



MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Level 6, Tower C, International Waterfront Centre
No. 1A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad & Tobago
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12th December, 2019

Ms. Omatie Lyder,
Editor
Trinidad Express Newspapers
Independence Square
Port of Spain

Dear Ms. Lyder,

A Response from the Minister of Labour to the allegations levelled at her in the Trinidad Express Newspaper of Wednesday 11th December, 2019.

As Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, I wish to address a series of misleading impressions which could be left in the minds of the population arising out of an online article written by Carolyn Kisson in the Trinidad Express Newspapers dated December 11th 2019 and headlined "Imbert's bhagi and pumpkin statement, and Jennifer's laughter"

The article was reporting on the debate on the Proceeds of Crime and Central Bank Bill which took place in the Parliament on Saturday 7th December, 2019.

I wish to make it abundantly clear that, contrary to what has been ascribed to me in the article, I never mentioned anything about "cutting grass". A copy of the Hansard (copy attached) confirms that my only statement referred to "selling Poulorie" which was a tongue in cheek reference to Dr. Moonilal's claim some time ago that he sold Poulorie for a fund raising effort and Dr. Tim Gopeesingh is aware of that.

Furthermore, I categorically state that the accusation levelled against me of "Laughing at Farmers or small business persons" as was also alleged in the article, may have been the figment of someone's imagination. In any event, such weird indiscretions are uncharacteristic of whom I am known to be and could never have entered my mind, having served and represented workers of this Country for almost all of my adult life.



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By now the population should be aware that it has become heretical among some of our society's indiscriminate parliamentary leaders to grasp at the proverbial wind in their quest to cast disparaging aspersions at decent and respectable citizens whenever the slightest modicum of reference to norms of Trinidad and Tobago culture are uttered in public places. They search the weirdest and most debilitating depths of their imaginations to convert what is objectively or innocently said, obviously with no malicious intent or purpose, into a forum for the propagation of racial and ethnic divisiveness.

Trinidad and Tobago has had enough of it and it is time for all patriotic citizens to speak out. That these "race baiters" can ascribe misleading and malicious intent to my statement in the Parliament leaves nothing to the imagination with respect to the flames of ethnic discord which they are bent on fanning and which for years they have been failing to enlarge. Thank God our citizens are more patriotically inclined.

It is my fervent hope that one day they will see the light and know that their conspiracies to sow the seeds of discord, discontent and divisiveness in our beloved nation will bear only the evils of destruction and destabilisation which they so eagerly strive to engender among our people.

With kind regards,

Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus
Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development