deep, long, hard look at what had gone before and to use that knowledge, apply the tenets of this Government and design a way forward, making difficult decisions that may prove unpopular, but which ultimately would contribute towards achieving the intended goal.

As such, one of the very first acts taken by this Government was to increase the special allowances for our country's police officers. This special allowance to police officers was in recognition of the increasing demands being placed on the police service. The Government agreed to the grant of a monthly special allowance of \$1,000 non-taxable, which was initiated in October 2010, to all serving members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. This allowance served as an incentive to boost the morale of the police officers on whom this country relies, in the large part, for ensuring the enforcement of law and order.

In the same vein, or continuing the movement as we say in the military, Government now seeks to increase the monthly pension of our police officers from \$3,000 to \$3,500 per month with immediate effect.

Mr. Speaker, this country finds itself in a complex era of policing, and one of the major challenges facing our society, of course, is the fight against crime and its impact on public safety and security. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has in the last five years made great strides towards improving the way it does business. The service has undertaken to complete a comprehensive analysis and assessment of itself, and bring together all the elements of effective policing into a single framework. The primary objective of this initiative is to modernize and better equip the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to meet the challenges of the 21st Century Policing, thereby ensuring the security of our nation and the safety of all persons.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service seeks to function more effectively as an organization and become:

1. more professional in its crime-fighting capabilities;
2. more technologically driven;
3. more service-oriented; and very importantly,
4. narrowing the gap between police officers and the communities they serve.

On this last point, many of our urban communities are experiencing serious problems with illegal drugs, gang violence, rapes, murders, muggings and

burglaries. Both the level and nature of crime in this country are causing police to seek more effective methods. In this regard, the narrowing of this gap between the service and communities can restore the public's confidence in the police service, but cannot only restore the confidence, but significantly reduce criminal activity as well as reduce the conditions that nurture crime. In the changing and dynamic nature of communities and in the shifting characteristics of crime and violence that affect those communities, I believe that the desired goal of enhanced sense of safety and security and well-being can be achieved.

As Minister of National Security, I am aware that the prevention and solving of crime is high on the list of the issues which are most relevant to the people in their daily lives. The Government is cognizant of the concern by the general public, of the current unacceptable level of crime that continues to stretch the capacity of the national law enforcement agencies. Since assuming office in 2010, our Government, through the Ministry of National Security, has embraced a multifaceted approach to securing our state and citizens and to address criminal activity. This involves:

1. public safety measures;
2. crime prevention initiatives, encompassing various social and youth-based programmes;
3. law enforcement and defence-capacity building; and
4. legislative measures.

While serious crimes have increased over the last five years, the murder rate continues to be of great concern to the Ministry of National Security and by extension, the national community. The Ministry of National Security is determined to utilize all available resources to bring crime and lawlessness under control. Each citizen of this country has the right to conduct his or her daily activities without the fear of falling prey to criminal activities and as a Government, we are determined to ensure that this right is protected. Greater emphasis has been placed on providing law enforcement agencies with all the equipment and latest technology required in order for them to perform their duties at an optimal level.

To date, Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago is currently serviced by approximately 1,000 CCTV cameras. These cameras have a 100 per cent uptime and all footage is recorded for 21 days. This storage enables sufficient time for post-investigation and electronic interrogation. These cameras are monitored 24/7

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and provide real-time coverage for law enforcement personnel to initiate proactive and immediate responses. Real time viewing of all cameras provide co-ordination and maximizing of resources in all aspects of responses, be it a road traffic accident, traffic management, natural disasters or law enforcement operations.

I am happy to state that Cabinet has recently approved 800 additional cameras for central, southern and western divisions [*Desk thumping*] and will complete surveillance in Trinidad. And there is also a plan afoot to expand the CCTV capability in the sister isle of Tobago. The information to determine the areas and the strategic locations are being reviewed by the TTPS. These additional cameras will assist in the reduction of criminal activities in the areas identified. They will further contribute a sense of security in the divisions mentioned.

This integrated approach directly relates to the safe city concept adopted by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and all law enforcement agencies. These new CCTVs will be so structured to integrate into the national network, and will be utilized to trigger accelerated responses in all aspects of emergency calls and observations. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has also taken significant steps to increase its visibility and has intensified patrols and operations, particularly in the areas deemed as hotspots.

In addition, during the last fiscal year, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service seized a total of 114.20 kilograms of cocaine with a street value of \$45,788,000 and 4476.21 kilograms of marijuana with a street value of \$53,035,700. Trinidad and Tobago Police Service expects to recruit approximately 1,000 police officers during the 2015 fiscal year, comprising of 600 regular police and 400 Special Reserve Police. This new intake would bring the TTPS closer to its sanctioned strength of 7,715 police officers. In addition, training and capacity building have been undertaken and international collaboration strengthened. I am also very aware that effective policing does not magically result from good training, but it is a fundamental building block for the police service which we endeavour to create.

The Government, through the Ministry of National Security is also focusing on the fiscal and infrastructural aspects of the transformation of the police service. The construction of eight police stations throughout the country which are at various stages of readiness is another major development that is worth mentioning. These stations are as follows: Arima Police Station, Piarco, Maloney, Cumuto, La Brea, Brasso, Moruga and Oropouche police stations. [*Desk thumping*] During this fiscal year, the Ministry of National Security will be targeting the construction and handover of an additional nine police stations, [*Desk thumping*] and these are: Besson Street Police Station, Maracas/St. Joseph

Police Station, Matelot, Matura, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Manzanilla, Old Grange and Roxborough Police Stations.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, let me end by saying a few words, with your permission, to our police officers who work day and night to keep us safe. While many of us sleep in the safety of our homes at night, these professional men and women of the police service are out there protecting us and serving us with pride and professionalism. Being a police officer is a conscious decision one makes to contribute meaningfully to the upliftment and security of our country. Your dedication and commitment to this country's future is what every citizen expects of you. I take this opportunity to applaud the police service's contribution and the way you carry out your duties. [*Desk thumping*] I may add, Mr. Speaker, that my father was a policeman but I decided to go one better and join the defence force. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: So you say.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: However, Mr. Speaker, I want you to bear in mind that the police service is the principal organization with responsibility for law enforcement and order in this country. The uniform that you wear represents your organization. Therefore, I submit, wear it with pride bearing in mind that the public demands and deserves the best from its police officers. I urge you to be clear about your role and your parameters of operation and your areas of responsibility.

Be mindful of the fact that you are always under the eye of the population that you serve, whether you are in or out of your service uniform. Your wives, your husbands, your family, your friends and community at large see you or should see you as a role model. Therefore, whatever you do, you must always uphold the virtues of integrity, ethics, discipline and professionalism. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

The Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development (Hon. Clifton De Coteau): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Normally the case where someone from the other side probably will start off there, but I want to assure you that I have no intention of going on that side.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to support my colleague, the hon. Minister of National Security, Sen. The Hon. Brig. Carl Alfonso in having all of us in this august Chamber close ranks with him and approve the Police Service (Amdt.) Regulations. I am normally in the ministerial leadership saddle when the substantive Minister of National Security is out of the

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jurisdiction and so I believe it is my responsibility to give support to this Bill. I am not here in posturing but rather to give credence to what my esteemed colleague has ventilated.

The educator in me believes in the idiom: repetition leads to retention, especially in our society where there is always a cacophony of sounds emanating from my absent friends on the opposite side resulting in a lot of misinformation entering the public space. Veteran educators like myself know that the key to successfully imparting information is to state, explain, support, restate and summarize and this is of paramount importance in the Government's public education and awareness exercise.

I must place on record that it is very regrettable and a very sad day that the Opposition has put on their opposition walking boots, and marched with some degree of alacrity out of this Chamber and that they are not here present to give support to this Motion. Mr. Speaker, they have indulged in some degree of cinematographic optics—predictive I must say, predictive optics by walking out and I suppose they will continue walking probably like Johnny Walker.

Mr. Speaker, we need to get the House approval for amendments made to the Police Service Regulations. The amendments made are to sub-regulations (1) and (3), which deal with providing an increase of a minimum monthly pension payment to police officers from \$3,000 to \$3,500 per month with effect from October 01, 2014. As rudimentary as this is, it is undoubtedly needed for an important group in our society who provide front-line protective services 24/7.

I think the historian in me would remember that Sir Robert Peel, two-time Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 1834—1835 and 1841—1846, said it best when he spoke of the critical role and importance that police officers play in society. I quote:

“The police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to the give full time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.”

7.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, our nation's police officers have a mammoth task to perform and as current US President Barack Obama put it in terms of the laity:

“Understand, our police officers”—that they—“put their lives on the line for us every single day. They've got a tough job to do to maintain public safety and hold accountable those who break the law.”

This ocean of a mandate also obtains on our shores.

Mr. Speaker, I am compelled to trek down memory lane, given the historian again in me, and I am to remind and underscore how we journey to this point and why the adoption of this approach is necessary. We should recall that in 2010, the Senior Citizens Grant was renamed the Senior Citizens' Pension, and increased the maximum pension payable to individuals under the Senior Citizens' Pension Act from \$1,950 to \$3,000 per month, with effect from September 01, 2010.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy, in agreement with the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC, decided that in order to provide further relief to our senior citizens whose disposable pension income would have been eroded by inflation, a proposition was made that effective 1st October, 2014, the maximum senior citizens pension should be increased from \$3,000 per month to \$3,500 per month.

Further, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai, realising that the existing pension arrangements for public officers does not provide for the indexation of pension benefits and as such, there was no measure of relief against the effects of inflation. The Minister noted that these retirees received a fixed income and experience difficulties in maintaining an acceptable standard of living since their purchasing power is severely eroded by inflation. In this regard, the Minister took a Note to Cabinet in September 2014, to help treat with those retired public officers whose disposable pension income would have been eroded by inflation. The relief was to come in the form of an increase in their pension from \$3,000 to \$3,500.

Mr. Speaker, this administration, under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC, is one of inclusion and all-embracing, and so all retired public officers would be beneficiaries of this move. This would benefit legislators, judges, prison officers, defence force officers, ambassadors, high commissioners, principal representatives of Trinidad and Tobago, general public service officers, widows and orphans of deceased public officers, municipal corporation officers, fire officers, teachers and our police officers.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is why we are assembled now at this juncture to ensure that when our indefatigable, hard-working and dedicated police officers retire, having given their all, plus more, in service to our land being on the front line of providing protective services, it is our hope that this increase in their pension would better their purchasing power and afford them an acceptable standard of living.

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Mr. Speaker, as a Government that believes in equity, access and fair share for all, I ask any critic why would they not support this measure of bringing added financial relief to our police officers during their retirement, given all other public officers were considered? As a secondary school teacher, a dean, a principal, whenever confronted by injustice and acts meant to be inequitable/discriminatory towards a person or group, during arbitrating matters for staff or students, I would expeditiously reference Act 3, Scene 1 of the Merchant of Venice by the renowned playwright William Shakespeare:

“I am a Jew...Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed by the cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?”

Mr. Speaker, it is crucial for us to remember that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere; that was by Martin Luther King Jr. During the years of my former incarnation and now under the leadership of our esteemed Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, our mantra echoes the penultimate line of the National Anthem: Here every creed and race find an equal place.

Mr. Speaker, it is then unsurprising for us to do what is right because it is the right thing to do. Our police officers have done a commendable job in restoring our rough waters, and sometimes unchartered areas of crime to some semblance of normalcy. They continue to work diligently and robustly to ensure our safety and security.

The police service has been ably assisted with the requisite apparatus to help in its combat to ameliorate the scourge of crime that has threatened to devour us. As legislators we have passed several pieces of critical legislation needed to help the police in being better armed.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that we passed the following pieces of legislation that are critical to policing:

- The Administration of Justice (DNA) Bill, passed on April 25, 2011;
- The Anti-Gang Bill, which was proclaimed on August 15, 2011;
- The Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2011, which was assented to on June 24, 2011;
- The Firearms (Amdt.) Bill, 2010, proclaimed on February 25, 2011;

- The Miscellaneous Provisions (Bail and Kidnapping) Bill, 2010 which was assented to May 19, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, we have the Bail (Amdt.) Act, which was just passed in the other place.

In working to strengthen institutions and provide the required administrative support for law enforcement agencies, we established several new units. The National Operations Centre—the National Operation Centre falls under the umbrella of the National Security Council and is chaired by the hon. Prime Minister. The National Operations Centre was formed as the backbone for intelligence-gathering and information-sharing among law enforcement agencies. The rationale for placing the National Operations Centre under the ambit of the National Security Council is that at times of manmade or natural disasters, several Ministries and agencies would be required to work hand in hand so a central communicating mechanism is needed. As it was said in the other place on September 16, 2014 debate on the Appropriation (Financial Year 2015) Bill, the National Operations Centre acts as a communication platform. It acts as that collaboration to ensure that all agencies work together, they trust each other, they have that sense of communication and understanding to ensure that you have successful operations.

Mr. Speaker, there was the formal establishment of the Rapid Response Unit, which has provided greater visibility, which has served as a deterrent to criminal activity.

The E999 was launched last year and the citizenry have a potent tool when reporting crimes. Reports are recorded, computer statistics are generated and proper utilization of resources are employed. Through the E999, the police are now able to locate where a phone call originated, look at vehicles in the closest approximately and so that response is rapid.

Establishment of the National Security Training Academy—a facility to ensure every single law enforcement officer has access to the requisite training to ensure maximum capacity in their profession. What obtained previously was that a barracks in Cumuto, under the Special Anti-Crime Unit, had been established and only a selected few were given access to this facility. Mr. Speaker, under this administration such discrimination is totally unacceptable and not tolerated.

A noted collaboration between the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force in inter-agency joint patrols have reduced crime in all patrol areas. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service vehicles have

been equipped with GPS technology in an effort to improve police response to calls from the general public for assistance. There is on-going construction of eight police stations as was articulated and ventilated by my learned colleague, and I am happy to say that one of those stations is in that rural area of Moruga/Tableland under our watch. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, what all the proceedings have done is resulted in a major decrease in serious crimes. In reality, this is the lowest that serious crimes has been in 31 years. The historian in me is the impetus for reminding those who have selective amnesia, and there are a lot of those with selective amnesia on that side. In 2013, we had the lowest number of serious crimes reported, 13,000. Statistics provided by the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Remember those dark ages? Let me show you how performance beats old talk. You want to see the marked difference under this administration, as opposed to the Prime Minister's erstwhile colleague, the Member for San Fernando East who is unavoidably absent since the start of this term.

Statistics provided by the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. In 2002, there were 16,810 serious crimes reported; in 2003, there were 16,890 serious crimes reported. Mr. Speaker, in 2004, there were 16,388 serious crimes reported; in 2005 there were 17,989 serious crimes reported; in 2006, there were 19,566 serious crimes reported; in 2007, there were 19,670 serious crimes reported; in 2008, there were 20,506 serious crimes reported; in 2009, there were 22,161 serious crimes reported.

Mr. Speaker, let me stop as I get repulsed from reading those disheartening statistics. These serious crimes were holding us to ransom. We are talking about rape/incest/sexual offences, narcotic offences, kidnapping, and burglaries—and when I said rape, I had—no, no. I am not going there—robberies, crimes that ripple the moral fabric of society, a society that would appear rudderless and swimming in a cesspool of lawlessness beyond repair to the outside observer.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder, as we come into the season now, if this is where we want to go back to. What we have done in this administration is to ensure that we have provided the necessary administrative support and apparatus to the police service to help them with effective and efficient policing. Unequivocally, this has resulted in marked progress towards reduction of serious crimes. Look at the statistics over the last three years for serious crimes, wounding, shootings, rape, sexual offences, kidnapping, burglaries, break-ins, robberies, larceny, and narcotic offences.

Statistics provided again by the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. In 2013, there were 13,000 serious crimes reported; 2014, 12,000 serious crimes reported; and in 2015, so far, 1,800 serious crimes reported. You see, Mr. Speaker, if we look at 2013 to 2014 alone, we see a drop in the serious crimes reported by more than 8,000, compared to 2009, 2008, 2007, and 2006. We have accomplished a major feat and will continue to soar in the combat against crime.

Our police officers deserve, upon retirement, to live and be afforded an adequate standard of living after dedicating their hearts and souls to making Trinidad and Tobago a safer and more secure place day by day, not only for themselves but for all of us.

I implore all to support the approval of these simple amendments to the Regulations which will make an important difference. I leave you with the words of Barbara Boxer, US Senator from California:

“Law enforcement officers are never ‘off duty’. They are dedicated public servants who are sworn to protect public safety at any time and place that...peace is threatened. They need all the help...they can get.”

Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I wish to support my colleague. [*Desk thumping*]

7.30 p.m.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. Carlton Alfonso): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the hon. Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development, for his contribution. I further want to recognize the contribution made by the police service, and that they continue to make.

Hon. Members: And the contributions by the Opposition. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. Brig. C. Alfonso: Like everybody else, I am saddened by the absence of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Police Service (Amdt.) Regulations, 2014 be approved.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we shall now revert to the Motion of No Confidence.

Dr. Moonilal: No, no, no, the Ombudsman.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, you are dealing with the Ombudsman, okay, my error. Okay. So we will now go to Motion No. 3. I call on the hon. Leader of the House, and the Minister of Housing and Urban Development.

THIRTY-SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you. Thank you very much, hon. Members on both sides of the House. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker—hon. Members on both sides of the House of like minds. It is for me an honour to stand at this moment in the Parliament, and at this moment in our history, to present for debate, for the very first time under our new Standing Orders, the Report from the Office of the Ombudsman, 2013:

Be it resolved that this House consider the findings and recommendations in the 36th Annual Report of the Ombudsman.

I commend this report to the Parliament for debate, to have a discussion on a very critical, monitoring and surveillance institution, in the history of independent Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, while I am privileged and honoured to be the first Leader of Government Business, to move a Motion to adopt a report from the Ombudsman, it is the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, that Parliament by the new Standing Orders, has the opportunity to debate and adopt a report from the Ombudsman. [*Desk thumping*]

Just for the record I wanted to indicate to colleagues in the House, and outside the national community, that historically a report would come from the Office of the Ombudsman, would be sent to the Parliament and to other departments and so on, but there was no legal basis, there was no parliamentary procedure, that brought the report for a debate. This is the very first time the Ombudsman Report has been brought to the Parliament for a specific Motion to debate this report.

Mr. Speaker, to me it is a sign of great regret and pity, that the Members of the Opposition are not in the Parliament to conduct the business of the people, to debate a very important report from the Office of the Ombudsman, that speaks to the issues affecting citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. If it is one office in this land, that meets and treats with the plight, the plea, the frustration of ordinary citizens, it is the Office of the Ombudsman.

Today, we have an opportunity to debate this report, and debate the concerns of ordinary citizens. Mr. Speaker, whether it is housing, whether it is the national

insurance appeal, whether it is matters of justice, whether it is medical issues, hospitals and so on. You go to the Office of the Ombudsman to make your report, and the Ombudsman prepares a report for transmitting to Parliament and to the agencies that are relevant to this work. Today, the Opposition is absent to debate a matter that involves the plight, the real concerns of real ordinary people.

Mr. Speaker, the people—and you know, I made this point in the context of housing. As you know, we are on our very aggressive and tenacious and audacious policy of delivering 100 homes per week. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Ostentatious.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Ostentatious, not the homes, but the programme is very ambitious. You know, I have been accused, and the Government has been accused, by our detractors that we are on an election campaign, and there is an election ploy, and so on. You would be surprised to know that there are many people in the national community, who do not know there is an election this year. They do not, because that is not in their minds, I mean, they really do not care about that at this time. People are concerned with their drainage. They are concerned with their roads. They are concerned with housing. They are concerned with their pension payment. They are concerned with their wages. The ordinary man and woman, Mr. Speaker, is not concerned with election. When that time comes, they will deal with that. People accuse us of giving out houses “as eef is bribe”, or giving out houses as election ploys. We are delivering goods and services to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; that is what we are about.

The Ombudsman’s report is a report that comes to us, that speaks to the plight of ordinary people. Where is the Opposition? Where are they? They are not here. They come, they ask a few questions, they go, they take “ah snack”, maybe before leaving, and they disappear. Where are they?

Hon. Member: “Dey eat out all de food.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “Dey eat out what?”

Hon. Member: “All de food.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, Mr. Speaker, “I not eating” myself too much these days, so I would not know that, but they are not here to debate the matters that really affect people. The people who complain here, the Ombudsman made the report—the people who complain here about these matters across Trinidad and Tobago, not only in one electoral district, across the board.

Mr. Speaker, the people who complain, they complain on the little matters, but the matters that are important to them, they may be small to some of us, and it is across Ministries. This should have been a debate almost to the magnitude of a budget debate, on the provision of goods and services that is what the debate on the Ombudsman's report is. It is almost a budget debate, but instead of just economics and finance, on social delivery of goods and services.

The people complain about Members of Parliament as well. It is here that the Ombudsman is putting us in front the mirror, under scrutiny, accountability, responsibility of all Members of Parliament, to say, look, we have received complaints about your Ministry. We have received complaints from this locality of Port of Spain, Laventille, wherever. And where is the Opposition? They cannot be seen to do the people's business.

A few moments ago we were debating an importation motion on national security, enhancing the quality, and the welfare of members of the protective services. Mr. Speaker, Members of the Opposition were not here to speak to the issue of security, and they were not here to lend support to the police officers of Trinidad and Tobago. On a day when we learned that they are a few, not all, and certainly not the majority, who we may have to deal with in the police service, who for one reason or another, embarked on a course of action that brought great discomfort and distress to citizens. But the majority of hard-working police officers, we have just increased their welfare, [*Desk thumping*] increased their terms/conditions, but the Opposition is not here to support that, they have abandoned the police officers. Now, they have abandoned the innocent citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, who feel the oppression, and who have recorded their concerns and frustrations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take you to the report. The report deals with issues dealing with persons with disabilities, persons affected by flooding, national insurance appeal, the HDC. This is why I speak to housing, the Commissioner of State Lands in matters dealing with lands, and so on. It deals with the general problems they face, community development issues and so on.

The Ombudsman reports the common problems of enforcement, of rules and regulations and law, of delay in addressing issues by public authorities—sometimes of poor communications, that is a problem. They are complaining about that to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman played this role historically as a sort of last outpost, you know. The last oasis that you could go to when you feel you have failed everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say in defence, you know, there are times when we try to help people as best we can, but as you will be aware, and all Members are aware. Sometimes we try to help people with housing, but we cannot help all. We try to help somebody get “ah house, dey complain dat de neighbour” is making noise. They want to relocate. We try our best, but we cannot relocate you. They complain, maybe, that the house has defects, and I am coming to that now, because it is in the book here.

Mr. Speaker, we have spent over \$150 million repairing those HDC sites that we inherited from the PNM administration, and not a day goes by that people who got a house do not come to me and complain about the flooring, the ceiling, the tiles, the shabby work. There is an estate in south Trinidad, I think it is Retrench we call it, Hill Crest. A person came for a transfer, I said what do you want a transfer for, you just got a beautiful townhouse. “Dey say boss, de way this thing build, when I in my washroom, doing what I doing there, ah hearing all de neighbour” quarrelling next door, and all their business, and disturbing. They want to relocate. Those are design and engineering issues. You can build housing—the whole world has apartment buildings. You can design and build, so that you do not have that noise, where, if you sit in your apartment, and for one reason or another you have “ah lil”, you know, talk with your spouse, and some people—my friend from Moruga/Tableland as you know, he has a very heavy voice there. If he was one in our apartment, well, the entire estate might be disturbed. You have to build for that. You engineer, you build in your design for that.

Mr. Speaker, another complaint that went to the Ombudsman, and I actually have a reference here, [*Searches through a folder*] in my bag, in my brief bag. It is a pity Members of the Opposition are not here, because they go outside and talk in the public domain. A gentleman by the name of Krishna Maharaj sent me a note. This poor man in 2009—there was a lovely—2009, Carlsen Field Housing Development, presentation of keys, Saturday, December 19, 2009, 11.00 am. Carlsen Field is—which part is that? That is somewhere in Central. Is it? “Dai’ is by you, Glenn?”

Hon. Member: Caroni Central.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah. We had a good ceremony there a few weeks ago; 100 homes. Mr. Speaker, I want to just draw your attention to this function in 2009. The gentleman is saying, I was given keys for a three-bedroom townhouse. After the key distribution ceremony, I was asked to return the keys, and subsequently the unit was never made available to me. [*Laughter*]

Now, what manner of madness is this? This is 2015. Six years later, this gentleman came to me, and say, listen, I got the keys, and then the HDC gave me—I mean, I must say this is regrettable, but in a letter dated June 02, 2010, withdrawal of offer, but “dey take back de key”, Mr. Speaker, from this gentleman. All 100 persons who got keys in Carlsen Field a few weeks ago, we did not take back any keys, you know, and this is one example. I have many more, where the PNM administration gave people keys, six years later, “dey doh have de house, and dey take back de keys. An ah like wha dey do, dey write and dey tell ‘im, geh we back de key, becor dey did not want to change de locks”. So, “dey say”, give us back the keys. You know they have the gall to talk about housing and, Mr. Speaker, the Ombudsman’s report has a complaint again, about housing, in this type of manner.

7.45 p.m.

That is the PNM’s housing policy. They give people keys and then take it back, and then they leave me—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: They give somebody else the key.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah. Yeah. They give the same key to somebody else and take it back. They built house in Wellington, it is the first mobile houses to be built, I think, in history, “every year the house does move four inch”. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*] In Mayaro, yeah. In Mora Heights, we were there last week with the hard-working Member for Mayaro—those are mobile houses, every year they move four inch, they creep, because they did not do infrastructure work. I see the former Managing Director, who is responsible for that, now making statements about the random draw, one, Noel Garcia.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that fella, Justice Ibrahim is looking for him. Justice Ibrahim is seeking him out on a warrant to appear before the Commission of Enquiry in Las Alturas. You cannot find him there, but you could find him through the Internet. I think he is hiding behind a keyboard, you know, beating out on the keyboard statements on random draw. Mr. Speaker, we had a random draw, 500 names were called. One of the newspapers, “HOUSE FOR WHITNEY”, because one person appeared and gave thanks, and so on, at a meeting—499 persons did not appear. When we looked at the list, I do not know these people. It is a random, Mr. Speaker—random draw. “I doh know who is who.” Mr. Speaker, there was nobody named Moonilal, nobody named Persad neither, nobody named Cadiz. I looked out for some of the names here, I did not

see any. I saw somebody named Rowley. I do not know if that is a next sibling that we cannot find, but I do not want to go there, Mr. Speaker.

I saw somebody named Franchella Warner. I do not know if they are related to the Member for Chaguanas West because he has a lot of family; it is a big family he has, a wonderful family. But, Mr. Speaker, I did not see any Moonilal, “eh”. None. None. None. And there are many of us too, but we did not get that call. So, Mr. Speaker, they are talking about random draw. I want to inform my friends that, again, the hon. Prime Minister has given me some guidance on these matters, as she does want to do on matters of national interest, and the hon. Prime Minister has advised that persons—we had a random draw for everybody. It was everybody in the pool, came up with 500 names. But, in the coming weeks, to deal with the hardships that people complain of here—we will undertake another random draw in which we will have a pool, only, of persons who have been waiting 15 years and more for housing, and we will put in that pool, as well, persons who have received keys but the former PNM administration took back the keys. They took back the keys so we have to give them some chance and some hope.

So, persons who have been 15 years and waiting, we will create another random draw only for those persons, because it is a lot. I understand it is about 5,000 persons where we have evidence that they applied in 1977—Gypsy—at the Janouras building in Port of Spain, which housed the Ministry of Settlements, Mr. Speaker. Well, Minister Peters was around even then so he would know; the Janouras building, they applied. There was a clerk there who took the application, her name was Hazel Manning.

So, we have evidence where people have applied, 5,000 persons. We will put that in a pool and draw from that. So, Mr. Speaker, we do not expect those persons to be complaining to the Ombudsman, and we do not want the hypocrisy of the Opposition. Look at the complaints they make, Mr. Speaker:

“Delay to repair units;”

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know they sometimes raise this matter with me. They say I am only talking about spending money to fix PNM houses that were bad, and so on, and they think I am politicizing. Look what is the main complaint people reported to the Ombudsman, I am at page 26:

“Delay to repair units;”

So if the units were not bad why would you have a delay to repair them? It is

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[HON. DR. R. MOONILAL]

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evident that these units that were built, Mr. Speaker, was—Mr. Speaker, in Arima—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: You have a Procedural Motion?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah.

Mr. Speaker: I think you will have to move it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, with a different heart, in accordance with Standing Order 15(5), I beg to move that this House continue to sit until we have completed the matter before us, this Motion on the Ombudsman.

Question put and agreed to.

THIRTY-SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you something on this report, that is why I am so terribly sad that Members of the Opposition are not here to debate this matter; terribly sad. So unfortunate to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Let me read page 26 for you, hear the complaints:

“Delay to repair units;

Housing accommodation still unavailable years after receipt of down payments”

—where people paid money and cannot get their house. Hear this one, Mr. Speaker:

Persons invited to attend a “Presentation of Keys” ceremony where there is no provision for them to get”—a house—“accommodation;”

[*Laughter*] That is a complaint to the Ombudsman. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: A key to the city.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No. What is that?

Hon. Member: A key to the city.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I just read an example of one person. I had his documents with me to support this. Yeah, Mr. Speaker:

“Inability to obtain deeds for properties...”

Mr. Speaker, do you know under this administration we have moved—my colleagues know, Cabinet colleagues—very often we come to Cabinet to vest lands in the HDC. So that today, Mr. Speaker, we are vesting lands in the HDC and providing deeds to the persons who have, for many years, been unable—as the Ombudsman say—to obtain property, because with property comes security. You can use your property to go to the bank to get a loan, you can pass on your property to your children, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, my Cabinet colleagues know almost every week there is a Cabinet Note dealing with vesting of lands into the HDC, so we would provide property. I am terribly upset that the Member for St. Joseph is not in the House today, because, Mr. Speaker, he made a fool of himself a few mornings ago—on another occasion. I mean, again, he made a fool of himself. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Consistent behaviour.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah. He went on television, or found his voice on television, and speaking about the HDC throwing out people from their homes and asking people to purchase property, and so on. Mr. Speaker, what are we doing? I want to respond here, because people are complaining of the inability to obtain deeds for properties. You understand? The HDC is moving, today, to take people from rental bondage to home ownership. From rental bondage of the PNM to home ownership under the Partnership. [*Desk thumping*] Yeah, that is our vision.

They complain about that, but the Member for St. Joseph talking about throwing out people. We are not throwing out anybody. All we are doing is working with residents, who are in rental arrangements, to move them from rental to home ownership, to say we have a payment plan, you can pay a bit more, you can secure a loan, you can do this, you can do that. We do not want rentals. We do not want a nation of renters. We want a nation of homeowners. That is how you build nationhood, democracy, when you have a stake, when you have a piece of land, when you have a house and you say—you go in front the door, you look up and you say, “This is mine”. Correct? Yeah.

They wanted to keep 250,000 people in bondage, rental bondage. The Member for St. Joseph crying some crocodile tears because we are asking people to move from renters to homeowners—said we are throwing out old people and pensioners, and thing. Mr. Speaker, foolishness from that Member for St. Joseph;

foolishness. I am shocked that a Member of Parliament, who should be able to read and write, would talk such foolishness on the television. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I think you could use better language.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I am, but I am not motivated at this moment with my anger—[*Laughter*—you know—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: More elegance—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—to summon more elegant language, but I will. I hear you well, Mr. Speaker. I will because the Member for—let me put it this way—the Member for St. Joseph ought to know better than to raise those matters. It is really sad that he is not here so that he could stand and respond, you know, to this. I am very disappointed.

The next complaint we hear:

“Requests for re-location for...reasons are not promptly addressed” Mr. Speaker, I told you—do you know there is a house somewhere in Arima now, built under the former administration, the bedroom has five walls and a bed cannot come through the door? [*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: Five walls?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: There are five walls in the bedroom but a bed cannot pass through the door. They built houses like that somewhere in Arima. It is another sick estate where we had to go in, redo designs and reconstruct, and retrofit, in some cases, and so on. We are working on that now.

Hon. Member: Not Cleaver Woods?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No. Mr. Speaker, in Chaguanas you have the towers there that they constructed, you see this edifice when you pass up and down the highway, the engineering and design of that is so terrible that you are permanently in a situation where you have to have air-conditioning units for every low-cost apartment. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Seemungal: And the doors, you cannot go through the doors.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You cannot go through the doors, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Seemungal: The Member for Port of Spain South—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No. No. No. Do not say that, but I understand the point you are making, you are passionate about it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, you cannot pass through a door over there. There is a double corridor to get to one apartment. You cannot move any furniture that you purchase to get in there. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Who was the Minister of Housing?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The Member for Diego Martin West. Mr. Speaker, if I come here and expose those towers in Chaguanas, it is worse than Las Alturas. Las Alturas will appear to be the Taj Mahal if we talk about those problems we have in Chaguanas—Las Alturas. [*Interruption*] Chaguanas, is costing us \$75 million more to deal with the engineering and design problems associated with the towers in Chaguanas, \$75 million more. We have to go through another procurement process of getting a contractor properly, you know, a proper process that you can defend. Seventy-five million dollars more for the towers in Chaguanas. The situation there is worse than Las Alturas.

Mr. Speaker, in Carlsen Field—Caroni Central, eh?

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah. They went and constructed homes and built roadways over a gas line. Today, NGC is telling us that given the sensitivity and serious threat of a gas line on a road, we need to remove the road network. That is costing millions of dollars now, because that has implications on some of the buildings nearby. Mr. Speaker, this is the legacy of the Member for the Diego Martin West, who pretends that he is not guilty, and then I read into the record, letters with Las Alturas where he was calling upon them to turn the sod quick—turn the sod quick.

Mr. Speaker, his fired attorney, who I think is also in the other place, has something, I think, on Twitter saying that they built so much and they cost X, and we are building so much and it cost Y. Of course they spent less money because they built houses in a quarry, they built houses on a landslip, and they built houses on a gas line. That is why it cost less. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: Never built to last.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Never built to last, that is it there. That is the problem we face today, but they have the gall to challenge us on 100 homes per week.

Mr. Speaker, if you go to Chaguanas, Egypt—Oasis we call it—you would feel you are in a private development in Florida. You go Union Hall—correct?

The Member for Chaguanas East is receiving in two weeks—I think we are going back there for another 100. Union Hall in San Fernando, Fairfield, Princes Town, you look at the homes we have there, high quality. We have already given out keys to those areas. To this day—knock wood—to this day, not one recipient of a key has raised a complaint about Chaguanas, Princes Town and Union Hall, built under the People’s Partnership. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, there are requests for relocation, as the Ombudsman, quite rightly reports, but we cannot relocate everybody like that. People collected homes over the years and when the problem started, the liability period is finished, so the contractor will not come back because there is no liability period, it has already been exhausted. So when you build homes and you do not have the proper management—and the Uff Commission of Enquiry Report spoke to that, where at UDeCOTT and HDC, prior to 2010, you did not have the administrative, the organizational, the professional, technical, the institutional capacity to deliver quality homes and quality buildings—Uff Commission. We have implemented 95 per cent of the recommendations of the Uff Commission of Enquiry. We have, this Government.

8.00 p.m.

So that, Mr. Speaker, cleaning up their mess necessarily leads to citizens complaining about HDC, about housing, and we have a full response to this. I have given some information, in my wind-up I will give more information because this is a Motion, I will have to give a proper wind-up and a proper response to all the comments raised by my colleagues and so on.

So, this is the HDC. Tomorrow we are in Greenvale, I believe, La Horquetta for another 100 homes. [*Desk thumping*] When you see the look on the faces, you see the faces full of joy, the hearts lifted in appreciation, you understand the good work of the People’s Partnership, [*Desk thumping*] and transparency, may I add. Another matter it came up here as well, transparency in the provision of housing. Every week we have a public function. You know what they are saying now? They are saying well, we have a public function, and this is raw and naked politics. And what they call it again?—unbridled politics and electioneering and et cetera, et cetera. They blame us for that. That is what they are saying, that we are politicizing. Every week we have a public function. Correct? The master of ceremonies stand there and announces the names of everybody. You come up, you shake hand, you take your key, and you go.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address this matter. In 2008, I will have to do this in a delicate manner and you will see why. In the Senate in 2008, July 30, 2008, a question was raised by one Sen. Wade Mark. The Senator asked, Mr. Speaker:

“With respect to Housing... (HDC)...units...at Olera Heights, Circular Road, San Fernando, could the Minister provide the Senate with a list of names and addresses of all successful applicants...”

Imagine that in the Senate, a Member of Parliament is asking, could we have the names of those persons. You know what the response was from the PNM, Minister of Housing?

“Provision of a list of names...of all successful applicants...”—when they applied and so on—“...would undermine the necessary privacy and confidential relationships between the”—HDC—“and its clients. To disclose such information is not in keeping with proper business practices...”—and so—“...the Corporation seeks the understanding...”—to deny the Senate — the list of names of persons who received housing.

Mr. Cadiz: Who was that Senator?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Sen. Wade Mark asked the bold question.

Mr. Cadiz: Who replied?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, Sen. Emily Dick-Forde. [*Crosstalk*] Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the Hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development be extended by 15 minutes?

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, thank you and thank you colleagues for the indulgence.

So their policy was not even to give the names of people. Our policy is every week, come and hear, come and tape, come and see, mark it down with a lead and a copy book, everybody name. Look at what they say, they say we cannot tell you the name—that is private, that is confidential—this is Minister Dick-Forde. I have one better than that for you.

In 2004 another question was asked in 2004 by the same persistent democrat and patriot, Sen. Wade Mark. Sen. Mark on that occasion—2004, March 09—asked the question.

“Could the hon. Minister of Housing...”—inform—“...this Senate with a detailed list of...applicants for housing...”

Applicants, you know, not people who got houses, people who apply. The Minister of Housing replied and said:

I wish—“...to advise the Senate that a detailed response with names and the addresses of applicants would undermine the necessary privacy and confidentiality between the... (NHA) and its clients.”—It is—“...not in keeping with proper business practices, which the organization upholds.”

Therefore, the Minister seeks the indulgence to deny those details. They did not even want to tell you who applied, far less who got a house. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Housing hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, March 09, 2004. Under them, the Member for Diego Martin West, he did not even want to say who applied for house, far less who got a house. The next one by 2008 said whoever “get house, we cyar tell you that”. That is private.

Today, every Saturday in your face, the names of 100 and more—because our batting average now is above 100, the Member for Caroni East, and you know in any form of the game that is good.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is fantastic.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We average now 108—a century every week. The strike rate is also over 100 which is good. Mr. Speaker, every week 100 names called by somebody on a mike. You know who it is. This is transparency. This is responsibility. This is accountability of the People’s Partnership administration. [*Desk thumping*] Under my friends opposite, they did not tell you who applied, and worse, they could not tell you who got a house. So you know what they did? It was the scholarship. Everybody who got a house, you had to check which PNM party group, which friend and family, whose son and daughter. Today, they are asking about house for Whitney? That is the headline, “House for Whitney”. At least you could see Whitney. Eh? At least you see Whitney. Whitney came and made a statement and jumped up for joy. Under the PNM you could not have known Whitney. “You could not find nobody. From barran to saran you could not find no one.” So this is our commitment.

So, Mr. Speaker, they are not here to respond to these very important, you know, questions. I hope maybe in the fullness of time they will take a look at the report. But it is a very important report, and I will ask the House to consider this report in this historic sitting where we are debating a Motion on this report.

Mr. Speaker, given the crisis that the Ombudsman is seeing in housing over the years, which we are dealing with now, it is no wonder that we have spent \$150 million to repair their work. You know, and the HDC board, the same lawyer Senator who talking up and down de place, like a motor mouth, walks around with a towel in “he” front pocket, you know. Every morning hosting a TV show, was on the board of the HDC—on the board when Las Alturas was there. When they constructed Las Alturas that had fallen down—[*Crosstalk*] was acting as chairman, I believe—maybe supervised. And look, these are the complaints we had when he was there.

As I said before, do you know in the rentals and mortgage arrears, the HDC is owed \$291 million?

Mr. Peters: Nobody in Embacadere “get no house”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah. That is the point. Mr. Speaker, \$291 million owed to the HDC because of that culture of telling people, is PNM house, you “doh” have to pay. That is their culture. They tell people is PNM house. You “doh” have to pay. That is government house. “Yuh doh hah to pay.” Today, we could have built 800 low-income units for 800 citizens who lining up in the sun and rain, today, if they did not inculcate that culture of, is PNM house “Yuh doh hah to pay”. Is government house—\$291 million owed? They owe it to you and me, you know, and to taxpayers. We pay tax. So, they owe us. That is the culture.

One prominent Member opposite went in the 1980s, late 1980s and told the people on a political platform—“doh” pay for no house. That is government house. That is yours. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah. The NAR was in power at that time. That is their culture that they developed. [*Crosstalk*] They are still saying that, eh? That is why \$291 million owed to the HDC because of that culture. That culture wants to come back in government, eh? I want to warn you, and the national community, that Las Alturas is our future under a PNM administration, if they get in. That is our future. That is not the past.

Mr. Cadiz: How come Faris want to build houses between Marabella Train Line, yet?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They are going now “jumbieing” people, harassing people on the Train Line in Embacadere, but they could not build any house for them, you know. It is this administration that moved persons from the Marabella Train Line to proper, beautiful apartments in Corinth, San Fernando. We did that. And paved the line. We did that. We moved people from Carlton Lane which

every single health and safety and environment division closed down—it is called Carlton Lane, San Fernando. Everybody closed down that place, said it was unfit for human habitation. You know, we moved those people to San Fernando, Corinth. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. De Coteau: That is how they like to keep them.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah. We moved them to Corinth. In Carlton Lane, I went for a tour. You are sleeping on the ground in one apartment and five rats sleeping next to you. That is how it was. Yeah, Mr. Speaker. When you look up there, the light bulb hanging down 3 feet from the ceiling—over your face—the bulb. The electrical system is from 1952. That is how they treated their supporters. Had their supporters in squalor, like vagrants.

Today, the Member for Port of Spain South—I do not want to speak in her absence, but I am not responsible for her absence, asking us to relocate another group of people in Port of Spain there to Diego Martin to the brand new apartments. If you see how these people living there. Oh God, I went, I feel so sorry. We will act quickly to move them to Diego Martin to the apartment buildings there. This is how they have them living. We moved persons from Carlton Lane to beautiful, brand new apartments in Corinth, which we had to fix as well, but they are nice apartments there, and we are bringing this humane touch.

So, Mr. Speaker, for the moment I will rest my case and I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol Mc Leod): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, hon. Leader of Government Business and Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, very briefly I want to commend this Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Ombudsman, 2013, to Members of this honourable House. It is important that in addition to joining in the debate—if all of us are going to join in that debate—in addition to that, it is important that we read this report very carefully, and try to internalize a number of very important statements arising out of important complaints, complaints which sometimes we view as being frivolous, as being without any real foundation.

The office of Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker, is really to facilitate those in our society who we might consider as under-resourced, unresourced. Those who are unable to make connections with what we sometimes identify as official society, people who are in power, people who have money, people who have the means to pay for a lot that the ordinary people cannot pay for, and who are constantly appearing to be in a line to beg—“gimme a little bit more and so on”. I think it is important that we understand that and, therefore, we will understand why the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman, so that small people, poor people have somewhere to go, some persons to whom they can carry their complaints. The Ombudsman is very appropriately identified as the parliamentary commissioner for the people’s rights.

They say the Ombudsman is Parliament’s person put there for the protection of the individual, and if you protect the individual, you protect the society. So Government’s plans, all of those social programmes in which we are involved, are really to prevent further decay of the society by assisting the small man, the small woman, and the people with children who sometimes you do not know where they might get the next meal for them. It is to provide for such persons; housing.

The hon. Leader of Government Business was identifying the number of complaints that have been made by small people as to whether they are selected or not. And if they are selected, how many times the key was offered and withdrawn. How many of them would have gone into premises that did not provide them with the kind of protection and so on, that one would expect in a civilized society, we would have almost ready-made for people who sometimes cannot do more than they are eking out for themselves.

8.15 p.m.

You go in some of these apartments, Mr. Speaker, and as you get into the apartment they are so small, they are built so clumsily, you know, if you wish to change your mind inside of there, you have to back out, get into the open space, change your mind and then go back in. It is so small you could hardly maneuver yourself inside of there. In addition to these buildings being very poorly constructed, we have to identify that there were contractors who were made contractors overnight years ago, and, because of their influence among other people for the purposes of the vote, they were made contractors and given so many houses to build, the smaller ones, the smaller variety and so on. And some of these contractors never drove a nail in a piece of four-by-four wood.

And I heard with these ears a particular person who claimed to have been a contractor and was awarded contracts for about 10 or 11 houses, and did not want

to spend money to procure the kind of material that will be necessary to do a good construction of a good wall or a good platform. You know the platform at the top of your steps and outside of your backdoor, in the countryside we call it the landing?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: A contractor put hog plum wood [*Laughter*] where you are supposed to put steel, and they do a boxing. You see that, that is criminal neglect you call that, because you go up there, after some time the hog plum wood rots and so on, and you come out of your backdoor and you stand on this platform and you fall 10 feet, damage yourself. All of that went on. So that the HDC now has to spend so much money to remedy so many of those structures, so many of those situations where there is the lack of integrity in the building that has been put down.

The report, Mr. Speaker, is also educating you as to what the Ombudsman's capabilities are, what is his sphere of influence? How might he satisfy your queries and bring the proper redress to the many issues that might be raised? In this report, we see where they identified five things that we ought to know about the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman addresses complaints against public administration, is independent, respects your confidentiality—sometimes you have these complaints and you do not want anybody else to know about them—they advocate for fairness, and the Ombudsman's services most of all are free of charge.

Because you have a number of people who know everything in this world and you complain to them, and some of them will tell you, give me a few dollars and I know who to go to, to address this issue for you. So each time the poor and un-resourced is cheated out of the few pennies that he might have. And among the most common issues that the Ombudsman will hear and deal with are, under the heading of poor communication for instance: where written communications are unclear; there are difficulties experienced in understandings what is told by public servants and other dispensers of goods and services and so on, to which these people are entitled; their calls sometimes are not returned; there is an unreasonably long response time during which they wait to get a response to the issues that they would raise; the information which they receive from people who are expected to know, and this is one of the reasons that we go to them or one of the reasons that they come to us, but we give them information on which they sometimes cannot rely.

In the area of service: there is poor service; there is the inability to reach public servants; there is an inability to get fair treatment, so that there is unfair treatment, there are unfair policies, policies that are not tested and so on; and sometimes people feel a bit shy to challenge the policies that are read and told to them; they complain about unpredictable enforcement, where you have in some cases over enforcement and in others under-enforcement; and sometimes very faulty decisions, wrong decisions, unreasonable decisions, unfair unexplained decisions, and there is, of course, the long delay, the unreasonably long delay. Quite often in returning calls or emails, in processing appeals; in handling complaints and so on—

I see in the report, Mr. Speaker, where somebody in the prison, I think, is complaining about having to wait unreasonably long to have a matter heard before the court, while this person would have been incarcerated for 13 months, or did I see 13 years. I recommend that we read this report very carefully and we will come across a number of issues that quite often we take for granted ourselves. It is important that we understand what is being said here, and that we empower ourselves to more adequately deal in our response to the many issues that are raised from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, if we are talking as we did in the last issue raised by the Minister of National Security, if we are making the situation more comfortable for our protective services, all with the view to ensuring that they too become more efficient and more responsive to the many issues for which they are held responsible and so on, and we do not take care of others in the society, against whom sometimes the protective services have to intervene to protect others in the society, if we did not see about those, as I identified them as un-resourced sometimes, under-resourced, the poorer among the classes in the society, we will not be protecting the society as a whole, and it is generally in that vein, that I record absolute support for the Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Ombudsman, and I recommend again that we all read it very carefully, internalize it and be better able to respond to those issues that have become perennial and that are rehearsed every day, every day. Every day you hear the same thing.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would just spend a couple minutes to remind Members of the House of the importance of this institution and the importance of taking a report from this institution seriously,

because, as I said, and as the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre indicated in no uncertain terms, these are reports which speak to the heart of our treatment to ordinary citizens of Trinidad and Tobago seeking as their right goods and services from the State, and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago across the board, through every geographic location.

So, Mr. Speaker, if this report is to be taken seriously, it is a report to be studied, regrettably the Members of the Opposition have chosen not to be here to debate this report, to debate the report from the Ombudsman or the report on National Security. They have chosen not to be here at this time to do that, so the Parliament will not have on the official record any voice from Members of the Opposition on such an important report and on such an important debate. So, Mr. Speaker, I will have some more information to share on this matter for the record at a subsequent occasion, so I will not complete the winding up at this time, but leave it for another occasion.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, April 24, 2015 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, April 24, 2015 is the fourth Friday of the month, the Member for Port of Spain South has taken the unusual task— unusual for us. The Member for Port of Spain South has indeed written to me in a letter dated April 16, 2015—I believe yesterday—and indicated in high anticipation that Members of the Opposition will not be here today to participate in any matter, whether it is the Motion on the Leader of the Opposition, the Motion on National Security, the Motion of the Ombudsman report, in high anticipation that they will not be here to participate on the business of the House.

I did receive a letter—it is unusual, but we will have to go by it—indicating that the Members of the Opposition would wish next week Friday to debate a private Motion on the lack of confidence in the Minister of Finance and the Economy brought by the Leader of the Opposition. So, having received this, normally when we adjourn to a Private Members' Day—it is not the intention of the Government to walk out on their Motion, we will be here to speak to this Motion. Mr. Speaker, normally, as you know it is the practice that the Chief Whip of the Opposition would place on record at this sitting their intention and what to debate, but they have written to us and we will accept that in the circumstances.

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So, next week we will have Private Members' Day at 1.30 p.m., in which we will deal with the Motion—interestingly—on a lack of confidence in the Minister of Finance and the Economy. We assure you, Mr. Speaker, we will not disrespect the House, the country and our electorate by walking out on their Motion.

Mr. Speaker, so I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, April 24, 2015 at 1.30 p.m.

May I also, in closing, indulge you, this is the second time we are adjourning the House, there are, I believe, six Motions on the Adjournment—quite a few, maybe more—Members of the Cabinet and Ministers with responsibility for those Motions have been on standby at this time, they are prepared and waiting to answer those Motions on the Adjournment.

The relevant Opposition Members, particularly the Member for Diego Martin North/East who seems to file once per week, the Member for Chaguanas West who has filed a Motion to the Hon. Prime Minister— has filed a Motion on the Adjournment to the Prime Minister for which the Prime Minister is prepared to answer, and he is not here. That is the height of disrespect to the Parliament and to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister is prepared to answer but the Member for Chaguanas West is not here. Other Ministers of Government have been on standby in their respective offices. They may not be in the House, but they are in their office in Port of Spain waiting to know what time we will adjourn, they are also prepared, and the Members of the Opposition are not here to conduct the business for which they filed.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to put on record that from here on in, I will have to reconsider having Members of the Government on standby for Motions. If the Members are here, they are free to raise their Motion on the Adjournment, and the relevant Government Minister will attend a subsequent meeting of the Parliament to respond. But we cannot have Government Ministers every Friday night, in Port of Spain in their office, waiting for the adjournment, prepared on the Motion on the Adjournment for which have been duly served to them and have this level of disrespect, and disregard, and irresponsibility, and recklessness on the part of Members of the Opposition and the Member for Chaguanas West. I place that on the record, Mr. Speaker. It is gross disrespect.

Adjournment

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It is one thing boycotting the Motion for the Leader of the Opposition, for whatever reason, that is probably your right, but it is something else to boycott the business of the House. As I said, Mr. Speaker, it appears that the Opposition has collapsed on itself.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.31 p.m.