

SENATE

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]



LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Wade Mark who is out of the country.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T., S.C.:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

APPOINTMENT OF A TEMPORARY SENATOR

By His Excellency ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, O.R.T.T., S.C.,
President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T. S.C.

President

TO: MS. CHRISTLYN MOORE

WHEREAS Senator WADE MARK is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, do hereby appoint you, CHRISTLYN MOORE to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 25th April, 2017 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Wade Mark.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 25th day of April, 2017.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Christlyn Moore took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

TRIBUTES

(CAROL CUFFY-DOWLAT)

Madam President: Hon. Senators, as you are aware, former Senator, Carol Cuffy-Dowlat, passed away on Friday, April 14, 2017. I now offer you to pay tributes.

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Kazim Hosein): Thank you very much, Madam President. Ms. Carol Cuffy-Dowlat was a good friend of mine and a colleague with whom I served on the San Fernando City Council from 2003 to 2010. I sat next to her on the Council where she served as the member for Les Efforts East, Les Efforts West/La Romain and I

served for Les Efforts East/Cipero.

I always admired her for being a team player and a role model. She was the only COP member on the Council but she never let any political or party differences get in the way of helping the people of the City of San Fernando. She was a devoted mother of two sons, Israel and Anderson, both of whom have grown up to be successful young men and outstanding sons of the soil. She was also devoted to the people of Trinidad and Tobago serving both as a Government and Opposition Senator, a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and a member of multiple state boards.

In fact, she was always focused on helping people. She used to take on pro bono legal work so that people who could not pay still had a chance at high-quality legal representation. On her radio show with Aakash Vani was focused on letting people have a voice. She would discuss national issues with a profound sense of clarity and intellect. Carol was extremely nationalistic. She promoted our culture with unparalleled enthusiasm, getting involved in preparations for every event, every observance and every festival. She knew that she had something to offer and in her true spirit, she wanted to give back to Trinidad and Tobago however she could. Her passion, national spirit and dedication is unforgettable and she will be remembered with the highest reverence.

I offer my sincere condolences to her family, loved ones and other former colleagues in this Chamber. May her soul rest in eternal peace. Thank you.

Sen. Rodger Samuel: Madam President, I too want to join with my colleague on the other side and those on the other side on behalf of the Opposition to pay tribute to what I term a fallen social hero and a former Member of this Senate. To speak of Ms. Dowlat is to speak about a rich legacy, a life of service, a life in various capacities, more so in the public domain.

The first thing we have got to look at, Madam President, is the person Carol Cuffy-Dowlat. Brilliant and very analytical from what I know of her personally; very, very—a sharp-thinking person, high morals and standards but with an unwavering dedication to truth. Many have said about her, if one was to highlight her greatest accomplishment above all, her great accolades, the one easily chosen would be Carol's humanity and caring characteristic. As a human being, Carol was, indeed, a wonderful person, always willing to give, as my colleague has said, of herself to benefit others while she was a brilliant mother and a source of advice and inspiration for many. And as many have also said that their lives remain indebted to what she would have done and how her influence would have impacted their existence on planet -Earth.

Then there was Carol Cuffy-Dowlat, the attorney. Madam President, what stands out most was that there was this selflessness in Ms. Dowlat to give of her time and resources to enhance the lives of others whose rights as citizens she defended based on the principles of freedom and equality. As a lawyer, she made significant contributions to the fraternity that she belonged to but her greatest contribution as a lawyer will be remembered for the many individuals and by the many individuals who she represented and reached out to on a pro bono level.

And then we see Carol Cuffy-Dowlat, the politician, starting her political career in the 1980s under the then National Alliance for Reconstruction, shifting into the United National Congress where she became a Government-appointed Senator and served as a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Settlement. And then we see the many other aspects of her life politically where she served on different boards. But, in 2002, there was a Carol Cuffy-Dowlat, the Local Government Councillor, so many aspects of her life, serving for some two terms in the San Fernando City Corporation where one of the things and the traits

that have been highlighted about her was her passionate and an extreme feeling and adoration for people, and her concerns about the governance of our country and the welfare of citizens.

But then there was Carol Cuffy-Dowlat who also became a founding member of the Congress of the People and served tremendously well in her tenure as a part of that organization, a person of strong opinions and vigorously presented her views and became an outspoken talk show host, another aspect of her life. When you think about Ms. Dowlat and what she has done, many people would say today and it was said by those who attended the funeral that we have lost a true patriot, a person who loved her country, a person who loved serving and a person who loved people.

Madam President, in the words of Michael Jackson, a song written in the days of Diana, Princess, when she died, Michael Jackson said:

“Like a comet
Blazing ’cross the evening sky
Gone too soon
Like a rainbow
Fading in the twinkling of an eye
Gone too soon
Shiny and sparkly
And splendidly bright
Here one day
Gone one night
Like the loss of sunlight
On a cloudy afternoon
Gone too soon

Tributes (Carol Cuffy-Dowlat)
Sen. Samuel (cont'd)

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Like a castle
Built upon a sandy beach
Gone too soon
Like a perfect flower
That is just beyond your reach
Gone too soon
Born to amuse, to inspire, to delight
Here one day
Gone one night
Like a sunset
Dying with the rising of the moon
Gone too soon”

I believe that the life that she lived, though she lived well, she is gone too soon. God bless her and her family.

Sen. Stephen Creese: Thank you, Madam President. I first met Ms. Cuffy-Dowlat in her capacity as a student activist, back on the UWI campus and then our paths crossed again when I was looking for residential-cum-farming-type property and she was an activist with Sou Sou Lands and was trying to get me involved in that project. She was always someone who I felt stood committed to whatever cause she was involved in. And the third time that our paths crossed, she was then in the Council, San Fernando City Council and I was living in Vistabella, and she had some relatives in the area. And our paths crossed again and she said, “I know you” and I said, “Yes, from UWI. Right?” Good, and then the other connection with Sou Sou Lands came up. She was a tireless worker, she was serious, she was committed and I think she gave her all in all that she did.

It is fitting that we remember her here today in her capacity as a Senator and

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I think Sen. Samuel alluded to the tireless spirit and goodwill which she generated and that she was not the type of lawyer who only worked for fat fees but gave of her time generously, and I am aware because I sent someone to her once and they came back full of praise including the fact that she did not charge them for the service that she rendered. So that I can testify to the fact that she has been a worthy citizen, Senator, lawyer and activist generally and I wish to publicly acknowledge that, and to say thanks to her and her family for the contribution she has made to this country. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I too wish to join in expressing condolences to the family of former Senator, Carol Cuffy-Dowlat, a talented and caring daughter of the soil, an attorney-at-law by profession and someone with a social conscience who offered herself to public life to make a difference. From what we have heard here today, she did accomplish that goal of making a difference and we all collectively thank her for her service.

Hon. Senators, I hereby direct the Clerk of the Senate to forward to her loved ones the transcript of the tributes paid to her here today.

Hon. Senators, I now ask that we stand and observe a minute of silence.

The Senate stood.

FIRE SERVICE (AMDT.) BILL, 2017

A Bill to amend the Fire Service Act, Chap. 35:50, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to the Fourth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 2014 with specific reference to

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- the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. [*The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan)*]
2. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of National Security to the Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Treatment of Child Offenders at the Youth Training Centre, St. Michael's Rehabilitation Centre for Young Male Offenders and St. Jude's Interim Rehabilitation Centre for Young Female Offenders. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
 3. Annual Report on the Operation of the Interception of Communications Act, Chapter 15:08 for the year 2015. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
 4. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Tourism for the fiscal year 2014. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
 5. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Tourism to the Second Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 2014 with specific reference to the Ministry of Tourism. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
 6. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Tobago Regional Health Authority for the year ended September 30, 2010. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
 7. Response of the Treasury Division of the Ministry of Finance to the First Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial years 2014 and 2015 with specific reference to the Auditor General's Department. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]

8. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Finance to the Sixth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial years 2014 and 2015 with specific reference to the Ministry of Finance. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
9. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority for the year ended September 30, 2006. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
10. Report on the Determination of Salaries and Allowances of Members of the Board of the Office of Procurement Regulation. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
11. Draft National Development Strategy 2016—2030 (Vision 2030). [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
12. Ministerial Response of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs to the First Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial years 2014 and 2015 with specific reference to the Auditor General's Department. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
13. Ministerial Response of the Office of the Prime Minister to the Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the treatment of Child Offenders at the Youth Training Centre, St. Michael's Rehabilitation Centre for Young Male Offenders and St. Jude's Interim Rehabilitation Centre for Young Female Offenders. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
14. Report of the Task Force appointed to review the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Programme (GATE). [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]

15. Response of the Auditor General's Department to the First Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial years 2014 and 2015 with specific reference to the Auditor General's Department. [*The Vice-President (Sen. Nigel De Freitas)*]
16. Response of the Personnel Department to the First Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial years 2014 and 2015 with specific reference to the Auditor General's Department. [*Sen. N. De Freitas*]
17. The 29th Annual Report of the Integrity Commission for the year ended December 31, 2016. [*Sen. N. De Freitas*]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Presentation)

Sen. David Small: Thank you, Madam President. I have the honour to present the following reports as listed on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Wade Mark:

Community Improvement Services Limited

Third Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, Eleventh Parliament (Second Session) on the Examination of the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheet and other Financial Statements of the Community Improvement Services Limited (CISL) for the financial years 2008 to 2012.

Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement

Programme

Fourth Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, Eleventh Parliament (Second Session) on the Examination of the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheet and other Financial Statements of the Community-based

Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) for the financial years 2009 to 2014.

Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited

Fifth Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, Eleventh Parliament (Second Session) on the Examination of the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheet and other Financial Statements of the Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited (PLIPDECO) for the financial years 2008 to 2015.

Solid Waste Management Company Limited

Sixth Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, Eleventh Parliament (Second Session) on the Examination of the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheet and other Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL) for the financial years 2008 to 2013.

URGENT QUESTIONS

**Petrotrin's Oil Spill
(Mitigation Measures)**

Sen. Paul Richards: Thank you, Madam President. To the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries: Can the Minister state what immediate measures have been implemented or are being implemented by Petrotrin to mitigate the environmental impacts of Sunday's oil spill in the Guaracara River?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you very much, Madam President. On Sunday the 23rd of April, 2017—that is this Sunday gone—at around 2.45 p.m., fuel tank number 70, storage at the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery, sprung a leak at its base. This tank contained 123,850 barrels of fuel oil. The majority of the oil was contained within the

refinery area, luckily, should I say. However, some oil escaped into the marine environment.

2.00 p.m.

At that point in time, the strategy included the following:

- containment on land, which has been effectively done. That was done by transferring the remaining oil from the leaking tanks into other tanks nearby;
- skimming of the oil from the water using skimmers and portable storage tanks;
- the use of dispersants;
- the use of booms to protect sensitive areas such as Coffee Beach, mangrove and public beaches.
- notice to mariners and fisher folks to be aware that their vessels could be impacted, and to avoid areas of possible impact, which is basically the south-western peninsula area, and at that point in time to notify tier-three oil spill response to the Oil Spill Response Limited so that they could be in a state of readiness for the mobilization of additional booms, skimmers, dispersants as necessary.

As we speak, the mechanisms primarily used to date have been the employment of containment booms at Pointe-a-Pierre to prevent additional oil from escaping the port area, the use of booms, vessels and a barge to herd oil and to transfer oil to the barge. So as it is skimmed from the water, it is transferred to a—[*Interruption*]

Madam President: Minister, the two minutes of your time is up.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: “It finish already?”

Urgent Questions (cont'd)
Sen. The Hon. F. Khan (cont'd)

2017.04.25

Madam President: Yeah.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Okay. And—[*Interruption*]

Madam President: No Minister, it is up.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Okay.

Madam President: Sen. Richards.

Sen. Richards: Minister, can you indicate if an assessment has been done to provide information as to whether residents have been affected socially in terms of their health?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: That is currently being undertaken. With regard to medical attention, there is very little people who sought medical attention based on the oil spill. On Sunday, there were about five people that were treated for just a little nausea at the Augustus Long Hospital, but the biggest risk really now is to the marine environment, and we are containing the spill. We are trying to protect the mangrove.

As you saw in the newspaper today on the headline, there is a pelican that was soaked in oil, much to my chagrin, but we are doing all that is possible at Petrotrin to do the containment. Obviously, there will be an investigation as to why the tank failed and that has to do with the whole concept of asset integrity and their in-house inspection system of their assets.

Sen. Richards: Minister, can you indicate if Petrotrin and the Ministry have been proactive in terms of advising residents about precautionary measures to protect their health?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: As far as I am aware, Petrotrin has a response team. They have a response station that is manned by Petrotrin, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, the IMA, the Institute of Marine Affairs, and other agencies of the State. But the communication aspect of it, it is still, as we speak, it does not

affect significant areas of the population because the spill is largely confined to the Pointe-a-Pierre area. It has not gone down deep into the south-west peninsula like the last set of spills that went into Coffee Bay in La Brea in particular.

Fire at Cunupia Government Primary School

(Alternative Arrangements)

Sen. Wayne Sturge: To the Minister of Education: In light of the fire which prevented the re-opening of the Cunupia Government Primary School yesterday, what alternative arrangements are being made to facilitate the students and staff?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Madam President, I crave your indulgence to request that this this question be deferred. The Minister of Education will be coming to the Senate to do a matter on the adjournment at approximately 6.00 at which point in time he will address this question.

Madam President: So we will defer this question until later in the proceedings.

Pipe-borne Water in South Trinidad

(Reliable Supply of)

Sen. Wayne Sturge: To the Minister of Public Utilities: Given the increasing complaints of no pipe-borne water in Penal and other parts of South Trinidad for as much as a month, can the Minister indicate when a reliable supply of water will be returned to these communities?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Madam President, I am not so sure whether the time frames stipulated by my friend are accurate but, notwithstanding, based on the current dry season conditions, the Water and Sewerage Authority will be taking steps to redistribute available supplies to meet the demands to customers all over Trinidad and Tobago, including Penal and the area referred to by my friend.

Production was previously increased at the Point Lisas Desalination Plant by approximately two million gallons daily. The authority will be increasing production at its Caroni and Hollis Water Treatment plants in Tobago and Hillsborough Water Treatment Plant in Tobago by approximately 11.3 million gallons daily. This is in keeping with the Government's goal to provide a more equitable and sustainable water supply to all communities in Trinidad and Tobago. This will permit redistribution of supplies to areas impacted by the dry season, including south Trinidad and communities in Penal. It is expected that there will be an impact on service within the next three or four days in these areas.

Contact will be maintained with stakeholders including the Members of Parliament, councillors, community representatives and the residents in this regard. WASA will also be publishing a list of its revised water supply schedule later this week to better inform customers system-wide of their respective periods of supply. Customers are encouraged to institute conservation measures to ensure a continued availability of this precious commodity for the remainder of the dry season. Thank you, Madam President.

Sen. Sturge: Madam President, through you, having regard to the answer given by the Minister, can the Minister indicate how it is that these particular communities came to suffer, but this affliction has not affected west Trinidad and other affluent areas?

Madam President: Sen. Sturge, that question does not arise, so I will not allow it. Sen. Ramdeen.

Sen. Ramdeen: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, through you, could the hon. Minister indicate what is the mechanism by which the Water and Sewerage Authority informs itself about the different areas that do not have a proper supply of water throughout Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. My friend, Sen. Ram—well, Sen. Ramdeen ought to take note of the fact that WASA has been at this business for many, many decades. WASA has well-tried-and-tested systems in place, WASA understands its customer base and WASA has been distributing the water as equitably as it could in all of the circumstances in the way I have already explained. Thank you very much, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

[*Sen. Ramdeen on his feet*]

Madam President: No, Sen. Ramdeen, only two supplementaries are asked.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Madam President, I would like to inform this Senate that the Government is in a position to answer all questions except question 36 which will be answered at the next sitting.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

US Lobbyist/The Group DC LLC

(Details of Contract)

60. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Can the Minister indicate the terms of the contract between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the US lobbyist “The Group DC LLC” including the cost of the contract in TT currency, and the metrics being used to measure what benefits, if any, are being derived from the engagement with said US lobbyist?

Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries

(Details of Compensation Packages for Advisors)

62. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

What are the names and compensation packages of persons hired as advisors in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries since September 2015 to present?

Vide end of sitting for written answers.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Wade Mark:

Contraction of Economy (Government Measures to Improve)

- 36.** Having recorded an economic contraction of -8 per cent in the second quarter of 2016, what specific measures are being taken by the Government to improve the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and economic situation?

Question, by leave, deferred.

Tourist Arrivals to Tobago (Plan to Increase)

- 40. Sen. Daniel Solomon** on behalf of Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Tourism:

Given the low hotel occupancy rate of below 10 per cent, what is the Government's plan to increase tourist arrivals to Tobago over the short, medium and long term?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Madam President, initially this question is based on a false premise. The hotel occupancy rate in Tobago is far more than 10 per cent. The Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation, Tobago House of Assembly, which has responsibility for the development of tourism in Tobago has indicated that the

average occupancy rate for the period January to November 2016 was 40 per cent for hotels and 32 per cent for guest houses. Overall average occupancy over the period was 38 per cent.

The Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation has identified several strategies aimed at increasing arrivals in Tobago in the short, medium and long term. In the short term they are as follows:

- Intensify efforts at marketing the destination locally, regionally and internationally;
- Implement the Sustainable Tobago Tourism Dashboard, which is aimed at providing policymakers with timely data on the international best practices, travel trends and market intelligence;
- Continue discussion with Caribbean Airlines towards providing a more reliable domestic air bridge;
- Introduce new product offerings and experiences to increase the destination's competitiveness: new products proposed for implementation include Carnbee tours of Main Ridge, the Scarborough Heritage Trail Project, development and enhancement of Fort King George and the refurbishment of the Fine Arts Centre and Museum;
- Re-establish the Victim Support Unit to provide support for visitors affected by unfortunate or unforeseen circumstances;
- Collaborate with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to formulate strategies to allow for a safe and secure environment for visitors and locals;
- To continue to engage airlift service providers with respect to

increasing airlift to Tobago, specifically direct to Crown Point, probably which is the most important; and

- Engage the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Airports Authority with respect to a smooth transition from travellers destined for Tobago—that is, good connection from Piarco on to Tobago.

On the medium term, the Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation plans to:

- Establish a tourism development authority to construct new beach facility at Pirates Bay, Englishman's Bay and Petit Trou;
- The creation of new onshore excursion products such as the Goat Race experience and the expansion of the pan theatre experience;
- Operationalization of the Rockley Bay Research Project;
- Establishment of an integrated facility at Fort King George;
- Review of the legislation and framework governing tourism incentives;
- Increase local and foreign direct investment;
- Continue negotiations for the construction of the proposed new airport terminal to facilitate international arrivals on the island;
- Construction of a desalination plant;
- Collaboration with the Tourism Development Company on the Visitor Relations Management System Project.

And for the long term, Madam President, the Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation plans to:

- Continue marketing their destination locally, regionally and

internationally;

- Most importantly, the proposed construction of the new airport terminal;
- The construction of a new cruise ship port;
- The continued discussion with CAL towards the establishment of a policy to identify standards to facilitate a seamless transitioning process of passengers travelling from international to domestic; and
- The construction of the Sandals Resort to increase high-end accommodation as well as to improve the quality of room stock.

Madam President, the Ministry of Tourism will continue to work with its partners in the Department of Tourism in Tobago towards creating sustainable year-round tourism activity aimed at improving the visitor experience and thereby increasing arrivals of new and repeat visitors to the destination of Tobago and Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Moore: Having regard to the strategies outlined for the short, medium and long term, can the hon. Minister say what strides have been made or what percentage of these goals have been achieved over the last 18 months? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Well, they are all being achieved in various proportions. I cannot say specifically, because I have outlined a lot of incentives there, and some of the data capture is not to the level to say that we are 40 per cent complete, 30 per cent complete, but this is the basic plan that the Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation in Tobago has. Based on the occupancy rate which the question did say that it was 10 per cent is more in the 40s, and in the 40s based on the constraint that the Tobago tourism industry currently experiences, I think it is

quite an impressive number and it will only get better. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Moore: Through you, Madam President, having regard to the hon. Minister's opinion on the true numbers, can the hon. Minister say whether this completes a downward trend in Tobago tourism over the last 18 months?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: I do not think it has been a downward trend. I think it has been a flat line as it were. It has not gotten significantly bad that we have to raise a red flag, but I think the turning of the slope in the upper direction is still a challenge and, as I said, the whole tourism sector, both in Trinidad and Tobago is working on it, and that all has to do with the restructuring of the tourism product.

Sen. Moore: Through you, Madam President, having regard to the fact that 40 per cent—the Minister's utterances that 40 per cent in hotels and 32 per cent occupancy in guest houses does not raise a red flag, what in the hon. Minister's opinion would raise a red flag for occupancy rates in Tobago?

Madam President: Senator, I would not allow that question. Sen. Moore, yes.

Sen. Moore: Thank you very much, Madam President. Having regard to the current trends as outlined by the hon. Minister with regard to the Minister's opinion or his research on occupancy rates, can the Minister say when an improvement, a measurable improvement, can be expected?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: I think we will have a measurable improvement coming down to the end of this year in the winter season and, most definitely, in 2018. As I speak, the Minister of Tourism is not here because she is engaged in a meeting with British Airways in Tobago as we speak, because fundamental to the tourism product is the airlift. Unless we do not get the airlift right, the foreign tourist or the international tourist, which is different from domestic tourism, we will not improve. So I think the very fact that she is meeting with British Airways today and could not be in this Senate is a sign in the right direction. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Solomon. Sen. Solomon, just for the record though, I should point out to Senators that Sen. Solomon is posing the questions on behalf of Sen. Mark.

**Persons on Death Row
(Details of)**

41. Sen. Daniel Solomon on behalf of Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Attorney General:

Can the Minister inform the Senate:

- (a) what is the total number of persons on death row;
- (b) how many persons identified at (a) above fall within the time frame set out in the *Pratt and Morgan* ruling; and
- (c) what is the Government's timetable to resume the carrying-out of the death penalty?

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, in answer to part (a) of the question, the total number of persons on death row currently stands as at April 24, 2017 at 37.

With respect to the part (b) of the question as to how many persons fall within the rule of *Pratt and Morgan*, the answer to that is 12.

In answer to part (c), it is necessary to put onto the record, again, having answered a similar question just very recently, that there are three steps of approach towards managing the criminal justice system as it relates to implementing the death penalty. The first is, of course, if you have a High Court matter, where a conviction may be given. Secondly is that you are, of course, entitled to appeal that to the Court of Appeal. After appeal to the Court of Appeal, then to Privy Council and then lastly to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Regrettably, the data from the period 2006 come forward and, in particular,

that standing from 2011 to date of July 17, 2015, shows that the appellate process, in particular, has been the stumbling block to the implementation of the death penalty.

One notes from the data standing under the last Government that of the 37 people on death row, 29 of them have had consideration by the last Government, and of that 29, six of them were met with a conclusion of appeal at the Privy Council just at the five-year marker with the then-track having to run on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

One can see from that particular approach that, regrettably, prior to this Government, no tracking mechanism had been put in place to deal with the State's input into the appellate process, be it at the Court of Appeal level, the Privy Council level or the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

In those circumstances, recognizing the terrible record that stood, in particular if one moves backward from July 2015, it was important to implement—and this Government has implemented a tracking mechanism for every single file for every single person who stands convicted to be hanged in accordance with the laws of Trinidad and Tobago.

With that said, the Government in tracking on a daily basis notes that in the period 2016—that is, from the 19th of May, 2016 to today's date—eight new persons have been committed to hang. That eight is, of course, included in the number of 37 that stood on death row.

The 25 persons in total being tracked for the implementation of the law, the application of the law, are being tracked so that the State ensures that every step that it has within its power to comply with the State's input into the appellate process is preserved and is, in fact, accomplished.

In those circumstances, we expect to carry out the death penalty as soon as is

lawfully possible in all the circumstances. Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramdeen: Madam President, through you, to the hon. Attorney General. What steps have been taken with respect to the 25 people who are now presumed—having regard to the answer of the Attorney General—to be suffering cruel and inhumane treatment in death row? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Madam President, most respectfully, I cannot offer a presumption. The presumption at law has been applied because *Pratt and Morgan* itself says that awaiting an appellate time for over five years, having had the conviction of death imposed upon you, is cruel and unusual punishment. I have just said that 25 people of the 37 have not been considered to be the beneficiaries of the rule in *Pratt and Morgan* and, therefore, have not yet crossed the bar of being in cruel and unusual punishment.

If, in fact, that was the case, *Pratt and Morgan* would have been applied. Unless there is new consideration by the highest Court of Appeal, which in our case is the Privy Council, that there is some circumstance other than that set out in *Pratt and Morgan*, my learned friend's question seems to be entirely misplaced.

Sen. Ramdeen: Madam President, it is my error that I did not understand the information of the hon. Attorney General. So, sure. What steps are being taken by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to deal with the 12 people who are now incarcerated on death row who are suffering cruel and inhumane treatment to either commute those sentences or remove them from death row? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Madam President, again, there appears to be a fundamental ignorance of the law. The sentences have been commuted by operation of the rule in *Pratt and Morgan* and they are, therefore, sentenced for life imprisonment, there to be kept until their sentence is carried out. Again, I cannot understand where

this question springs from, either in terms of logic or law.

Sen. Ramdeen: Madam President, to the hon. Attorney General. Why are those 12 persons whose sentences have been commuted, according to the law, as espoused by the hon. Attorney General, still incarcerated on death row awaiting execution while their sentences, according to the legal advisor to the Cabinet and the Government, have been commuted? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Before I call on the Attorney General to answer, I just want to caution Senators when asking questions, ask a question. All of the extraneous information, keep that out of the question. Hon. Attorney General.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Madam President, the information provided by the Commissioner of Prisons in respect of this matter related to the question asked by Sen. Mark. In answer to those questions, the responses were already posed. The fact is that the listing and labelling of persons upon death row is certainly not consonant with whether the execution is going to be carried out or not.

The answer to the question is, as already noted on the record, that 12 people have had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. They are, as a matter of labelling only by the prisons authority listed as far as the information given to me by the prisons authority as being persons at death row. That is, persons who have had a sentence of death passed by a court of law and affirmed, those persons are labelled by the prisons.

The fact is that they are kept in prison under the warrant by which they are kept there by the Commissioner of Prisons in accordance with the law. The commuting of the sentence to life imprisonment is a clear statement of law that the death penalty would not be carried out. Again, the attempt to twist logic into reality is just simply lost.

Sen. Ramdeen: Madam President, through you, could the hon. Attorney General

indicate whether Mr. Peter Perselove QC has rendered any advice to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago since September 2015 when this administration came into power with respect to the carrying-out of the death penalty?

Madam President: Sen. Ramdeen, I will not allow that question.

Displaced Citizens/Homes Destroyed by Fire

(Measures Taken to Assist)

42. Sen. Daniel Solomon on behalf of Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Social Development and Family Services:

In light of the tragedies in Springdale, Claxton Bay and Second Caledonia Malick in which a total of twenty (20) persons were displaced when their homes were destroyed by fire, what measures are being taken by the Ministry to assist the affected citizens?

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn): Thank you, Madam President. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has been in contact with the family of eight in Springdale, Claxton Bay and two families each with three persons in Second Caledonia, Morvant in its capacity as second responder with responsibility for providing support to victims of natural or man-made disasters.

These families were initially provided with food support, counselling and clothing for all members of their family. Additionally, they were informed of the other grants and services available to them from the Ministry. These included household items up to \$10,000; a clothing grant of \$1,000 per person; school supplies of \$1,000 for children attending secondary school and \$700 for children attending primary school; house repairs up to \$20,000; house rental grant of \$2,500 for a maximum period of six months if required and the counselling services.

Subsequently, the Claxton Bay family informed the Ministry that they had received assistance from a private entity to rebuild their home. They requested and were provided with a purchase order for household items. Additionally, one of the Morvant families was provided with a purchase order for the clothing grant, and their request for assistance for home repairs is currently being processed. The other family requested and was provided with assistance to undertake household repairs. Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

**National Parenting Policy
(Implementation of)**

63. Sen. Paul Richards asked the hon. Minister of Social Development and Family Services:

In light of the many behavioural problems being displayed by children and the noticeable link to poor parenting, does the Government intend to implement a National Parenting Policy, and if so, within what time frame?

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn): Thank you, Madam President. Yes, Madam President, the Government intends to implement a national parenting policy. The Ministry expects to finalize draft policy by May 2017. This draft policy would then be subject to public consultation and finalization of the National Parenting Policy is expected to be completed by July 2017 and implemented by the end of fiscal 2017. Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Supplemental Sen. Richards?

Sen. Richards: No, Madam President. **Madam President:** Okay. Sen. Richards.

**Children's Authority
(Proper Procedures and Protocols)**

64. Sen. Paul Richards asked the hon. Prime Minister:

What measures have been instituted to monitor the operations of the Children's Authority to ensure strict compliance with the law and to guarantee that proper procedures and protocols are being followed?

The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam President. The Children's Authority is governed by all existing laws which aim to ensure the accountability of state agencies. In addition, at section 21 of the Children's Authority Act, it states that the Minister may give in writing general or special directions to the board on policy matters in the exercise of its duties and powers of the Act which the authority shall follow.

In May of 2016, the Children's Authority was provided with a document entitled: General Guidelines to Oversee the Relationship between the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs and the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. This document established an oversight role for the Minister and outlined the reporting relationship between both entities.

The guidelines also specified the need for the authority to provide the following information and documents to the Office of the Prime Minister. For general oversight, the authority is required to:

- submit monthly board Minutes;
- monthly reports on the authority's financial disbursements;
- the roster of names of children and their ages who qualify for monthly upkeep; and financial contributions received from external bodies or institutions.

For community residences, the authority is required each quarter to provide:

- a list of licensed community residences;
- a list of community residences awaiting licensing or renewal;

- a list of community residences whose licence has been cancelled and the reason for their cancellation; and
- documents supporting the payment of financial support to the children in care at community residences.

2.30 p.m.

In the area of public awareness the Authority is required to:

- inform the Minister of its plan for public campaigns and proposed public statements;
- the Minister, from time to time, may also request special reports from the board on specific matters and will convene meetings with the board as is required;
- on an annual basis the Authority is required to submit its annual report detailing its activities over the financial year, as set out in section 49 of the Act.

The above information, documents and meetings are used in assessing the operation and performance of the Authority. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Richards.

Sen. Richards: Can the Minister indicate, given what the Minister has just indicated in terms of the operations and the regulations, and the rules regarding the Authority, if a report has been completed regarding the recently published issue that has raised concerns about the Director and the housing of a minor in her personal residence?

Madam President: Minister.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. A report was done by the Children's

Authority at the request of the hon. Minister who oversees this area, however, it is currently before Cabinet for the appointment of an investigative team to produce a report for specific areas that the Minister has identified she would like to have properly investigated. That is currently before Cabinet for approval.

Madam President: Sen. Richards.

Sen. Richards: As in the run up to, or as the investigative committee is put together, has the Ministry put systems in place, given the fact that the situation involves the Director, to ensure that similar instances do not occur? And, also—
[Interruption]

Madam President: One question at a time. Minister.

Hon. S. Young: The answer is that they have been alerted to the fact that an investigation is going to be conducted into this area, and one would be very surprised if, in light of that, anybody goes and repeats what may or may not have happened. The guidelines that I outlined in the original answer govern how the placement of children, et cetera, and then the reporting should take place, so the answer is that we would not expect any reoccurrence of the matter that has transpired.

Madam President: Sen. Richards.

Sen. Richards: With all the good intention of that answer, has there been an indication as to whether or not there were other instances they may have occurred even with good intention in that situation, and before the investigation is complete, are systems being put in place to ensure that those situations, if they did occur, have been addressed in a forthright manner?

Madam President: Minister.

Hon. S. Young: Madam President, through you, we have no such information before us at this time.

Madam President: Sen. Ramdeen.

Sen. Ramdeen: Madam President, through you, could the hon. Minister indicate whether there are currently any licensed community residences in Trinidad and Tobago, or rehabilitation centres, according to the children Acts?

Madam President: Sen. Ramdeen, that question does not arise.

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER

(LEAVE)

Continuous Water Supply

(Failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities)

Sen. Gerald Ramdeen: Madam President, I seek your leave to move the adjournment of the Senate today under Standing Order 16, for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance. That is the failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities to ensure that citizens throughout the country receive a continuous and proper supply of water. The matter is definite because it pertains specifically to the supply of water to the citizens of this country, which is a necessity for each and every citizen to survive.

The matter is definite because there are specific communities that are today, as we speak, without a supply of water, and have been so for some time. Some communities are not even the beneficiaries of a truck borne supply of water, and the number of persons who are affected is increasing daily. Water is life, and it is currently said that we cannot survive without water. The matter is urgent because without a proper supply of water citizens' lives would be affected in an indescribable way. It is urgent because the meteorological office has issued warnings to the citizens of the increase in temperatures which can be hazardous to health, especially for persons who may be particularly vulnerable, such as older people with long-term or serious illnesses, and young persons, and these people

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave) (cont'd)
Failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities (cont'd)
Sen. Ramdeen (cont'd)

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need and require a proper and constant supply of water.

Persons are unable to go to work, and businesses are being seriously affected by the failure to have a proper supply of water. The matter is of public importance because cities, towns and villages throughout our country are affected by a continuing failure to have a proper supply of water. In some communities, schools are being closed early and workers are being sent home due to the lack of a proper supply of water. Health institutions, such as health centres and hospitals, that are essential to the public, are now under threat of being shut down because they have no water.

The effects of a continuation of this water shortage can be disastrous to the entire country, and the hon. Minister must provide the country with some assurance that this situation will be resolved in the shortest possible time. I thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have considered the Motion of Sen. Ramdeen and I am satisfied that this matter qualifies to be raised as a definite matter of urgent public importance. The matter requires the leave of the Senate. Is the Senate prepared to grant such leave?

Hon. Senators, I remind you of the Standing Orders, is the Senate prepared to give such leave?

Assent indicated.

Madam President: Therefore, hon. Senators, leave having been granted in accordance with Standing Order 16(5), the debate on this Motion will stand over until 6.00 p.m. today. [*Desk thumping*]

**UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF VIOLENT CRIME
(GOVERNMENT STEPS TO DEAL WITH)**

[Third Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [February 14, 2017]:
Be it resolved that this Senate take note of the increasing and unacceptable levels of violent crimes in Trinidad and Tobago.*

And be it further resolved that this Senate call on the Government to take all immediate and necessary steps in the shortest possible time to deal with the unacceptable crime level facing the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

Question again proposed.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, the Senators who have spoken on this matter are as follows: Sen. Wayne Sturge, who is the mover of the Motion; Hon. Maj. Gen. (Ret.), Edmund Dillon, MP, the Minister of National Security; Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir; Sen. Wade Mark; Sen. W. Michael Coppin; Sen. Stephen Creese; Sen. Gerald Ramdeen. Sen. Cummings. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Foster Cummings: Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to join this debate on a Motion moved by Sen. Wayne Sturge, which was introduced on the 14th of February, 2017. Madam President, in reminding us all, the Motion calls on the Government to take immediate and necessary steps in the shortest possible time to deal with the unacceptable crime level facing Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, there is no comfort with the level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. I do not think anyone, either on the Opposition Benches, or the Government Bench, or the Independent Bench in this House would find comfort in the crime levels that we are experiencing in the country at this point in time. Sen. Sturge, in his preamble, states that it is the responsibility of the Government to ensure public safety and security through the maintenance of law and order. I do

not think any of us could argue with that. It is universally accepted as a governance principle, but, what we sometimes have to step back and consider is that crime, while of concern to all of us, must never be used as a political tool. It is real and it affects each and every one of us. [*Desk thumping*] It matters not whether you are in Government, in Opposition, whether you are an Independent, all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are affected by crime, and we all have a responsibility to make sure that we do not experience the level of crime that we are experiencing right now.

It seems that it has become sort of the mantra of the Opposition as they address issues to coin it along the lines of “the Government has failed to address”. And when they do not say, the Government has failed to address, they flip that and they say, “the failure of the Government”. Somebody somewhere must have advised the Opposition that if they repeat the word “failure” enough times that it would stick and that somehow it would bring them some political benefit. And I would suggest to them that maybe they need to rethink that. I do not think it is working at all.

I spent some time in Enterprise recently in an attempt to get a better understanding, Madam President, of what are some of the issues facing these so-called “hot spot” areas, because when the Opposition comes to the House and speaks about crime as though it is a PNM thing—and somebody said that. I think in the Motion, I recall, something like that being said by the mover of the Motion, as though it is when the PNM is in Government, and some statistics were used, and all of the statistics debunked by my colleague, Sen. Coppin, to suggest that during the time of the UNC in Government crime was lower, and when the PNM came into office some mysterious thing happened and crime increased, and several

statistics were given, all of which were debunked by Sen. Coppin, and, clearly, because the statistics were not taken, I believe, from a credible source.

Madam President, no murder, one murder a year is too much. The loss of life is devastating to family members. It does not matter on which side of the political divide you sit, and no responsible Opposition should piggy-back on the issue of crime for political—and to score cheap political points. It is irresponsible and it is reckless for any Opposition party to do that. But I have noticed over the years that successive UNC Oppositions have chosen as their strategy, the issue of crime, because they know it touches the life of each and every one. It is a fear tactic, a fear tactic used by political strategists who wish to score some political points. And if we examine the history and the record of the UNC when in Government, because if such a Motion comes now, compelling the Government to take certain action, then it falls to us to examine the work of the UNC when the UNC was in Government—falls to us to do that, because you cannot, when you are in Opposition, conveniently call on the Government to take action, but, yet, when the UNC was in office you had no solution.

Let us examine what transpired during five years and three months in office of the UNC, and, Madam President, of all the crime strategies the UNC was able to come up with is the grand state of emergency. That was their strategy. [*Desk thumping*] That is their record. And what did we experience with this masterful plan of the UNC Government? Madam President, I quote from an article published in the *Guardian* on Tuesday 23rd, 2011, by one, Reshma Ragoonath, and I know they would not like to hear this, but we will not forget and we must be reminded, because when you come like Pontius Pilate, raising your hands as though your hands are clean we must remind you of what you did when you were

in office—and, Reshma Ragoonath, and I quote:

“In an open declaration of war on crime, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has announced the institution of a limited state of emergency in several areas deemed as crime hot spots, effective as of midnight last night...Persad-Bissessar, after an emergency meeting with members of...her Cabinet at her private”—residence in—“Phillipine, San Fernando...said”—that—“: ‘The limited state of emergency will take effect from midnight tonight...’

The Prime Minister, speaking briefly with reporters after the briefing, said”—that—“11 murders in one day was the breaking point for the Government.”

She dismissed the notion that crime was out of control after—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Sturge: Madam President, point of order, 46(1), we are here to debate about this Government and what they are doing about crime now.

Madam President: Sen. Cummings, continue. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Thank you, Madam President. We are talking about crime in Trinidad and Tobago, whether the UNC is in office or the PNM is in office, you introduced it, do not run from it.

So, Madam President, with 11 murders in one day the Prime Minister said that crime is not out of control, but it is a cause for concern. And what was the UNC remedy? A state of emergency. They hounded, and they arrested by the hundreds, young men from depressed communities in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam President. These young men, over 4,000 of them, mostly young Afro males from urban Trinidad were denied their constitutional rights in an effort to show that the then Government was fighting crime. It failed, Madam President, it

failed and we witnessed the failure of the UNC Government and their attempt to deal with crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, on this issue, recently, in 2015, the *Express* published an article by Richard Charan, on June 30th, 2015, and in this article Charan writes:

“The State can expect a slew of civil lawsuits, resulting from the ruling yesterday of High Court Judge Joan Charles, who found the arrest of a Marabella parlour owner during the 2011 State of Emergency (SoE) amounted to wrongful arrest, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution.”

Kevin Stuart was awarded more than \$350,000 in aggregated damages and exemplary on special damages as compensation for his arrest.

Sen. Ramdeen: Madam President, on a point of order, Standing Order 47. The matter that Sen. Cummings is referring to is now engaging the attention of the Court of Appeal, and, therefore, I think the hon. Senator should be very careful in observing Standing Order 47. It is a matter that is currently engaging the Court of Appeal on an appeal from the decision of Madam Justice Joan Charles. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Cummings, could you be very careful in your references to any court actions, okay?

Sen. F. Cummings: Guided, Madam President.

Madam President, the act of instituting a state of emergency as a crime measure failed miserably. It was a failure of the UNC Government. [*Desk thumping*] After 4,000 arrests, Madam President—they do not like to hear the truth, you know—after 4,000 arrests of young men all over Trinidad and Tobago, I have yet been able to identify one successful prosecution from these arrests, not a

single one. This was of nil effect, and the crime situation experienced no change. That is the record of the United National Congress Government, Madam President. It was an act of desperation, targeting a certain sector of our society. You look at who comprised the majority of the detainees and draw your own conclusion, Madam President.

So, if when in Government the UNC had no solution one would expect, Madam President, that while in Opposition they will conduct themselves responsibly, and that they would support measures brought to this Parliament by the Government to assist with dealing with the crime problem, but they speak with “forked tongue”. On the one hand, the Opposition cries and mourns over the issue of crime, but on every occasion that the Government brings measures to the Parliament that would seek to address the issue of crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago, the UNC runs and hides. No support whatsoever.

Look at what they have continually done, and you can find several contradictions in their position. Every time they are in Government they will preach one thing. The very thing that they promote when they are in Government when they are in the Opposition they are the first to oppose it. How could that make any sense? That making any sense? No, Madam President. Their conduct can best be described as passive civil disobedience, because the Opposition is part of the architecture of the governance of the country. The role of the Opposition is not to make sure and oppose everything that comes from the Government, and, therefore, if the Opposition does not rise to the occasion and behave and conduct themselves in a responsible manner, they are more part of the problem than part of the solution.

So, do not come crying about the Government’s failure to deal with crime,

Unacceptable Levels of Violent Crime
(Government Steps to Deal With) (cont'd)
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and every opportunity you get you do something different, you delay, you oppose, you obstruct, and when you fail to obstruct the Government in the Parliament, the next thing you do is run to the court to try and thwart what the Government is trying to implement, very obstructionist. The mover of the Motion went to lengths to speak about the failure of the Government to appoint a Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police, how is that not ironic? Because the country must ask, on whose doorstep should we place that?—when it is the action of the Opposition that is preventing such appointments. It is the action of the Opposition outside of the Parliament—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Sturge: Point of order, the court has ruled—

Sen. F. Cummings: I know you will stand up all day.

Sen. Sturge: The court has ruled, and my friend cannot impute improper motives to the court.

Madam President: I am sorry, I did not hear what Sen. Cummings said, but, Sen. Cummings, if it is that you are questioning a decision of the court then you should stay clear of that. But I must say that I am sorry, I was engaged in another matter. Okay? Sen. Cummings, continue.

Sen. F. Cummings: Madam President, I assure you that I will not ever question the decision of the courts, but I am questioning the conduct of the UNC Opposition. *[Desk thumping]*

The UNC is standing in the way of development in this country. It is clear, they are irresponsible Opposition, very irresponsible. The founder of the UNC, hon. Basdeo Panday, in his retirement, must be a very sad man at this point in time when he looks at what has become of the party that he founded. He must be very sad at this point in time when he looks at what we have on offering from the UNC.

I am sure “ole Bas” is probably wondering, what has happened to my UNC? I am sure. Madam President, we must stop politicizing crime. There are many factors that we have to consider when treating with this issue, and the Government is about taking a holistic solution to the problem. The Government is not about scoring cheap points, the Government is not about knee-jerk reactions. We bring solutions here every time and you do not support it, my friends.

The Minister of National Security spent a length of time speaking about the five pillars on which the Government policy and strategies are founded. He spoke about prediction, he spoke about deterrence, he spoke about detection, he spoke about prosecution, he spoke about rehabilitation, but I know that you were too busy, consumed with yourself, to listen to what the Minister of National Security had to say. Had you paid attention to his contribution you would not be asking me what the Government is doing. He was clear, he was concise and articulate in giving what the Government's position is. He spoke about the prediction pillar, which involves the intelligence gathering and the intelligence capability of the State. He was at length on that matter. He spoke about deterrence, which involves the presence of the security forces on the streets, and the patrols, and the work that we must do from the community up in order to move our young people to more productive activities and a life away from crime. The solution to crime does not rest with any single politician, it must come from the community up. We all have a responsibility.

3.00 p.m.

Madam President, I took some time to read from what people more learned than myself had to say on this matter, and I came across an article published by one Abe Luke in the *Guardian* of October 4th, 2011, in an interview with criminologist

Renee Cummings. And Miss Cummings, no relation to the speaker, no relation, said in this interview and I quote, Sen. Sturge:

“While crackdowns on crime, coercive interventions and muscular measures often receive popular public support because of high law enforcement visibility, the research shows that such results are often temporary and tenuous.”

And she goes further, Miss Cummings that is:

“Deterrent...”—she said—“...will only be achieved when punishment is certain, swift and severe.”

And I agree wholeheartedly with the writer/ criminologist Miss Renee Cummings. We—

She goes further.

“The police must catch the criminals, the courts must administer justice in real time and the prisons must punish and rehabilitate. What is missing, nationally,...”—Miss Cummings says—“...is social regulation. Deterrence must be retailed with programming that taps into an individual’s internal motivator to obey the law because lawlessness has become a national pastime.”

And, Madam President, we have so many examples of lawlessness. If you go to Tobago and you “cuss out” the staff, that is lawlessness. You know, I saw a report on the—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Solomon: 46(6).

Madam President: Sen. Cummings, continue, please.

Sen. F. Cummings: Thank you, Madam President. That touched somebody. It starts with self, Madam President. We have a society that does not pay attention to

the laws of the country. We view crime as murder only. Why do not focus much on the other serious crimes. But from the community level we must do our part because the lawlessness has to stop. We witness it on the roads as there is little regard for the speed limit, traffic lights and other traffic laws. Squatting is illegal, yet some people squat on lands, land grabbing only to sell the State's assets as a profit later on. In most communities drug blocks are as established as the parlour on the corner. So that the parlour selling sweets and dry goods on the corner is as established as the drug blocks. The residents in these communities know where these drug blocks are. They know who the pushers are. It appears that only the police do not as yet have the information as to who these pushers are in the communities.

And we know, Madam President, that the drug trade is tied to the guns, and then the guns are used to protect turf and this results in the high level of killings and drug wars and fights between gangs, gang against gang, that is what is happening in Enterprise. And if we understand what the situation is, maybe the Opposition might be convinced to be more cooperative with the Government to deal with this problem of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not a political issue. It is one that requires the Opposition to be responsible as much as it proves difficult to be. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, I have said it here before in the Parliament and we need not bury our head in the sand, we have a problem with the urban youth in our country. That is a reality. Sen. Sturge is a practising criminal attorney, and so I know he will agree with me. We have an issue when it comes to our urban youth in Trinidad and Tobago. I checked with the prison statistics and our prison population is currently approximately 3,680 or so prisoners, of this figure 64 per

cent are on remand. Of the total prison population, Madam President, 56 per cent are of African descent, 34 per cent are of East Indian descent, and this information is directly from the prison, and 10 per cent mixed.

And so let us look at, Madam President, if I am allowed, I would like to share from Prof. Ramesh Deosaran who wrote in a book called *Inequality, Crime and Education in Trinidad and Tobago: Removing the Mask*. And what does Prof. Deosaran say? Prof. Deosaran is a criminologist well renowned and he speaks to the question of why some of these problems exist within these communities. He says at page 300:

It is almost misleading to youths to advocate education as the key passport out of crime and for better life when the road is so twisted, prejudiced and apparently discriminatory for those who are starting from far behind.

Madam President, we know that the issue of crime is not just a question of policing, and that is why the PNM Government is making sure that in addressing this issue of crime we do not respond to the Opposition in a knee jerk way and that a holistic approach is taken involving the Ministry of Education, social development, community development, working along with the Ministry of National Security to ensure that within the communities those who are determined as high-risk communities that require social intervention takes place to make sure that the crime we speak about and we are all concerned about is arrested at root cause, and that is the work of the PNM Government, that is how this Government operates responsibly.

Madam President, I came across a piece of research done by the committee appointed in 2013, and this committee involved Prof. Selwyn Ryan as chairman, Dr. Indira Rampersad, Dr. Lennox Bernard, Prof. Patricia Mohammed and

Marjorie Thorpe. And as I made my intervention in Enterprise I sought to relate some of what I witnessed in that community to the research conducted by this committee. And the report is entitled “No Time to Quit: Engaging Youth at Risk”. And it really is a very serious problem, Madam President.

I mean, Enterprise is hot in the news now, but we have other at-risk communities that over time require the attention that would cause these young people to find some hope and some different way of life. Many of these young men, and this Enterprise falls in the Chaguanas East constituency which is represented by the UNC in the Parliament. These young men, many of them find no hope, they need direction in life. Many of them when they leave the school system, the only industry that they feel or they see that they can get involved in is one of drugs and all the attendant negatives that come with that.

And therefore, we are going into the communities, it is not just about arresting young men and placing them in prison. It is about making sure that you address the root cause of the problem and impact on the lives of these young men within the community in which they live. It is not just about coming here and spewing statistics, about how many people the police arrest or how many are charged or how well the judicial system is working. We need to be a more caring society and that is something that I would certainly like to give a lesson to the UNC in, in true PNM style. You can come to class next week Saturday with your pencils and book bag and learn how it is to really care about people. We can teach you that. We can teach you that.

We can show you that even though you are Opposition and you are called Opposition, you can take one issue out of the basket and decide we will not politicize this issue. We will not run rings around this issue, we will not try to

score political points off this issue because it affects all of us. Both Government and UNC supporters will all like to see the issue of crime dealt with, and they are looking at you Opposition Members. I know sometimes you have to vote according to the Whip, but you live here in Trinidad and Tobago. We work here in Trinidad and Tobago and we understand what are some of the challenges that we face here.

So when we have an opportunity to make real and meaningful change, let us grasp that opportunity. Show Trinidad and Tobago that you can make a difference; show the Commonwealth that you can make a difference; show that you are not only interested in coming and bringing a Motion because you want to show up the Government in a bad light; show that you are serious and the next measure that comes to the Parliament piloted by the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago to deal with serious crimes in this country, as a responsible Opposition, support the measures of the Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, the committee, and it makes good reading, I will suggest it to the Opposition because they appointed the committee. I do not think they read the report. This committee was appointed in 2013. I think it was the UNC that was in Government at the time, and I do not know what they did with the report, but I will print a copy and pass it to the Opposition so that the next Motion they bring will be more informed. And when the Committee—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: You did not read it?

Sen. F. Cummings: Clearly they did not read the report, Madam President, clearly they did not read the report. If they had read the report, the structure, the very structure of this Motion would have been different, it would have spoken to collaborative effort. But instead, the Motion took the angle of beat the

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Government, beat the Government, beat the Government, no responsibility on the side of the Opposition. But if they read this report which identified hotspots, and what does the report say about a hotspot?—that a crime hotspot is generally defined as an area containing dense clusters of criminal incidents and it may also extend to an area adjacent to one where criminal activity is geographically concentrated.

Madam President: Sen. Cummings, you have five more minutes.

Sen. F. Cummings: Thank you, Madam President. And incidents occur on a frequent and relatively regular basis. I commend to the UNC that they go back and read the report of the Committee that they appointed to treat with the issues of crime, and look at the report compiled by Prof. Selwyn Ryan and the report that is named “No Time to Quit: Engaging Youth at Risk”.

Because at the end of day, Madam President, no matter how much we come to the Parliament and posture and put positions that we try to make the other side look bad, I mean it is—our system is somehow designed in a confrontational way, but at the end of the day crime is an issue that affects all of us and I call on the Opposition as a citizen of this country to do the responsible thing and not politicize crime, not politicize crime. I refer the country to the failure of the Opposition to support the Government on matters that are brought to this Parliament to ensure that we deal with criminality in a serious way. And I hope that in the future we will see this Opposition UNC behaving and conducting themselves in a manner befitting of the office that they hold. I thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Christlyn Moore: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, let me orient the intention of my contribution in the Senate at this time.

At this time there are voices opposed to this Government as represented in Tobago and these voices have no place or have no—find themselves nowhere in either of the Houses of Parliament neither here or in the other place. While there are officeholders in these two Houses that valiantly attempt to capture and articulate the mood of the day, today Tobagonians on the issue of crime, our day to day struggles with water, with tourism and all other related aspects, these people though concerned are no more than onlookers, not really affected or true participants in our story. They are not even second hand recipients of our complaints or point of view.

I have always maintained, we have always maintained, that Tobago is old enough to speak for itself. [*Desk thumping*]. I make no apologies for standing here in this House speaking in the national Parliament as Tobagonian opposed to the Government's policies on crime. [*Desk thumping*] I make no apologies standing in the national Parliament as a Tobagonian on behalf of other Tobagonians opposed [*Desk thumping*] to this Government and their lack of policies on crime. I make no apologies for finding new ways for Tobagonians to be heard as more and more doors shut in our faces and this Government pretends that our voice is its voice.

Madam President, even PNM people are not PNM every day. Tobago is not PNM country, in fact, right now Tobago is PNM hostage. [*Desk thumping*] Criminality in Tobago has over the last 18 months trended upwards surpassing all other periods in Tobago's history. Already for the year Tobago has recorded a record of five murders. Those precious few in which arrests have been made can expect to wait more than 10 years for a trial, the rest of them well, Madam President, they may well go the way of all flesh.

While five murders may not affect the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago, with a murder toll to date of, I think, well over 300 and climbing, it sends shockwaves through our small community, five murders in four months overwhelms a community already buckling with other social issues, created, exploited or mishandled by this Government. It is not only the significant uptick in murders that is cause for concern on an island of 55,000 people. These people mostly leading peaceful lives and going about their business, it is the uptick in other major crimes as well.

Between September 2015 to December 2016 under this Government, Tobago led all nine TTPS divisions in the crime of larceny dwelling house. Tobago led all nine TTPS divisions in the crime of larceny dwelling house. And, Madam President, this is according to the report generated for the period on the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service statistical page. This is not a question of fudging numbers, this is a question of presenting the actual numbers as verified, as sanctified, as sanitized by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Madam President, between September 2015 and December 2016 under this Government, Tobago was third behind Port of Spain and Northern Division for rape, incest and sexual offences. Madam President, crime I agree with the hon. Senator, crime ought not to be politicized. When a bandit invades your home, he does not ask for your PNM party card; he does not ask for your Tobago Forwards party card; he does not care whether you are COP or have never voted in your life. However, the responsibility to make sure and to do everything that is possible to ensure that no bandit enters your home, that responsibility falls on the shoulders of the Government. [*Desk thumping*] It might be unpleasant, it might be unfortunate, the Government might not have the wherewithal to bear the burden of this

responsibility, nonetheless, the responsibility falls to them. [*Desk thumping*]

And, you know, I listened to the hon. Senator who was at pains to say to this honourable House and to all who are listening that this Government is powerless to make an impact on crime unless the Opposition supports.

Sen. Cummings: I never said that.

Sen. C. Moore: The effect of that theory is really to say to the population that the Opposition is the intellectual Viagra of this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

In the last quarter of 2016, Tobago recorded 53 break-ins and burglaries, 53 break-ins on topped all police divisions for dwelling house larceny recording over 110 robberies in 2016 alone. Now these numbers seem small, they seem small when you are talking about Trinidad's mammoth numbers, but I want to stress, it is 55,000 people. [*Desk thumping*] This is enormous for us. I want to stress that those 55,000 people are really about 12 families. This is enormous for us. This Government has to shoulder the responsibility. [*Desk thumping*] It cannot blame people who were not elected for a problem that it promised to solve. [*Desk thumping*]

These figures, Madam President, are uncomfortable truths. They are uncomfortable truths that in some quarters including in quarters in Tobago, many would prefer to have suppressed or to stay silent. Many would prefer that there not be a public admission that our houses are broken into, that our children are being violated, that we are being robbed. Many would prefer that we are silent, that while all these things are going on, the Government is also silent.

In Tobago, as in Trinidad, the link between crime and unemployment cannot be ignored. The Government, when it took the decision to close the Ministry of Tobago Development rendered over 400 people unemployed and ceased the

training of another 200. This training would have given people marketable skills and set them on a path to some sustainability. That sustainability would be needed more and more now in these perilous times. Well, Madam President, where are these people? How many of these now unemployed, untrained, partially trained people have flirted with crime? How many of them are in arrears of maintenance, and desperate to escape jail on a defaulted maintenance order caught real jail by committing some other offence? Avoiding one tax to pay another tax.

Not only has the Ministry of Tobago Development closed, Caroni Green has closed affecting about 100 employees according to the estimates of the former agriculture Minister. The TDC closure is estimated to affect over 200 workers according to the Communication Workers' Union. GHRS has closed. The OJT has sent home a reported 50 per cent of its staff according to *Guardian* newspaper report. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: Madam President, the OJT has not sent home any of its employees as of today.

Madam President: Continue, Sen. Moore. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. C. Moore: Madam President, the *Guardian* has reported on March 19, 2017 that ArcelorMittal—[*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Moore, Sen. Moore. Please, Members, the noise level is starting to intensify, so I would ask that we comport ourselves. Okay? Sen. Moore.

Sen. C. Moore: Thank you, Madam President. The *Guardian* reported on March 19, 2017, that ArcelorMittal has closed its doors in March 2016, resulting in—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Point of order. Point of order, 46(1).

Madam President: Sen. Moore, continue, please. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. C. Moore: The *Guardian* has reported on March 19, 2017 that ArcelorMittal closed its doors in March 2016, resulting in about 700 workers being sent home; Centrica has terminated 200 workers last year; Repsol, 11 workers in January; OAS Construtora laying off 900 workers in April 2016; RBC is in on the axe sending home 20 workers.

In an interview published on January 03, 2016:

Former head of NSOC Commander Heerah warned that current economic challenges would influence crime trends. [*Desk thumping*]

He said could that there could be as much as a two-fold increase in violent property crimes such as robbery during a period of economic stress. He predicted an increase in homicides.

Well, Madam President, Tobago is living this and is breathing this.

Many of these closures previously recited have occurred in Trinidad, but 300,000 Tobagonians live and work in Trinidad and their relatives depend on their remittances. Moreover, criminals, like the rest of the population, enjoy freedom of movement. And what is easier, what is easier than starting over in a brand new place with a few of your criminal friends? As the calypsonian says, "Come leh we go to Tobago".

This is not conjecture. This is not conjecture. The police report a migration of criminal pests from Trinidad to Tobago. And I want to remind this honourable House and hon. Senator, that our colleagues have repeated that crime has no political side. So that if that is so, I stand here reporting on crime in Tobago, because it cannot be, Madam President, that only the PNM could talk about crime or the UNC could talk about crime, but the COP cannot talk about crime and the Tobago Forwards cannot talk about crime. We do not subscribe to that. [*Desk*

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thumping] Madam President, if crime is a national issue then all hands are on deck complaining that the current Government—[*Interruption*]

Madam President: Just have a seat. Members, please, please, can we listen to Sen. Moore in silence? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. C. Moore: If crime is a national issue then all segments of the society whether they are in Government, Opposition or nowhere have a duty and a responsibility to come to this Parliament whether they have the privilege to sit here or to stand outside and to say to this Government, we call you to account. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, the police in Tobago confirm reports of a migration of criminal pests from Trinidad to Tobago, and Tobagonians can attest to the non-residents who contribute to their terror. What is the plan? The plan cannot be to blame a Government that no longer sits. [*Desk thumping*] What is the plan? The plan cannot be to beg the Opposition to give you an idea. That is not a plan. What is the plan, Madam President?

3.30 p.m.

The plan must be and the Government must take the responsibility, hard as it is. The Government must take the responsibility, in the Tobago context, to monitor criminals as they migrate from place to place. That has to be step one. You want to know where the criminals are going. And why is Tobago concerned about criminals visiting us? Because, Madam President, this Government has said that we are the next frontier of forex in Tobago, that we in Tobago hold the tourism product with which they will break through. [*Interruption*] Madam President, if I could have some assistance.

Madam President: Continue Senator.

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Sen. C. Moore: Thank you. This Government has said to us—[*Sen. Moore sits*]

Madam President: Sen. Moore, continue.

Sen. C. Moore: Thank you very much. This Government has said to us in Tobago that we sit at the forefront of economic diversification, bringing forex into the Trinidad and Tobago economy via our tourism product. Crime puts the tourism product at jeopardy. Crime puts the Government's attempts at economic diversification, through tourism, in jeopardy. Crime jeopardizes the Government's own plan to take this economy forward. So they must be concerned. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, what is the plan? We must build out appropriate registers, including the Sex Offenders Register so that communities can be put on alert. And I remind you of the statistics in Tobago regarding indecent assaults and sexual offences. The plan must include constructing an adequate prison plant for Tobago residents convicted of petty crimes, so they are not transferred to and transplanted in the university of Golden Grove where they graduate with a BA in bacchanal and a Masters in mischief. [*Desk thumping*] The plan must include developing and implementing before the closure, particularly of government institutions, a plan of adequate counselling and retraining options, because suicide is a crime too and there is an optic in that.

I want, if you would permit me, Madam President, to deal with crime and transport as it relates to Tobago. There is a tendency when we address criminality we forget that not all crime is blue-collar crime, and we also forget that there is a colloquial meaning ascribed to the word "crime". Tobago has been confounded with the *Galicía* issue over the last month, as the debate on that issue and the resultant uncertainty has been bad for commerce, enterprise and tourism. It has

been put in the public space by this Government, that there is an element of criminality associated with the procurement of the vessel in the first place and that such criminality will not be condoned. As this vessel was the lifeblood of Tobagonians over the years, we feel that we have a vested interest in this matter. The Tobago Opposition and the Tobago Forwards want to applaud this Government for the goals that we see in its determination on this issue to begin to address white-collar crime, procurement and procurement misfeasance. But, Madam President, in all honesty, we would be more comforted if the file with regard to these alleged crimes is passed to the correct agency, [*Desk thumping*] to the desk of the DPP, rather than to the desk of the Attorney General who is, of course, impotent to deal with crime and its prosecution.

Additionally, and unpacking the Government's concerns with regard to white-collar criminal issues surrounding inter-island transportation, Tobago requires in the Government's need to fix crime, Tobago requires assurances that the current sea transportation arrangements are not similarly tainted, and so we expect complete transparency will refute any allegations of criminal conduct, public misfeasance or corrupt acts in the tendering process of these brand new, spanking, yet inadequate, vessels.

I said before, Madam President, crime in Trinidad and Tobago has many nuance meanings and we regularly refer to the crimes of bad grammar, the crimes of failing wardrobe in the case of inter-island transportation, the mishandling of the entire affair has been equivalent to a crime perpetrated on Tobago, its residents and its business owners. [*Desk thumping*] There are some matters that must be investigated with regard to this issue.

Madam President, we must investigate with the same thoroughness that we

demand investigations into the procurement of the *Galicia* in the first instance. We must investigate the deliberate decision to source vessels that were specifically unfit for purpose. [*Desk thumping*] We must investigate with the rigour that we do a criminal matter, the decision to reduce passenger carrying capacity between the islands. We must interrogate the deliberate decision to source an open-water barge despite all entreaties and pleas from Tobagonians who have historic and collective knowledge of the unsuitability of this type of transportation for the sea bridge. We must investigate the take-it or leave-it attitude of the line Minister on this issue, the doublespeak on the part of the Government as to whether the boat should go or stay, and the failure of this Government to fix air and sea transportation between the islands. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Moore, just on a point of relevance, you started off on one aspect of relevance but you are straying now, so I would ask you to seek to be more relevant on the Motion.

Sen. C. Moore: Thank you very much, Madam President, I am guided. With regard to a crime policy for Tobago, I want to point this honourable House to the manifesto that convinced the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and the residents of Tobago in particular, to support the PNM. This was its 10-point crime plan, and two of the matters in particular resonated with Tobagonians. In this 10-point crime plan the Government proposed a manpower audit. It suggested that police experts would immediately conduct a manpower audit of the police service with the goal of producing more effective and sustainable policing derived from knowing the personnel available, the personnel required, and how they should be deployed.

Madam President, this is laudable. No reasonable person could find a fault with this as a plan. But it may come as a surprise to you that after 18 months there

has been no manpower audit. There has been no provision in the 2016/2017 fiscal for this to be done. Of more concern is a meeting held within the last six months with the TTPS, hosted by the Tobago Chamber, where the acting superintendent of police Tobago indicated that half of the officers stationed on the island on any given day are on leave. A manpower audit would assist with this. Of the remaining strength on the island we have a large proportion of SRPs. These are supplemental to the regular strength, so they are not there every day, they do not work the same hours, they do not labour under the same terms and conditions. So, when you boil it down, with no manpower audit, with the Government policing Tobago by “vaps” and by accident, when on any given day half of the strength is on leave of some type, and, Madam President, there is vacation leave, there is maternity leave, there is sick leave, there is bereavement leave, there is leave because “ah” just come off leave. The list goes on and on. Madam President, we know in the police service, police officers work long, long hours and their duties are hard and dangerous. We do not begrudge them leave, but we also know that oftentimes police officers, sometimes because of the nature of their job, accumulate long periods of leave. So, you may not be talking about a day, or a week, or even a month, you are talking about large swathes of time. This is why a manpower audit would be needed, and this is why Tobago is currently suffering from an optic in crime because one of the items suggested in this 10-point plan has never been implemented.

This Government also promised to activate the laws, to establish the municipal police in all 14 local government bodies and the THA. Of course, I want to concentrate on the THA. Naturally, Madam President, that would involve amendment to the THA Act. That would involve an amendment to the THA Act.

Well, as far as I am aware, and I stand to be corrected, the question of amendment of the THA Act is not on. The question of constitutional amendment that would make the THA semi-autonomous or give the THA more powers, or even give the THA legislative powers, is not on. So this entire question of empowering the THA to have some sort of municipal type policing is of course not on the agenda, has not been on the Government agenda for the last 18 months, and is not predictably on the Government's agenda any time in the future.

So once again, the people of Tobago have been fooled. They thought that they would have gotten, in short shrift, their own police service, or their own police entity, which would have been more nuance and more suitable to their needs. But alas, alas, Madam President, these promises once again have not materialized. You know, I am always mindful when I stand anywhere and I articulate a peculiar or an individualized position for Tobago, because quite often it comes across as though Tobago is somehow removed from Trinidad and Tobago, and people start to get nervous when Tobago and persons interested in the progress of Tobago start asserting any kind of individuality. It is seen as an attack.

Madam President, I want to assure you and this House that Tobago is a different cultural space. It is a space that has its own make-up, it is made up of families, it is not the disparate communities of Trinidad. It is in fact one large community, and I say that to say that policing one large community is going to require very different skills from policing these vast unrelated entities. [*Desk thumping*] And that is why this Government must have thought of a municipal type force for Tobago, and this is why Tobagonians would have expected it. The other matter that policing in Tobago knocks up against, is the fact that all policies must be vetted and approved by Trinidad.

Madam President, you know we are in the age of the Internet and fax, and so on, but you may be surprised to know that physical files still need to move between police departments in order for matters to be approved. And you may be surprised to know that notwithstanding Tobago is only 15 to 22 minutes away by air, that a file moving from one desk in Tobago to another desk in Trinidad may take three weeks. So that finding a time sensitive response to a Tobago policing problem is going to be delayed by weeks. This is why it is so important for Tobago to have a policing system that is oriented in Tobago, that is manned in Tobago, where approvals can be obtained in Tobago in real time.

Madam President, I want to give an example. I want to give the example of community watch, neighbourhood watch. Neighbourhood watch is a popular crime preventative measure in Trinidad. It may surprise this House to know that neighbourhood watch does not and cannot work in Tobago. Neighbourhood watches are really designed for suburbia, for those communities that have a dispassionate interest in each other's house. Neighbourhood watches in communities that are families really boil down to institutionalized "macoing". That is how the community views it, and that is why the community rejects it. So that policing is not a one size fit all solution. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, a nuance approach to crime in Tobago is required. This Government ought not to export the Trinidad solution. Trinidad solution does not work and it does not respond in real time. No more neighbourhood watch. It is ill-suited to our community. Policing must be Scarborough driven rather than Port of Spain centric. I want to mention, Madam President, the question of crime and tourism. I want to go back to the issue of crime and tourism. Google crime and Tobago and you get results for crime Trinidad and Tobago. So that the failure of

this Government to get a handle on crime has a direct impact on visitor numbers in Tobago.

I want to remind this honourable House that the Government's position appears to be that the numbers for occupancy rates in Tobago over the last period measured is around 37/38 per cent average. Madam President, that number can never grow until the Government addresses crime. If all the Government will do is blame the Opposition, then the Tobago tourist numbers will, in the words of the hon. Minister, flatline. The Minister in his wisdom, as yet does not see this as a red flag issue, and I respect that. However, until and unless the issue of crime is dealt with, because Tobago cannot be disaggregated from Trinidad and Tobago when I am looking for a destination to visit, then Tobago's cookie is cooked, its goose is cooked in terms of advancing the tourism product. It cannot happen.

Madam President, in listing the beaches known for criminal activity—

Madam President: Sen. Moore, you have five more minutes.

Sen. C. Moore: I am obliged. In listing the beaches known for criminal activity, google it, in Trinidad and Tobago. Of the four beaches named, two are in Tobago.

Madam President, on what planet ought that to be a norm? You google beaches, you get "do not go to these four", and of these four two are in your tourism paradise, because of crime. The Government has to take responsibility for crime. [*Desk thumping*] The Opposition "cyar" pass laws. The Opposition may wish it could pass laws, but the fact is it cannot. The Opposition may wish it is in Government, but the fact is it is not. [*Desk thumping*] The Government sits in Government, and the Government must govern, and on this issue, we have been reminded early in the term that "We in charge now", but you are not in charge of crime.

Madam President, unless there is a crime plan that addresses Tobago's vulnerability, addresses our position as a forex earner via tourism, then the tourism product will fail. Unless the crime levels adjust, then Tobago can expect that its tourism product will continue to see subpar occupancy numbers, and it will not be able to participate in a global and regional improved trend in tourism revenue. That is the bit that is missing in these discussions about occupancy numbers. Tobago's occupancy numbers may be 37 per cent, but what is the regional occupancy numbers? Way, way beyond that. And why are our numbers so low? There may be a number of reasons, but crime is certainly one.

So, in closing, Madam President, I want again to thank this honourable House for the opportunity to highlight Tobago's issues. This is still a national Parliament, and Tobago is still part of this nation. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Paul Richards: Thank you, Madam President. It is an honour to be able to contribute to this Motion raised by Sen. Sturge, and:

Whereas the responsibility of a Government is to ensure public safety and security through the maintenance of law and order;

And whereas the Government has failed to address the extraordinary increase in the level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago;

Be it resolved that this Senate take note of the increasing and unacceptable levels of violent crimes in Trinidad and Tobago;

And be it further resolved that this Senate call on the Government to take all immediate and necessary steps in the shortest possible time to deal with the unacceptable crime level facing the citizenry of—the country.

You know, Madam President, it is interesting—I would say that I became interested in politics in my mid twenties while a broadcaster on radio. It is actually

bemusing to me that most politicians I have heard in the last 25 years when debates start on crime, and criminal justice, and criminality, usually stand and assertively state, crime should not be politicised, and then go on in the same sentence or the same paragraph to politicise crime. [*Desk thumping*]

In any incarnation of any administration and Opposition no one is absolved from this. And, I think we find ourselves in Trinidad and Tobago, when we think about it, in a crisis, not at the hands of the criminals, but at the hands of the institutions that seem to have crumbled in this country, and critical institutions at that. And we are really fighting for economic justice, social justice, and for the criminal justice system. And we seem to have strayed, unfortunately, away from the wisdom of our founding fathers, and by two in particular: Dr. Eric Williams and Dr. Rudranath Capildeo, who sometimes is not given the kind of prominence he should be given. [*Desk thumping*]

And when we think about our nation's watchwords and our nation's credo, and the fact that they are not as prominent as they would have been 15, 20 years ago in schools, and the national discourse, and in discussions, we take the power of them and the wisdom of our founding fathers for granted. When you realize the importance of discipline, tolerance and production in the context of the issues, the challenges that we are facing in Trinidad and Tobago today, a crisis of indiscipline, a crisis of intolerance, and an absence of production and productivity, we realize, if we look clearly, where the real problems lie. If we look at how far we have strayed, we seem to be at a point of anathema to "*Together we aspire, together we achieve*", and we seem to have thrown away these mandates, as they were, from our founding fathers in terms of the security of the future of this country.

I stood, since the Motion was moved, and commendably so by Sen. Sturge,

about crime. Because crime, corruption and the economy have been the three major critical issues in the run up to elections for the last 20 years in Trinidad and Tobago. And, the fact that we say we do not politicise crime but we end up doing that, and I just want to run some statistics to show that you know really no administration can absolve itself, and if we do not realize that Government, Opposition and Independents have to work together. And without one or the other working together, or all working together, we cannot solve this, we are going to have a problem.

And while I commend Sen. Sturge for bringing the Motion, because I think it is critical at this time, there is some of the wording that has me a bit uncomfortable—not that I do not think that his intention was honourable—but the part that says:

“...this Senate call on the Government to take all immediate and necessary steps in the shortest possible time to deal with the unacceptable crime level facing the citizenry of”—the country.

It sort of implies to me, it may be erroneously so, that it is the responsibility of the Government, and Sen. Moore just indicated in her contribution—and congratulations on your contribution Sen. Moore—that because the Government is in power the responsibility lies on their shoulders, and I totally disagree. I disagree vehemently, because no Government can solve crime without the Opposition or the Independents. No Government! [*Desk thumping*] As we have seen since 2000, and I will read the statistics: Murder rate, 2000, 118; 2001, 151; 2002, 171; 2003, 229; 2004, 260; 2005, 386; 2006 , 368; 2007, 395; 2008—we peaked—550 murders in Trinidad and Tobago; 2009, 509; 2010, 485; 2011, 354; 2012, 383; 2013, 408; 2014, 403; 2015, 416; and 2016, 463 or 462 depending on the source

that you use.

This period spans several different administrations, and if we look at these numbers, all these administrations have failed in relative context in terms of dealing with one of the major barometers of crime, which is murders in Trinidad and Tobago. So, if we still go with the mindset or the philosophy that crime is the responsibility of the Government, we are going to continue to fail in dealing with crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

The other issue I want to highlight in terms of dealing with this issue of crime is my deep concern that because we have normalized the murders of males as gang related, in many instances, we have now seen the criminals move to the murder of women and children. This country went into depression three or four days before Christmas last year with the murder of Shannon Banfield. There was an outrage, blogs, talk shows, “this must stop, this innocent young girl killed”. And since then we have seen the murders of: Sylvestine Gonzales-Bernard, Kathy Ann Bernard, Dorothy Hosein, Abiela Adams, Jamilya De Revenaux, Nadia Simms, Rachael Ramkission, Luenda Anthony, Balmatie Balchan, Christine Joseph, Celine “Ameena” Thomas, Cynthia Matthews, Cheryl Joan Cooper, WPC Nyasha Joseph, Petra Manwaring, Sharlene Somai, and three others, bringing the toll to 19, just before Christmas last year.

4.00 p.m.

So while we went into an uproar for Shannon Banfield, there were 18 additions to her in terms of women and girls which is a frightening development. And this is not to diminish the abhorrence of the murders of males even if they are gang related, because we sometimes seem to want to find comfort in the fact that, well he was a member of a gang, so his death means nothing and “We doh have to

worry about that because it is not our family, is she and he raised ah gang leader or ah gang member so they deserve to die and we shouldn't take them on". And that is why we find ourselves in this position.

In addition to the 19, let me read some rape—reported rape statistics to show how critical the issue is and to underscore the fact that if we continue with the mindset that it is the Government's responsibility because they are in power, we are sadly mistaken and we will continue to be lost. It is everyone's responsibility— Government, Opposition, Independents, the church, the schools— every single person in this country. Rapes: 2008, 670; 2009, 642; 2010, 632 reported rapes; 2014, 829 reported rapes. And if we know, if we are au courant with statistics on rape in any jurisdiction, we know that this is just a drop in the bucket.

This is probably less than half, and I am being very conservative by saying half, of the number of rapes that are actually occurring in this country. That is not even counting assaults and abuse, physiological, emotional and physical. So I think we really need to get off the mindset about crime being any particular entity's responsibility in this country, because that is part of the counter-productivity we are facing in dealing with crime.

Sen. Moore indicated, well, the Opposition cannot make laws and pass laws, but the Opposition can contribute to passing laws, especially laws that require a three-fifths majority, which in many instances are the critical laws that have to deal with the criminal justice system in Trinidad and Tobago. And we have seen that in several incarnations, from Dr. Eric Williams to George Chambers, to the late ANR Robinson, to the late Patrick Manning, to Mr. Basdeo Panday, and again if I am not mistaken in terms of my chronology, the late Mr. Manning again and then Mrs.

Persad-Bissessar and now Dr. Keith Rowley. Every administration has had to deal with this issue of crime and deal with the divide that seems to be the stumbling block or the obstacle of Government versus Opposition in that mindset that we seem to be stuck in, in Trinidad and Tobago, in dealing with crime and several other critical issues. And to me that is where we need to place our issues—our attention in Trinidad and Tobago.

A criminal justice system, according to the Ministry of Justice communiqué in 2013, is a set of agencies and processes established by governments to control crime and impose penalties on those who violate laws. The criminal justice system of Trinidad and Tobago is a collaborative alliance of government agencies, institutions aimed at maintaining the rule of law for the preservation of human life, liberty, property and ensuring social control, deterring and mitigating criminal activity and reprimanding individuals that violate laws with the appropriate criminal penalty coupled with rehabilitative efforts; and I will deal with that in more detail later on because that is almost non-existent in Trinidad and Tobago.

The criminal justice system aims for the execution of swift justice and efficient management of both offenders and victims, ensuring the process is conducted in an unbiased manner and the accused is protected against the abuse of investigatory and prosecution powers.

In terms of global analyses, a criminal justice system is a system of practices and institutions of governments directed at upholding social control, deterring and mitigating crime and/or sanctioning those who violate laws with criminal penalties and rehabilitation efforts always in the equation, and those accused of crime have some protections against abuse of investigatory and prosecutorial powers. Basically, those are the issues that to me we are facing when we are trying to deal

with crime in Trinidad and Tobago or any other jurisdiction for that matter.

Let me start with the issue of the education system, which many will realize is my deep passion, but I would not stay too long on that because I want to deal with the issue of the police service and also the penal system in Trinidad and Tobago. And we have to look at the way we identify behavioural issues in young people, because right now we are trying to corral the horse long after it is bolted.

I listened with horror, recently, discussions on Carnival every year. “We waylay we body” from Boxing Day, we intensify the celebrations the week before Carnival, productivity drops to an all-time low, we clock in work and clock out, because we have all-inclusive to go to. So we party the week before Carnival. Monday and Tuesday off in most instances to play mas—I am not against Carnival—and Ash Wednesday we take an extra day.

So, the issue has come up that, well the absenteeism levels in schools on Ash Wednesday, and what is now described as Ash Thursday, is very low. The solution proffered, take the rest of the week off. That is how we identify and solve problems in Trinidad and Tobago. We do not look at corralling the indiscipline, we extend it or we suggest that it is to extend it. That is how we seek to identify and solve problems and that is symbolic of how we seem to deal with everything. We have a problem with Ash Wednesday, take Thursday and Friday off and in some instances they will get even bolder, and say, you know what, I will take an extra Monday off after that because I could fly to Miami, if I could get the foreign exchange.

We have an issue recently of indiscipline in schools. The suggestion is, shorten the lunch hour—shorten the lunch hour. Not find out why the indiscipline is happening, you know. Presume that if they have 30 minutes instead of one hour,

it will have no indiscipline. How does that make any sense? Where is the empirical evidence to support even the mention of the suggestion in open air? Why are we not looking at the models that are working? Do they have half an hour lunches in Japan or Norway, or Sweden, would have constantly topped the education listings for decades? Or as a matter of fact, are they going in the opposite direction because they understand that play is important in terms of developing children's creativity, innovation and social interaction in a productive manner. Why do we not just then tie them to the desks if we do not really want to solve the problem, or we just want to corral them in a little room?

Newsday, Tuesday, April 18, 2017, behaviour change consultant, Franklyn Dolly:

“We are breeding criminals”

Now I really, I am uncomfortable with classifying children as criminals or monsters if it is anything else, because labelling has a powerful effect on a child's mind and psyche. If you call me a criminal at seven years old, self-fulfilling prophecy, I will turn out a criminal because “yuh done call meh dat already”. But even—and I understand the media sometimes, this is the catchy headline, this may not have characterized his intention or his contribution, but he has made some very interesting points in-between about how our education system is contributing to the problem down the line that we are trying to solve by policing and extremely punitive measures.

There are many children who are not being addressed effectively in the nation's schools. Primarily, according to Prof. Deosaran, and I know as Sen. Coppin's quoted from Prof. Deosaran, one of his publications about the issue with the urban youth, that Prof. Deosaran has done quite a bit of research in the nation's

prisons and found that those who populate the prisons are the ones who would have fallen through the cracks. They would have flunked out of school, they would not have been addressed by the education system because we still somehow have the mindset that, well, if a child is not doing well it is the child's fault, the child is "duncey", so let us move on to the next child who is bright, which is not the mindset in the developed world.

In the developed world there is a heavy focus on those in the lower 30th percentile, the ones who are not coping with the curriculum in the system, because those are the ones who are most vulnerable, those are the ones who if they cannot work within the system are going to fall prey to the criminals and the gangs. And we still have not effectively gotten to the point where our education system is dealing those who more than likely would have some undiagnosed learning disability—in some cases, extremely—very easily remedied if they are identified. So Mr. Dolly is saying and I quote:

"It is easy to give good news to the parents...It is easy to tell parents that because a child is not doing well they should get them in a particular sport..."—because if you are not doing well in math and science it means you could only do good in sport as if sport is a throwaway.

And that is something that should be within the curriculum as an essential part of a child's holistic education.

"What teachers are not skilled in is how to give bad news to a parent who loves their child. They either do it badly, or they avoid doing it."

When a parent is told that their child has a challenge and they need to get some sort of access—those who can afford it will get the assessment done and those who cannot afford it would be referred to a guidance clinic from the Student

Support Services to get a maximum, as I understand it, of \$2,500 a year and if you know anything about learning disabilities and special ed, \$2,500 is woefully inadequate.

As a matter of fact I had the honour to host the Down Syndrome Family Network annual conference recently and heard a parent stand and was almost brought to tears because since his 11-year-old was born he has not bought a beer, gone to a party, bought any new clothing because every cent he has and can borrow has to go in for remediation services for his child. I spoke to another mother recently whose child has Down syndrome and to get this \$2,500, which is also woefully inadequate to remediate and give the child the support services her child needs, she has to fill out forms to prove that her child still has Down syndrome every year. That is the kind of nonsense parents are dealing with in Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition to the fact that the \$2,500 is not nearly enough. And that is a special need, that is not particularly classified as a learning disability in the context. He said and I go on to quote Mr. Dolly, and I am saying this in the context—I may seem to be straying—in the context of the input and the output flows of criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago and what the genesis of it is in many instances, in any jurisdiction. If children fall through the cracks, they become more vulnerable to criminal activity later on in life. It is a very strong correlation.

If a child is not being engaged in school, the child is becoming more frustrated and the child goes on to start to misbehave, be distractive in the class, in some instances, zone out and feel, well, the system abandoned me, so you know what, I am going to just go through the system and normalize what I see in my

neighbourhood; as the gang leader, well, he did not go to school and he is driving a Range Rover, so I could aspire to that because it has become normalized in his or her life. And we tend to focus on the boys, and the girls are becoming more and more vulnerable in that sort of way also.

Prof. Deosaran, in the book quoted by Sen. Cummings, *Inequality, Crime & Education in Trinidad and Tobago: Removing the Masks*, he brings to light a scrutiny of a subject that has plagued our society for many years and to which much talk and money has been directed with unsatisfactory results. The education system is in a state of trauma and failure and crisis and needs intervention, and no amount of any Minister—and I am not casting aspersions to as to the present Minister, but I am talking about successive Ministers of Education—who can tout about successes can turn their backs on the fact that there is a huge cadre of students who are not being addressed adequately in the education system and the system is failing them. Prof. Deosaran has at his disposal several years of empirical evidence and survey that he has mobilized to illustrate the fact—he went on to posit:

“Such a system, with its manifest unfairness in the placement of a small minority of students in ‘prestige’ ...”—schools...
—which is also an issue in Trinidad and Tobago as if we have resigned ourselves to the fact that well, we have prestige schools and we have government schools. And government schools will always be lower in possibility to the prestige schools, which is not the case if the proper systems are put in place.

In the Scandinavian countries, the state-run schools are the most successful schools, not the so-called prestige schools. Prof. Deosaran has also agreed with Mr. Dolly in saying that the schools turn out to be a veritable breeding ground for

criminals in many instances and are on the assertive supply side of criminality because of what they are doing or not doing for our nation's children. It is a significant part of the real problems with students being allowed, and we are comfortable with it in this country, to fall through the cracks, because every year we are writing—students are writing SEA next week Tuesday, I think it is, on the 4th—and when the results come out there is a tendency for heavy focus on those who have done well. And that is right because they have worked hard, but we also need to equally focus on those who have not done well because there is a reason they did not do well. It is not because “dey duncey or dey stupid”, it is because the system is failing them. When more than 15 per cent of any population is falling below the cracks or not making the benchmark, it is not the child, it is the system that is failing. [*Desk thumping*]

We must get to the point, and you know, the interesting thing is our Constitution mandates that education is our right and that parent has the right to send their child to the school of their choice, but can that school of choice really provide what that child needs, because children are not apples. They are individuals and they are unique so they all have special and different needs and, yes, the system will catch and provide for most but there are some, more than 20 per cent who need different kind of attention and differentiated instruction.

The other issue that we are facing in our schools, and we seem to want to gloss it over these days, is the issue of how much violence and abuse a child faces at the primary and secondary level in our country. And what impact that has on the child's psychology and personality later on. Because if you talk to 30 parents, they will tell you, more than 75 per cent of them will tell you, that their child has complained about bullying and abuse that is affecting their functioning in the

schools that is not being addressed.

In many cases it is being covered up by administrators because they just do not want to deal with it. And it has to be dealt with in a proactive manner. We have to assume every school has bullies. Every school has children who have been exposed in their home setting to violence and abuse of some sort and they come to school and transfer that and if it is one institution we have in the country that, according to our law that every citizen must pass through at least until they are 12 years old, is the education system.

So the education system is a natural opportunity for us to deal with these problems and we also need to address the situation regarding the fact that we want to be a developed country, we want to follow the best countries in the world but our education system only mandates that our children go to school until they are 12 years old. How does that make sense? How can we develop a person's full potential in 12 years? So we see a huge drop-off, about 2,500 to 3,000 students, between those who write the SEA and those who end up in secondary schools. What is happening to that cadre of students? Where are they ending up? That needs to be dealt with assertively.

Madam President, you know, our Constitution sets out fundamental rights and freedom of citizens and these rights which all citizens are entitled to which are protected in our Constitution, sections 4 and 5 provide that these rights:

“...exist, without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex...”

And among the rights and freedoms protected are:

“(a) the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived”—of these—

“except by due process of law;”

Of the numbers that I quoted earlier on, between 2000 and 2016, how many of these citizens have been afforded the right to life, liberty and security of the person, when their lives have been taken from them, in many cases with no justice for the family. Is the State providing security as it should? And again, I stress, I do not believe that it is the Government's responsibility alone. It is the responsibility of all elected and selected officials and institutions to contribute to the fight against crime in Trinidad and Tobago, because if we do not understand that we are going to have problems all through.

The other issue is, in Trinidad and Tobago, of course, law enforcement, and I use the term generously, because based on the statistics available I do not see that much law being enforced and we can, in the other place and in this honourable Senate, pass and amend all the laws in the world. We can have the best laws and Bills brought forward by the hon. Attorney General, we can have the laws amended in the other place and in this place and if we are not enforcing them, what is the point? There is no point to it.

Law enforcement, poor detection rates, 15 per cent and below, solvency rates 14 per cent and below, poor community relations, public perception about corruption in the police service negatively impacting the public cooperation and partnership with the police service and police cannot do their jobs without the assistance and cooperation of the general public who will not cooperate if they do not trust the police. The tragic thing about that is the majority of our police service members, men and women, are hard-working and trying to be honest.

Madam President, I have a friend who was a police officer, whose name I shall not divulge, who joined the service about 14 years ago and was determined to

make a difference. And he was assigned to a group and he went on an assignment and I remember him telling me this story in tears. The assignment took him to the north coast of Trinidad and Tobago and he was the “young poule” as they called him, I think, the new one in the batch. So he was just observing and learning and he observed the group positioned themselves by the sea and lights flashing and a vessel came ashore and dropped a parcel and he said, “What is that about?” He was told, “Shut your mouth and comply”, because, “We going on runs, it have police in front ah yuh and it have police behind yuh and bullet doh have no eyes”. So he complied. He shut his mouth, which automatically made him complicit and he stayed five more years in the service and he got out, because that is not the life he wanted for himself.

Madam President: Sen. Richards, you have five more minutes.

Sen. P. Richards: Unfortunately, where does this time go? Anyway, that is the sort of issue we are dealing with and we are seeing assertions by the Police Complaints Authority, Director David West, for the expanded parts of the Police Complaints Authority. That is not beyond this Parliament because the more confidence we have in the police service the more cooperation we will get from the general public. I do not know where the time flies, but I wanted to deal now with prison reform and the fact that we have had so many instances of the prisons in Trinidad and Tobago being less than what they should be.

The jailbreak, in 20—is it 15?—where the police constable lost his life which shut down Port of Spain and had the country unnerved. The recent huge drug bust at a prison, allegations of access to inmates in and out and people coming in and out for entertaining purposes and the list goes on and on, in terms of a lack of proper restorative justice systems and recently the hon. Prime Minister

commended, Wayne Chance, Vision on Mission for the work they are doing, but this—when you look at the recidivism rates in Trinidad and Tobago, 61 per cent and more, you will realize that we are recycling criminals.

In the Netherlands, they will close five prisons in the next five years because the cost of maintaining these prisons are too high and they have had a steady decline in the crime rate and now they simply have no, or very few, inmates. So they have to find other uses, other purposes for prisons in these countries, because they are heavily focused on rehabilitation and restorative justice, because they know more, the larger percentage are not death row inmates, they will not spend their life in there, they will come back out and they need to be rehabilitated and transformed to be productive citizens in Trinidad and Tobago; otherwise it is more cost to the State to run them down again, more cost to the courts to process them and more cost to the State to deal with this recycling door of criminality in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, that is something we need to deal with assertively in Trinidad and Tobago. In Sweden, new prisons are being constructed with secondary schools and tertiary level institutions inside, because they understand if you educate that person and transform their mind and give them a skills set they are more than likely going to come out to be a productive citizen and not reoffend and end up back in the system. That is how forward-thinking they are. We treat them like animals and I have a whole list of issues in the nation's prisons from Justice Sat Sharma, amongst many others who have spoken about the abhorrent conditions in the nation's prisons that really turn them into animals, as Sen. Moore indicated. It is basically the university of banditry and murder, because you go in, sometimes as what one may consider a "softer" offender and you come out with

skill sets and networks that make you even more a menace to society. And with that I realize I am running out of time.

Madam President: You have two more minutes.

Sen. P. Richards: I just wanted to underscore the need and the urgency for a mindset to change regarding collaborative work, in terms of dealing with national issues in Trinidad and Tobago. It cannot be that we have just created or made poor leaders for 54 years. We have to work together to strengthen the institutions—the Police Service Commission, the Teaching Service Commission, the Police Complaints Authority, the Judiciary, even this honourable House in the other place—otherwise we will continue to blame people and point fingers and make no progress at all in terms of dealing with our challenges in Trinidad and Tobago to move us forward to developed country status and to serve the citizens adequately. Madam President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Hon. Senators, at this stage we will suspend and we will return at five minutes past five. So we are suspended until five past five.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. VICE PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Mr. Vice-President: Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Dennis Moses): Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. As Minister in the Ministry of National Security and a member of the National Security Council, I wish to assure this honourable House and the citizens of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that their Government is taking all the appropriate steps, the strategic steps, necessary to address the issue of crime

and criminality in our country. The Minister of National Security has, in a fulsome manner, contributed to this debate on the 28th of last month. As in times past on a number of separate occasions in the past, he would have given updates and detailed Government's policies, efforts, activities and, indeed, the orientation in our fight against crime.

On the same day, on the 28th of March, Sen. Coppin would have debunked and repudiated in quite some detail, the assertions, proposals and reasoning underpinning as used by Sen. Sturge in support of the Motion. I would therefore focus on other aspects of this longstanding and intractable scourge that is represented by the high level, or relative high level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. Criminals have posed a threat to people everywhere. Property and law and order as well, have come under the attack of criminals since time immemorial. However, due to the inter-relation and amongst countries in the world today, crime has become even more organized and transnational. The Caribbean has been called the third border of the United States of America, which illustrates that country's close geographical linkage to the region. It is recognized that due to the geographical proximity and long-standing commitment to collaboration, the United States of America and countries of Latin America will remain key partners for cooperation with Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago sought to not only build upon this long-standing and close relationship with the United States, but also to enhance our border protection capabilities by signing a Memorandum of Intent just last week on April 27th. This Memorandum of Intent provides for the establishment of a state-of-the-art border control system that documents the arrivals and departures of international travellers at airports and seaports in our

country. This system called the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System or otherwise known as PISCES, will strengthen the security of Trinidad and Tobago as well as the United States and other partner countries by increasing the ability of the Immigration Division to document and share information with regard to travellers' identity. PISCES will support the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's efforts to improve border security and ensure the safety of its citizens. Most importantly, Mr. Vice President, this system will be owned and operated by our country.

Just turning to another area of crime, we would know that this has turned into a global business where these nefarious activities occurring in one country simultaneously affect other countries. Global criminality which manifested itself in localized violence within countries has a potential to turn into widespread threats in societies of citizens, cities, indeed states and even entire regions. As such, Trinidad and Tobago is cognizant that its work must be in conjunction alongside other partners in the global community in order to protect its citizens and combat criminal elements and deter unlawfulness in our society.

Given our holistic understanding of the dynamics of the realities of crime in this century, we have sought to engage in strategic partnerships not only to ensure the safety and security of our citizens, but also to maintain law and order. For this reason the Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the United States in September of last year regarding the assignment of foreign liaison officers to the Joint Interagency Task Force South. This collaborative venture established a formal mechanism for liaison between the parties through the assignment of individuals at Government facilities to service as liaison officers. Accordingly, I am pleased to inform this House that a national of

TT—Trinidad and Tobago—was posted as the liaison officer at the Joint Interagency Task Force in Florida in February of this year.

Amongst the highest priorities of the Government is the security and safety of its citizens, as I said, and the borders as well. Diplomacy has proven and continues to be one of the main planks in support of—well, it is the best ways to protect Trinidad and Tobago and its people. Through Government's adherence to the whole-of-government approach to strategically address national issues, we were able to advance security cooperation with another country, our neighbour, Venezuela, through a joint security coordination meeting convened in Caracas last year. Trinidad and Tobago's embassy in Venezuela played a key role in the coordination and execution of the joint security coordination meeting where both countries were able to efficaciously discuss the elimination and movement of arms and other illicit activities in the waters and territories between our two countries.

We also executed and participated in the inventory exercise. Our collaboration in this undertaking is ongoing. We also, as part of our build to accomplish our goals, outlined in our official policy that is coming out of the PNM's manifesto for the last national elections that were held in 2015, we have recently granted instruments of appointments to two additional heads of mission. Mr. Vice-President, under the stewardship of this Government, the foreign policy of Trinidad and Tobago continues to be an extension of the domestic policy implemented in our country. Therefore, the appointments of these Heads of Missions to the United Kingdom and Costa Rica will continue to not only emphasize Trinidad and Tobago's interest in furthering bilateral strategic relationships and partnerships, but also will be utilized in pursuit of addressing our domestic needs in areas, including national security.

Mr. Vice President and hon. Members of the House, given all the contributions to date on this Motion made by the Government, Opposition and Independent Senators, one fact remains clear. All stakeholders must work together in order to effectively address the issue of crime. According to the United States—or rather the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the political will of States is mightier than the greed and firepower of criminal groups. The political will of this Government in the area of fighting crime is clearly manifested in the decisions we are making and the systems we are putting in place on the ground, about which many of my colleagues would have spoken. It is also evident in the bilateral arena where, outside of the public eye, critical decisions and agreements have and are being reached. The manifest political will of our Government is known to some and it is becoming increasingly known to others.

Mr. Vice-President, allow me to quote the Chargé d’Affaires at the United States Embassy who, on the signing on the occasion of the signing of the aforementioned PISCES Agreement recently—only about last week I think it would have been—he stated that this Government, meaning the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, is getting things done. I urge the Opposition to resist resorting to imagery involving blood, carnage and hysteria. Such has been the common thread in a number of contributions in this House on the Motion being debated, especially the first two contributions. Our country needs contributions to improve the lives and livelihoods of our people at this time. Let us focus on advancing our country and not on the dubious hope that some may buy into the picture being summoned of total mayhem in our country. We, the citizenry, know better.

Allow me to thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Ameen.

Sen. Khadijah Ameen: Mr. Vice-President, I want to thank you for this opportunity. I really have been looking forward to contribute to this debate as it is an Opposition Motion that calls on the Government to take all immediate and necessary steps in the shortest possible time to deal with the unacceptable levels of crime facing the citizens of this country. And today, as I speak, 164 persons have been murdered in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Vice-President, that number could vary because in the last few months we have seen many days where multiple murders are committed.

Mr. Vice-President, never before in the history of Trinidad and Tobago has there ever been so much blood in our nation due to murders. One hundred and sixty four murders in four months. And so sad to hear the hon. Minister of National Security who spoke just before me, ask Members, or ask that Members of the Opposition, and I quote him loosely: “refrain from using imagery of blood”. I do not know how many Members who sit in this House ever personally, first-hand, see what happens when a person is gunned down in the street. Blood flows in the street. The image is not optional; it is a reality every single day in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk Thumping*] and I have seen it. And every day families live through this trauma over and over again. For the Minister, it might be optional to expose himself to that image, but for many in Trinidad and Tobago, many citizens, we have no choice. This blood, Mr. Vice-President is on the hands of the People’s National Movement. I wonder if these words sound familiar: “And if the Government can’t deal with crime then the Government itself is part of the problem.” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Who said that?

Sen. K. Ameen: That was reported in an article in the *Express*, July 29, 2015, and

Unacceptable Levels of Violent Crime
(Government Steps to Deal With) (cont'd)
Sen. Ameen (cont'd)

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they were quoting Keith Rowley, then Leader of the Opposition; Dr. Keith Rowley, now Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Member: The story change.

Sen. K. Ameen: And I ask if the thoughts of the hon. Prime Minister has changed with regard to the Government being part of the problem. [*Desk thumping*] Now that the shoe is on the other foot, it is convenient to attack what was done by the People's Partnership in Government. And I am so disappointed, and I hear young Members on the opposite side spend so much time going on and attacking, conveniently and selectively, measures that were done. What you should have also quoted—what the Members on the other side should have quoted, Mr. Vice-President, are the statistics to compare crime and murder during the years when the People's Partnership was in government to the present Government. [*Desk thumping*]

In the 18 months, what have you done? What has the People's National Movement done? What has this Government done to reduce crime and to deal with the scourge upon our nation? The Government must answer to the people, and it is the role of the Opposition to hold the Government accountable, and the Opposition is doing our job. Are you doing your job? It is time to do your job. [*Desk thumping*]

The Government must answer to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Vice-President. They are in charge now, and they boast about it. You are in charge but you are not dealing with the problems. [*Desk thumping*] In the face of the failure of this PNM Government to deal with crime, it is the Opposition, the responsible Opposition, that brought this matter to be debated in the Parliament of our Republic. A responsible government would take the opportunity to account to

the population. You have been in Government for just over 18 months and I would have expected to hear in this debate from, particularly Members on the other side who are Ministers of Government, their plans and how their Ministry's programmes would fit into them as a Government dealing with crime and the scourge of crime. [*Desk thumping*]

I thought that if this Government was a responsible Government, it would have been putting forward solutions in this debate brought by the Opposition. This Government should be assuring citizens by outlining the measures that they have put in place; that they intend to put in place, the objectives and the time by which we could expect some results, and engaging citizens to get them on board. But this Government has no clear plan, or not plan at all, as to how to deal with crime. [*Desk thumping*] Apart from being a Member of this House, I am saddened as a citizen of this country at the Government's failure to account to the nation on crime and the spiralling rate of murders.

The Members of Government continue to blame the Opposition, blame the police. And I tell you, all those utterances are ringing hollow with the citizens of this country. You blame the Opposition, but what is your solution? You blame the police. And I want to say, Mr. Vice-President, that the protective services, the police, as well as the other protective services in this country, there are many hard-working officers who put their lives on the line every day, and the constraints that they work with oftentimes ought to be addressed in a holistic way, and simply attacking the police service is not going to get results.

The crime-fighting and a strategic approach to crime-fighting, policies regarding laws and strengthening our officers' ability to implement laws rest at the feet of the Government of the country. What we have seen is a lot of talk and

promises and really, PR, on measures to be brought to Parliament. We have had the Bail Bill; we have had the SSA matter that came through this House; we had the Bill to appoint the Police Commissioner. These were named as the Government's crime-fighting methods, you know. And I wonder if they have measured the results they get.

The appointment of a Police Commissioner, because of the incompetence of the Attorney General, was struck down in court because it violated the Constitution, and so on. There are some other measures: the trial by judge alone that recently came which, Mr. Vice-President, I mean, in that debate we have contributed our thoughts to that. But all of these measures are measures that will come into play after the crime is committed—after the fact. And the question remains as to how are you going to really measure the results? Are you going to attack the violence with more violence?

I remember there was an incident where the Minister of National Security, sometime earlier this year, in an interview with a newspaper, a gentlemen had been shot and killed in south Trinidad and he was described as a known mischief-maker and he had a number of matters before the court, and so on, and the Minister of National Security, in commenting, had made a statement encouraging the police to make things hard for people who are mischievous—the mischievous elements. And that in itself, Mr. Vice-President, cannot be an approach to confronting violence in our country. That type of approach will really only get you further and further down the rabbit hole, in terms of violence.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to touch on a few areas that I feel can be categorized as the softer approach to crime-fighting. Before me, earlier in this debate, Sen. Paul Richards mentioned our treatment of children as criminals; the

use of education in a constructive way to treat with and to prevent children from going down a rebellious route. And some of the issues that I plan to present today are similar in nature. Mr. Vice-President, we speak of crime and justice and the administration of justice. There is no question that the justice system has led many citizens to feel that justice will not be served. And if your relative is murdered and you do not feel that justice will be done and you live in an environment that makes it easy to access a weapon, consider the position of an emotionally distraught relative of a murdered person who saw their relative gunned down in cold blood—blood running on the street, literally, with access to illegal guns, and ask yourself if we are not allowing those elements to combine to create another crime. So from the perception that justice will not be done, it follows very often that the citizens take justice into their own hands, and you have a lot of reprisal killings because people also feel that they may not even be arrested.

Mr. Vice-President, I expect that, hopefully, somewhere along the debate, we could hear from the Government as to the infrastructure that is required in terms of courtrooms, the court spaces that are suitable to the effective administration of justice, to deal with case management and expedite the system, prevent backlogs, but also court spaces that are suitable to mediation and dealing with families and troubled children, as mentioned by Sen. Paul Richards before me. I would like to hear from the Government of further legislative support which could be brought into being to facilitate that type of approach to crime-fighting, as opposed to just the punitive measures. We have seen cuts in funding in various areas, but there are many agencies and departments such as the Children's Authority, the Children's Protection Unit, the Family Court, that I would like to hear the Government account in this debate, because those things have an impact

on the rate of crime.

Mr. Vice-President, when the People's Partnership was in government we had a Ministry of Justice and through that Ministry the government had made a commitment to deliver on the promise to the people of Trinidad and Tobago to modernize the administration of justice in our country. In early 2013, the Partnership agreed to spearhead the construction of four judicial centres. One was in Sangre Grande, one at Trincity, one at Carlsen Field and one in Siparia. If we are going to speak about the modernization of justice, if we are speaking about increasing the efficiency of the justice system as a deterrent to crime, the Government has to speak about giving the Judiciary the support to having an environment that is conducive to that, that would also include spaces for mediation and counselling which we cannot do in the present atmosphere at the courts in terms of space, and so on. They really are challenged.

The dignity of the court must be maintained. Under the People's Partnership Government the designs of those buildings really shifted to reflect that change from using the retributive methods of punishment to include more restorative techniques for offender management. I think this is particularly important when it comes to young offenders. And I am mentioning that, as Sen. Paul Richards said something that really stuck with me, in that he had a difficulty calling children criminals. And so if we take them to the courts and treat them like criminals, we may be, in fact, causing them to become repeat offenders. Mr. Vice-President, which brings me to another point, and again dealing with the social risks that lead to crime, and if they are not addressed by the Government we will continue to see murders increasing.

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Madam President, parental criminality, where either one or both parents are involved in crime, is considered to be a risk factor behind the development of criminality in children and in adolescence. Apart from even the actual parents, the very environment where it is almost normal to see laws being broken, there are children who grow up seeing illegal firearms on a regular basis. It is normal to them. There are several studies that I looked at that indicated positive relationships between parental criminality and criminal behaviours in children, which can be referred to as intergenerational continuity. I just want to mention some figures, Madam President. The results of the Cambridge study focusing on a sample of 411 south London boys revealed that parental criminality is especially a risk factor for children ages eight to 10. They found of all boys with a criminal father, 49 per cent already had a criminal record compared to 18 per cent of the boys without a criminal father. If both parents were criminals, about 63 per cent of all boys had a police record, compared to 41 per cent with one criminal parent. Thus the higher level of criminality in a child's family background, the higher the risk of its criminal behaviour, and it appeared that criminal mothers had a stronger influence on girls and fathers on the boys. Unfortunately, I did not find any similar studies with regard to criminality and parents in the Caribbean or in Trinidad and Tobago, but certainly these statistics may be reflected in what takes place in our own country and should inform us about the approach we should take to fighting crime. Therefore, the question must be asked: What are the programmes that the Government intend to introduce, pilot or continue to ensure that these young children, these teenagers, who may be exposed, who may be at risk, are captured and protected in the right time?

5.35 p.m.

Previously, there was a Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development that was responsible for a lot of counselling programmes and so on that reached out to those at-risk and vulnerable youths. “You know they call it all kind ah thing, eh.” They tried to put all types of politically correct phrases. When you live in an area where a lot of crime is reported you are stigmatized, young people are stigmatized, and these programmes really serve to reach communities like those to remove some of the risk and the susceptibility of these young people to turn into a life of crime.

I also want to touch, Madam President, on family violence and maltreatment of children, and the impact that has on crime. Family violence and maltreatment of children has significant intergenerational effects as well on an individual’s likelihood of becoming involved in crime, which is why we should not take the abuse of children lightly. Under the Partnership Government, we brought the Children’s Authority and a lot of work was done into the protection of children, but it takes a little more than the law or the agency. The Children’s Authority has complained bitterly about the lack of resources, the lack of funding, they are understaffed, and that is a matter for the Government to address because that agency is a protection to our children who are going to be vulnerable. There are a number of other programmes that reached out to those children who are abused or neglected.

Again, I just want to refer to something that I came across. It was a study that looked at 676 abused or neglected children. The study was entitled “The Cycle of Violence” and it was done in Washington by the US Department of Justice. It looked at 676 abused and neglected children, where those children who were abused or neglected were 38 per cent more likely to have been arrested for a

violent crime.

“The abused or neglected”—children—“were also 53% more likely to have been arrested as a juvenile. Physical abuse was more likely to lead to subsequent arrest for a violent crime than was sexual abuse or neglect...”

So certainly some of these approaches ought to be looked at when you think about what our young people are exposed to, in terms of young people who are delinquent, who get into drug abuse, who have other behavioural problems in those adolescent ages 14 to 18.

I want to ask if this Government will continue to invest—well, let me rephrase that, Madam President. I want to call on this Government to continue to invest in programmes which will assist victims of abuse from turning to the lives of crime through life skill development and other character building initiatives. As a nation, we must do all that we can to not only protect the victims of crime, but the potential criminals, if you want to put it like that. I know we do not want to call our children criminals, but the fact is that children who become criminals are at risk or they are victims in their own way. So we must protect them from being drawn into a life of crime. If we have to address these issues, we can see young people being more productive and not reaching that point where they are arrested, they get thrown into the criminal justice system, justice is delayed, they stay in Remand for years and, again, more criminals are being trained in that way.

Madam Speaker, I want to urge the Government to examine the root of the social issues that lead to crime, rather than simply taking the hard approach. And while there is space for that, an enforcement, there is also a need for us to take an approach that will encourage, provide opportunities and alternatives to a life of crime. The other two critical components that I want to touch on, which would

lead individuals to be involved in criminal activities, are education and employment. Earlier, temporary Sen. Christlyn Moore mentioned unemployment and the increasing rate of unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago, and I was appalled to hear and see the responses from Members on the other side, really irresponsible and childish [*Desk thumping*] and I wonder if they are serious about this thing called governance.

You know the incompetence is just overflowing, and on top of that you have the arrogance and then you have this childish display. The fact is that unemployment and lack of opportunities, lack of education, does have an impact on crime. Education has an important role in influencing an individual's opportunity for success in society. Non-participation in school level education is a risk factor for later delinquency. I mean, sometimes I wonder where—you know when I see the reaction I really wonder where some of these people live. To me, it is as clear as day when there are no legitimate opportunities in terms of education and employment that crime is an opportunity that presents itself, and the rewards are there. It may not be a person's first preference, but sometimes they feel they have no choice, and for the Members opposite to try to diminish that point being made from this side it really—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Sturge: Mind-boggling.

Sen. K. Ameen:—is mind-boggling and I want to tell you that the population really—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Sturge: Will not be fooled.

Sen. K. Ameen:—will not be fooled by your behaviour. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, what we have seen over the last 18 months is that this Government continues to strangle wholesome opportunities that leave young

people vulnerable to crime and violence. The neglect of the education of our children, our most essential human capital.

This Government, Madam President, must be fair to citizens, and there are a number of initiatives by not only the past People's Partnership administration, but even Governments before that, that are credible and saw good results, and successive Governments must build on that. Granted that the PNM has chosen to spend their first year in office campaigning and bashing the People's Partnership Government, what they are in effect doing is punishing the citizens for the good strides that were made under the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*].

We are at a time, a very worrying time, when guns and violence and the activities in the areas surrounding some schools which are considered to be at-risk areas, but also inside the schools bullying is a huge issue. There are some schools that had, I was told, up to eight armed security guards. In the last budget the allocation for security in schools was significantly cut. That as well will have an impact on the behaviour that we see in schools because you simply do not have the security to help deal with some of these violent situations that erupt, and I wonder if the cuts in the budget for security in schools by this Government has anything to do with the increasing violence in schools today. You must ask yourself that.

You know when we see those vulnerable children being left, who are innocent victims of crime—A schoolboy was found dead in a drain behind his school and the Government did not seem to think that that was related to the school. I wonder if any one of them, who are parents, would send their children to school and feel comfortable if he was found in a drain dead behind the school. These activities, these incidents are normal, and the Minister wants to ask that we

do not dramatize and paint images of blood flowing in the streets. Tell that to the parents who lost their children due to violence in the last 18 months.

Madam President, the issue of young people, the youth of our nation, the opportunities and how lack of opportunities tie into violence and gang activities were touched on earlier in the debate, and the fact is that this PNM Government had left the youth of our nation fearful, vulnerable and neglected. I am just reminded of the—I am just seeing my note here where it was on the 21st of October where there was the incident with the father in South I mentioned, who was gunned down by the police, and Minister Dillon was speaking at a function and this was quoted in that article as well. So I just want to jump back there, Madam President, where the hon. Minister of National Security said and I quote:

“...harass”—individuals and—“make their lives untenable.”

He was speaking about individuals who have been disruptive, or had run afoul of the law. The Minister was condemned. The police must not operate above the law, and the police cannot gain the respect of the youth of our nation and the citizens at large if they continue with action like that, but the Minister cannot expect to see a dent in crime if he is endorsing that kind of behaviour by the police.
[*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, part of the reason that our nation lives in fear has to do with the fact that this Government still has no plan for crime. We are 18 months into the administration of this Government, they have three Ministers of National Security, millions of dollars are spent on the national security budget, and what you have as a result is the highest murder rate in over two decades in this country.
[*Desk thumping*] It is very clear that this Government really has no clue, and what you have is that cluelessness being coupled with arrogance, and in the face of that

Rome is burning, blood is flowing. If the Government cannot deal with crime then the Government itself is part of the problem, and if they cannot do their job they should resign.

Madam President, there is no doubt that the lack of opportunities and the massive cuts in—let me tell you, eh. I am saying it nicely by saying massive cuts in employment and all these things. The fact is that “people losing dey jobs every day, eh”. So whether you want come to Parliament on a technicality and say, “Well, technically, we did not fire them. Their contracts came to an end.” At the end of the day these people are facing the breadline, and they are facing the breadline because of the PNM’s incompetence and we cannot continue to pretend that those things do not exist.

What leaves people and young people vulnerable? Those lack of opportunities leave young people vulnerable to gang activities, to violence, to drugs, to chaos, and to a lifestyle that goes nowhere fast and ends in the street in blood. And some of those areas where young people who are not necessarily academically inclined, who would have gone into the technical and vocational studies, a lot of those areas in the last budget, this PNM Government cut the allocation to programmes like MiLAT and MYPART, the MIC, metal industries, YTEPP—[*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Ameen, you have five more minutes.

Sen. K. Ameen: Thank you. The PNM continues to strangle the young people of Trinidad and Tobago today. I want to urge those on the other side, Members of the Government, to stop punishing the young ambitious people of our nation by shoving aside the good things that were done because they were done by the People’s Partnership Government.

Successive Governments ought to build on what happened before and build our nation, create opportunities for our young people. Both education and unemployment are linked as the former contributes to the latter, and therefore, we must serve to address them both, the youth education and unemployment, but you also have adult education and unemployment. And it is not to say that a person who is not educated automatically goes into a life of crime because the fact is that there are many who are educated, very well educated, but because of the current atmosphere, because of the mismanagement of the PNM, they are losing their jobs. Very well qualified people, they as well are facing frustration. “Doh” feel that everybody who involved in violent crime that they are uneducated and dotish you know. There are people who are very smart, some very educated university graduates, but the opportunities that presented themselves, that looked prosperous, are what led them down that road. Therefore, the Government has to really treat with opportunities and employment to have an impact on crime and crime-fighting.

Madam President, today we have a Motion brought by the Opposition, on crime. The issue of crime and murder in Trinidad and Tobago has been on the forefront of national discussion for many months, and what is, I think, very concerning is the Government’s seeming—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Solomon: Indifference.

Sen. K. Ameen:—indifference. They are very indifferent about what is happening, they are very disconnected.

Madam President: Could the echoes in the room allow Sen. Ameen to finish her contribution?

Sen. K. Ameen: Thank you, Madam President. I do appreciate the support of my colleagues. *[Desk thumping]* Madam President, this Government cannot continue

to operate in the manner which they have been in terms of being arrogant, in terms of ignoring the population. There are times when you have to do your job and sometimes it might be unpopular, but it is very clear in the public opinion that when it comes to crime and dealing with crime and violence this Government is in competent, this Government is part of the problem, and if they cannot deal with the problem there is a solution, call an election and let the people decide. I thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus): Thank you very much, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to participate in this very important debate on the issue of crime. Now, Madam President, I think all of us would agree that the crime rate in this country is not one that we are comfortable with as citizens of this country, because no matter if we sit on this side as the Government, or on that side as the Opposition, or even our colleagues who are Independent Senators, when we leave this place and we leave this pace we are citizens who live in communities who could be affected by the crime. So crime is all of our business.

Madam President, I just want to take a slightly different approach in this debate because I think all that has to be said about the statistics, the links have been said. I want to look a little—what is causing crime in this country? What is causing it? Madam President, learned psychologists have indicated that there are basically five main causes of crime:

1. the need that arises out of poverty;
2. the influence of drugs, alcohol;
3. the belief that the society is not giving them enough, and therefore, it is their right to take back;

Unacceptable Levels of Violent Crime
(Government Steps to Deal With)
Sen. The Hon. J. Baptiste-Primus (cont'd)

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4. to either gain money or to gain wealth; and
5. you have the impulsive crime.

But there are other factors when we look at our own scenario. At the top of the list I would place lack of proper parenting, and I will come back to these issues and drill down a little more if time permits. Then you have, Madam President, the influence of cable television, combined with that you have the influence of social media.

In addition, Madam President, we have the situation where there appears to be easy access to guns, drug trafficking, and we must not rule out that phenomenon called corruption in high places, and then the other issue about belonging to gangs. Now, let us take a look at the lack of proper parenting. I mean, all of us who are parents seated in this Chamber, or the ordinary citizen, we can be the best of parents but we cannot supervise our children 24/7, and therefore, the possibilities of external influences occupying the minds of our young children is very real. All of us as parents must face that reality.

Now, Madam President, how many of us as parents check on our children, for example, check their schoolbags on a regular basis to see what is in their schoolbags? Yes, indeed, the “Father” of this Nation did say that the future of the country lies in the schoolbags of the children, but there are other things that can be found in schoolchildren’s schoolbags. For example, if you are going through your children’s schoolbags and you identify certain objects that do not belong to them, what do you do as a good parent? I know when I was growing up—and I am sure that is the experience of almost everyone seated in this Chamber—if you go home from school and you had any item that did not belong to you, you will get a ring ears, or you will get some slaps, or you will be instructed—[*Interruption*]

Madam President: I apologize. Hon. Senators, it is now 6.00 p.m., you may recall that earlier in the proceedings, leave was granted to Sen. Ramdeen to raise a matter of urgent public importance. Sen. Ramdeen, you have 20 minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER

(LEAVE)

Continuous Water Supply

(Failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities)

Sen. Gerald Ramdeen: Madam President, I want to first thank you for exercising your discretion under Standing Order 16 to allow me to raise this matter of definite urgent public importance, and the matter I wish to raise by virtue of this Motion is the failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities to ensure that citizens throughout the country receive a continuous and proper supply of water.

Madam President, I do not think that as a Parliament, as a Senate, even reading the newspaper today and seeing that two out of the three daily newspapers have highlighted the plight that citizens are going through throughout this country, that we really understand the situation that citizens find themselves in when it come to a supply of water and it was brought home to me over the weekend.

Over the weekend I was in Icacos and I found it strange to see two large black cylindrical tanks at the side of the main road, and next to those tanks there were police officers with a police vehicle. I asked the people who were close to me, “Well, what is going on? Why do you have police officers next to these two large tanks?” And the reason why the police officers were there is because those tanks have been put there, water is placed in them at intermittent periods, and the officers are actually there armed to guard the water that is in those tanks, that are put there for the villagers in Icacos, Fullerton and Bamboo Villages.

UNREVISED

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)
(Continuous Water Supply
(Failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities) (con't)
Sen. Ramdeen (cont'd)

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Those citizens in those three areas, Madam President, Fullerton Village, Bamboo Village, Icacos, have not had a supply of pipe borne water for the past 45 days. It is unbelievable to see that you have children, who have little buckets that are toting water to their homes from a river. In 2017, with a budget of \$55 billion, we have reached back to the position where you have people at the side of the road by a standpipe. Most of the times the standpipe has no water in it, but you have children and parents taking buckets to take water to their home, in 2017 in Trinidad and Tobago?

Madam President, it was a UNC administration, under former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, in 1995—2002 that coined the slogan “Water for all”. It was a vision of a UNC administration to provide water for all of the citizens of this country. [*Desk thumping*] We must not forget that at that time we always like to be reminded between 2010 and 2015 what the price of oil was. It was over \$100 a barrel. But when Basdeo Panday and the UNC administration were in office between 1995 and 2000, oil was \$9 a barrel, and they had the vision to say we should have water for all.

Madam President, in 2010 when the UNC came into power, let me give the people of this country an idea of what they met. After all of the oil and gas and LNG between 2005 and 2010, when they came into office in 2010, 18 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago had water 24/7—a supply of water—and 38 per cent of the country were getting water five days for the week—18 per cent and 38 per cent. By 2015, under a Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration, 60 per cent of the people in this country had a water supply seven days a week; 80 per cent had water five days for the week. I stand next to my friend from Tobago. In 2010, 23 per cent in

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)
(Continuous Water Supply
(Failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities) (con't)
Sen. Ramdeen (cont'd)

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Tobago had water 24/7; in 2015, that figure had reached 70 per cent in Tobago.

6.05 p.m.

I want to use the opportunity, the short opportunity that I have in the short time that I have, to be a voice for those people in all of the different areas who, for the past few days and for the past few months, have not had a supply of water. A supply of pipe borne water to bathe, to cook, to clean, they do not have. The people—and it is not confined to one particular area, you know, Madam President: from Brazil to Talparo, Morvant, Lopinot, Paramin, Carapo, St. Joseph, Five Rivers, Tableland, Mount D’or, Barrackpore, Debe. One has to ask what is really going on in the Ministry of Public Utilities.

I left Icacos on Saturday where people had to take water from a river to take to their homes to clean their homes and on Sunday, I am passing on the Beetham and at the entrance to the landfill, you have a big fountain up in the air, gallons of water wasting, and one is wondering that you have people in this country who cannot get a pipe borne water supply, but on the Beetham, you have a fountain of water, thousands of barrels wasting, and nobody does anything. People in this country, in Icacos, the Councillor for Icacos, let me pay tribute to him. A UNC Councillor, Shankar Teelucksingh, had to buy 20 cases of water and distribute to the children in Icacos because they did not have water to drink over the weekend; they did not have water to drink.

And one has to ask, in times like this when these things are brought out in the public domain, what is the Minister and the Ministry of Public Utilities doing? Is there a unit set up somewhere so that communities that do not have water can actually contact the Ministry so that they will know they have no pipe borne water?

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)
(Continuous Water Supply
(Failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities) (con't)
Sen. Ramdeen (cont'd)

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You have communities that do not have water for 45 days. Can any one of us actually comprehend what it is like to live without pipe borne water for 45 days?

Madam President, what is even more inexplicable is that the Minister has told the public, well, there is no shortage. So if there is no shortage, then what has happened to the water supply in our country over the past few months? It has simply just broken down? Is it that the system has automatically collapsed? You have a black market now that has developed where the commodity that is being traded is water. People are paying a thousand dollars for a tank of water. A thousand dollars in these times for a tank of water? And you have people being robbed with their truck borne supply of water. I mean one has to wonder what is really going on in our country.

Madam President, every single community that I called out just now, you have people burning tyres for water, blocking the road for water. In 2017? And these people who have no other choice but to protest. In the *Daily Express* today, an article written by Michelle Loubon, and when you see this kind of anarchy going on, you have a Minister, an MP, after this has happened, saying, when asked about the protest in La Horquetta/Talparo, Member of Parliament, Maxie Cuffie said:

“It’s a fake protest. This protest was not about water. It is a UNC protest organised by...UNC council and some supporters. They have been organising it for...three months. Over the last week, there was a water shortage.”

Well if that is so, I wonder if the MP who made those statements would say that about 68-year-old Alloy Guillermo and his wife Susan who have been highlighted

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)
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in today's *Guardian* under an article headed:

“Heat for MP as pipes run dry”

“Water once per week, road falling apart in Moruga”

I am not going to go through this, you know, Madam President, what I want to highlight about this is that it has been reported in the daily newspaper that in this particular community in Moruga, you have 800 residents and their supply of water once per week is to fill two 1,000-gallon tanks for 800 citizens.

Madam President, when you do the maths in that, you know what it works out to? That a citizen in Moruga is surviving on 2.4 gallons of water a week. Two point four gallons of water a week in Moruga. A citizen and his wife, 68 years old, a pensioner, pulling a barrel on a box cart to carry water. Governance PNM style, 2017, with a budget of \$55 billion and a pensioner in Moruga pulling a barrel of water with his wife pushing it. And they are saying, the Government is telling us, that that is not real, it is fake, it is made up. Madam President, it is very, very disturbing to think that citizens who want a supply of water have to go through this. Every single newspaper today, the:

“Councillor for Todd's Road/Talparo, Ryan Rampersad, yesterday lamented...residents were not getting water on schedule...” for months.

That is Todd's Road.

“Penal residents block road

An inadequate water supply of pipe-borne water and bad roads yesterday triggered a fiery protest along Penal Rock Road...”

They were:

“...calling on the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) to ‘open the

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)
 (Continuous Water Supply
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 Sen. Ramdeen (cont'd)

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valves””.

Madam President, if we have no shortage then why is it that these communities are not getting a proper supply of water? One could understand if there is a shortage but the Minister has told us there is no shortage.

When you look at the comments of the Chairman of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, today again, *Guardian*, Tuesday, April 25, 2017, Radhica De Silva:

“Even as protests for water raged in the PNM led Moruga constituency, frustrated residents of Penal have reportedly now started resorting to violence by blocking water trucks and stealing the precious commodity.”

Madam President, to get water, residents are blocking the road and water has become like a precious commodity that people are stealing the water now. But you know what is disturbing about this article is that the headline is:

“Penal people being punished”

And the Chairman, Dr. Allen Sammy, is quoted as saying:

“...because people in these constituencies did not support the PNM, the people were being starved for water.”

Madam President, we must never bring ourselves down to the level where you discriminate politically against people to give them a precious commodity that allows their survival. You will do that with respect to water? If you are doing that with respect to water, what does it leave for anything else?

“Water is being used by the Government to punish the people of Penal/Debe for not supporting the PNM. Water is now a political tool.”

[*Crosstalk*] If I do not believe this? Madam President, this is what is going on

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today. The question is whether the Government believes it.

Sen. Sturge: “The reporter lying.”

Sen. G. Ramdeen: The question is whether the Government believes that there are people in this country who are being starved of water because one particular constituency—no, I do not believe it. You know why I do not believe it, Madam President? Let me tell you why. Because Icacos, Fullerton and Bamboo Village is in PNM constituencies but you know Icacos, Bamboo Village and Fullerton, it is the only seat run by a UNC councillor. So why they are not getting water there? Why Shankar Teelucksingh has to give water to the children there? “If I believe that.” I do not have to believe it, every single newspaper today is littered with what is going on.

“A Las Alturas, Morvant, resident said she has to spend...\$1,000 a week to get a proper water supply.”

Madam President: Sen. Ramdeen, you have five more minutes.

Sen. G. Ramdeen: I am obliged, Madam President.

“Many times, some children miss school because there is no water for showering.”

This is in Morvant, you know, Morvant.

“At times, they are armed with bottles...”

This is children we are talking about.

“At times, they are armed with bottles, buckets and receptacles and make the trek to the nearest standpipe in hopes of collecting water.”

That is what we know when we were growing up in the '80s and in the '70s, not in the 2017. You had 80 per cent of people in 2015 had water five days for the week.

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What has happened between 2015 and now? The only thing that I—the pipes did not change, the dams did not change, all that changed was the Government and since the Government changed, the supply gone. [*Desk thumping*] So water and the supply of water and the Ministry of Public Utilities has demonstrated again the minus touch of the PNM. Once they touch it, it goes down and it gone. So you reach the point where with respect to water, the people of this country cannot depend on the Government. They cannot stop crime, right, blame the Opposition. So what is the position with water?

Let us have a system set up. It cannot be that difficult that the Minister cannot set up a system where you can—let the Minister get out of his office on Richmond Street and go and work. Go into the communities, find out the areas that did not have water. Supply them. If you cannot give them a pipe borne supply, ensure that they get a truck borne supply. [*Desk thumping*] You have health centres that are closing. When people turn up at the health centres, the health centres are closed. Why? They do not have a supply of water.

In one of these articles, Madam President, it is said that Mount Hope was being shut down. The Minister was being told that Mount Hope had to close because they did not have a proper supply of water.

“Protest over bad roads, no water

Residents of Todds Road in Central Trinidad staged a fiery protest yesterday to highlight the lack of a proper water supply and deplorable roads.”

This is *Guardian* again, Tuesday, April 25, 2017, Shastri Boodan. He said:

“...the community of around 4,000 people receive a weekly supply but the pressure was too low to reach...”—their—“households. Rampersad said the

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roads in the community were...deplorable.”

I do not know. We might not believe that too.

“Councillor for Quinam /Mon Diablo, Diptee Ramnath, called on the police to protect the truckers.”

To protect the truckers!

“He said the south region’s retention dams including the Petrotrin dam, were not being maintained. Diptee also said the corporation had applied for \$3 million for water...but...received \$800,000.

Penal Councillor Shanti Boodram accused WASA officials of selling water...‘this is total victimization...’”

Madam President, in 2017, we cannot reach the point where a Government cannot supply proper water to the people of this country. They cannot supply proper water to the hospitals, the health centres, the schools, the businesses. Businesses are closing on a daily basis. Why? Because their toilets cannot flush. And the Minister tells us there is no shortage, there is nothing to worry about. Well, if there is no shortage, Madam President, then tell us why, in almost every single community, the people are starved of a proper supply of water. It is a common saying, Madam President, “water is life” and at the end of the day, if the Government is starving the people of water, they are starving them to death.

We are soon going to hear—the meteorological office has issued warnings saying make sure and have a good supply of drinking water because of the heat wave that is going on, and today, you have councillors having to buy water and give to children on the streets. It is unfortunate, Madam President, and I thank you for the opportunity for being able to raise this and I hope that the hon. Minister

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would be able to provide the country—not only the Opposition but be able to provide the country with the answer as to why this is going on and what is the solution that the Government is proposing so that the people of this country can once again have a proper supply of water.

I thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): I thank you very kindly, Madam President, for this opportunity to address the national community on this important matter, notwithstanding the exaggeration and hyperbole on the part of the Member opposite. I want to begin with a little housecleaning. The Member told us that 60 per cent, under the last administration, of the population got water 24 hours a day, seven days a week and that 80 per cent received water only five days per week. Now, I am not describing the Member, I am saying “dais duncey head mathematics, ah cyah understand it”. And in any event, quite apart from that, it may not even be true but that does not surprise me because that is what flows, like water ought to be flowing in the taps of everyone in this country, from the lips of my friends on the other side, untruths evermore.

The Member proposed a Motion here today, the matter is definite and among the reasons why it is definite. He tells us that there are specific communities that are, today as we speak, without a supply of water and it has been so for some time. He tells us that the matter is of public importance, among other things. He says health care institutions such as health centres and hospitals that are essential to the public are now under the threat of being shut down—“they eh shut down yet eh”, under the threat of being shut down because they have no water. I would really wish I had the time to ask him to tell me which one because there is none. There is

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absolutely none.

Before I get into my details, he made a comment about Mount Hope. Last weekend, I received a call that Mount Hope had no water and it was about to be shut down. I took the trouble to call the Chief Executive Officer of the North-Central Regional Health Authority under whose purview the Mount Hope hospital complex falls and I was happily informed, and not surprisingly because I know different. I was informed that the women's hospital carries a large tank farm close to 100,000 gallons and it was to capacity and there was no issue with water there and in respect of the main hospital, they had much more capacity than 99,000 gallons. I think about 140,000 gallons or more and it was up to capacity, and there was no problem. Later in the night, perusing Facebook, I saw the story about Mount Hope but by then I told my caller that that was all nonsense, rubbish, perpetrated by some people in this country behaving like terrorists, just as they do with crime and other things, trying to stir the population and to create unrest, hoping that there might be some political benefit from it.

Having said that, Madam President, I heard the Senator tell us that—with great aplomb you know, and apparent faked consternation—imagine in 2017 people have to use buckets and people by the standpipe. Well, it looks to me as though on September the 7th, 2015, they had pipes and then after that, the pipes went and now they had to use bucket again. It was so for the last five years under your administration. And to exacerbate the problem, your Government was responsible for mismanaging millions of dollars in this country that could have been used to resolve the problems. [*Desk thumping*] It is hypocritical to come here and tell the country that, but shamelessness is not as rare as he pretends that water

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is.

Madam President, he had the temerity to tell us about Mr. Panday saying “Water for all”. That was not Mr. Panday, it was a Member of Parliament called Mr. Ganga Singh in great scandal on a platform in Siparia along with his Opposition Leader whose coattail he holds and walks religiously behind, and they scandalized themselves on a political platform in this country. That is when they told us about pipe, pipe and more pipe and “Mr. Bissessar pipe” and “Ganga Singh pipe” and has the courage shamelessly to come here and resurrect that sordid aspect of our political history.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: “Bissessar pipe.”

Hon. F. Hinds: “All kind ah pipe.”

Sen. Sturge: “And you doh geh no pipe.”

Hon. F. Hinds: They should be beaten with many stripes—many pipes.

Madam President, let me say sadly, this country is still not at the point—WASA has been in existence and operating under law since 1865. We took it all over when we became independent. A whole lot of stuff has been done and a tremendous amount of money and consultancies have been executed, trying to bring it to the point where it ought to be. Sadly, today we are not able to produce water 24 hours a day to every household and every business that needs it in this country.

I lived in England for seven years and never one single day did I turn on my tap and not expect to get water, much less not get it, not once and that is the aspiration. But it had not been achieved in the last administration when they over-bloated WASA with employees and friends and family, had a VSEP, sent home

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people and then employed far more people than they released under a VSEP programme. So millions of dollars later, more people in WASA almost 6,000 people. WASA's payroll is about \$1.2 billion a year, as I speak to you. Take into account and match that against the fact that the gas subsidy in this country is about \$1.6 billion, and you will see how ridiculous this Motion is, and shameless they are to talk about WASA. But I would not let them detain me, let me speak to the national community.

The Member went on to tell us about Mr. Panday. There was oil at \$9 a barrel. Yes, but even though the oil was only \$9 a barrel, they went into the airport and created one of the biggest corruption scandals in this country. What was supposed to have cost \$400 million ended up costing us \$1.6 billion.

Sen. Ramdeen: Madam President, point of order, 46(1).

Hon. F. Hinds: He raised it.

Madam President: Minister, you have responded to something that was said but now can you move on, please.

Hon. F. Hinds: I am obliged, most obliged. WASA has been providing water to this country, as I told us, since its inception in 1965. During the annual dry season, Madam President, the management of the nation's water supply and distribution of water to the national community is always—it is a perennial challenge because we have six months of rainy season, six months dry. With the climatical changes taking place in the world and we are not unaffected by it, the rainy season, last, was not as rainy as it should have been. As a consequence, a large chunk of the country's water supply—there are three sources. We get water, ground water; we get surface water largely from the rain and we get some water from the

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desalination plant—a very costly exercise that they would know a lot about and put us into a take-or-pay contract that has WASA spinning on its head up to today but we are stuck in it. Again, the UNC.

Having regard to the above, I have mandated the Ministry's technical operators to work with WASA to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of available supplies. I spoke in this Parliament a few days ago in answer to—earlier today and last week in answers to questions about water here and pointed out, very carefully and truthfully, that we have four reservoirs, collection systems here: Hollis, Navet, Arima, in Trinidad and Hillsborough in Tobago. And I told this country happily and I used the word, they were all up to expected level at this time in anticipation of the dry season. So, in that sense, based on the question that was put to me, exaggeratedly, that there is water shortage in the country, I pointed out there was no water shortage. The issue is, are we able to provide water 24 hours a day to every citizen, every household, every business institution in Trinidad and Tobago, 24 hours a day? And as I said, that is not yet the case, it remains an aspiration.

I said, in that contribution, based on the current dry season conditions, WASA is taking steps to redistribute available supplies to meet the demand of customers. Production was previously increased at the Point Lisas desalination plant by approximately 2 million gallons per day. This country, through WASA, produces about 243 million gallons per day. A lot of it, unfortunately, because of inefficiencies and broken lines and porous lines, some of them as old as Methuselah, loses a substantial amount of the potable water produced for distribution to households. In addition to that, inside of people's households, there

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are leaking taps and bad functioning cisterns and what have you, exacerbating the problem and it is an expensive process. So we waste a lot of water, and one of the things this Minister has to do, in this capacity, is to take action to cause WASA to become much more efficient in that sense and to deal with this wastage of potable, non-revenue water. And that is what I am about, not the scandal and the hyperbole that my friend seems to enjoy.

My friend raises the question—so as I was telling you just before I press on, in the dry season, we anticipate that. WASA will be increasing production at its Caroni and Hollis Water Treatment Plants in Trinidad and Hillsborough Water Treatment Plant in Tobago by approximately 11.3 million gallons daily, all in anticipation of the very predictable dry season and these are—WASA has a tremendous amount of experience over the years. They operated in the last five years under the last Government, same WASA, and they are coping and trying to cope with the issues of distribution of water equitably around the country. We have not yet begun to impose any restrictions in Trinidad. Some exist in Tobago. But if it becomes necessary, we will do it here.

Because right now, with less rainfall, the rivers that flow into our water treatment plants have dropped from 65/70 million gallons down to 60 million gallons because that is a phenomenon of nature. It is the dry season as opposed to the wet or rainy season. And my friend does not seem to understand that. Is it that he does not understand nature or has no regards for the power of Almighty God? That is how it works. So we are doing what we have to do in that regard and when I said that there was no water shortage, that is the context in which I used it. And indeed, the only thing, perhaps, he said accurately today is that water is a precious

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commodity. And then spoke about people stealing water. Well, he will know a lot about stealing in the country.

Sen. Sturge: Point of order, 46(6).

Madam President: Minister, please, let us be very careful about how we present certain arguments. Okay?

Hon. F. Hinds: I am very mindful of that and I do not think I would offend the Standing Orders but I will press on. [*Crosstalk*] I will press on.

The Member told us that some Dr. Sammy, who is Chairman, I think it is, of some one of the corporations. He is reported in the newspaper as saying that the people of certain areas are being starved for water and that the Government is punishing people. But in the same breath, went on to tell us about Morvant, which I represented, which is a PNM-represented constituency and that they are having a water issue too and then told us in a word that they like so much, discrimination. Madam President, I assure you, we are not so simplistic, narrow-minded, unpatriotic and foolish. We understand that we are the Government and we are here to serve all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And that reckless statement about discrimination with water, that is political hype and hyperbole and designed to create a certain kind of behaviour out there that might lead to the protests, and so on, that you see. But I want those people to understand that, of course, is not the case. We are not about that.

6.35 p.m.

We were not in Government with no water to discriminate in 2015 and we won the election. We do not have to do that. They were kicked out of office. Sorry about that, let me put it more palatably. They were thrown out of office on

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their necks.

Madam President: Minister, you have five more minutes.

Hon. F. Hinds: I am obliged. We were not there to turn on or turn off any taps. And yes, some of the inefficiencies in WASA, I would be the first to say, has to do with some bad management, bad planning and indeed corruption. I could speak for an hour on bad management and bad planning, but to my friends on the other side, I need say nothing about corruption. I need say nothing about that.

So, as I wind to a conclusion, I got WASA's management today, the entire management and the entire board in front of us today, and we spoke about the situation in the country, and before I had reason to tell them—since earlier in the week they promised—they delivered to the Minister today, a very detailed water schedule in light of the fact that we are in the dry season. In light of the fact that we have reservoirs up to the level now, which we have to use sensibly and sparingly because as the rivers do not flow as they used to during the rainy season, you now have to go into your reserves, and you use that very sparingly. That is what is happening.

So we have devised a schedule, a copy of which I have and which will be published on Thursday and Friday of this week—a complete schedule for all to see—and everyone in the country will know when they are to expect water and on what days and in what circumstances, equitably and in the interest of all.

Madam President, there is much more to be said, but I do not think I need say anything more except to assure this Senate and to assure the people of Trinidad and Tobago who must reject and disregard the emotive, empty, baseless comments of the Senator who spoke just before me. I want to assure them that in terms of the

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long-term reform of the sector, to get us to be like Singapore, to get us to be like London, of which I hope, to get us to be like Israel—a deserted land, 67 per cent desert—that has mastered the art, the business of managing and distributing water, such that it exports water to its neighbouring countries and has made agriculture a flourishing industry in deserted lands. I believe we have the capacity to do that. I believe we have the intellectual abilities and talent in Trinidad and Tobago to do that and that is the aspiration.

So insofar as the long-term reform is concerned, only yesterday we met at City Hall, one of eight consultations around the country, where we are now planning—something that they were supposed to have done, but did not—to establish independent authority, water resources agency, and we are now shaping an integrated water resource management policy. That will take into account all aspects of collecting water, cleansing water, distributing water and preserving water, doing it in the context of current environmental demands, doing it with the projections of the societal needs into the future. That is the business of this Government. That is what we are doing, and we will do it without fear, favour, malice or ill-will.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Mahabir, you have five minutes.

Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, it reminds me of the old days when Sen. Hinds was withme in the Senate, so that there is always a level of action one could imagine, but let me get down to what is the crux of the matter.

Sen. Ramdeen has raised a very valuable point and, that is, there are some

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communities—he mentioned Fullerton, Icacos and Cedros. I think those are some of the rural communities—which have not been in receipt of water for a number of days, if not, perhaps, even a month. This has to be of concern to us in the national community. We are in a very dry period and water is a basic necessity.

How do we solve the problem? The hon. Minister has given us, Madam President, a schedule, but may I recommend the following in the short period of time that I have. I know it is going to be costly to actually truck the water to various communities, but we do have a military with military transport. If certain areas can be deemed to be emergency areas, I am sure we can make use of military vehicles, which would be of really little or no cost to the State to transport the water to some of these communities.

One thing we have not been doing, the Minister alluded to is what Israel has been doing, is desal plants with very small capacities. Could we consider now, for some of these rural coastal communities in Trinidad and Tobago which may be water deficient, some of these 10,000 gallons per day desal facilities? It is something that can go into the planning framework for WASA.

Another issue is that not all water, Madam President, has to be piped, because the piping structure can result in a lot of leakage, a lot of loss. The old-fashion drilling of wells in rural communities where wells with purified water can then form a water source so that communities will not have to go more than a few days without the water.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister indicated that we have four reservoirs, but we do have a situation where there is a rainy season with a huge amount of water being wasted and a dry season where our reservoirs run very low. I think we

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ought to give consideration now for the long term. So for the short term, military trucks to transport the water. For the communities, it can alleviate the problem.

In the long term, could we consider, as a matter of national policy, a number of smaller reservoirs, manmade lakes in the country which will capture the run off flood waters in the rainy season, so that we can expand the pool of freshwater inland Trinidad and Tobago from which we will then ensure one thing, we have adequate supplies of water regardless of climate change and, second, we will then be able to either truck that water or pipe that water to the communities.

I think if we were to look at it in the short term via truck borne and in the medium and long term via well water and desal plants, we will go somewhere towards solving this problem and ensuring that all of us have access to water on a daily basis. I thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Wayne Sturge: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I think it is an accepted truth that the only difference between us on this planet and every other planet in our solar system and beyond, is that we have water, and because we have water, water is that which sustains life. But what is an even greater irony, is that we live on an island. So imagine you are living on an island which, by definition, means it is surrounded by water, and a very small island with four dams and in the year 2017, in this new millennium, we are here quarrelling about water. [*Desk thumping*] Something must be seriously wrong with this country. So after my learned friend, Sen. Ramdeen moved the Motion, I expected to hear from the Minister opposite exactly how we intend to reach First Word status with respect to water. It seems as though we live in two Trinidad's. There are two Trinidad's in this country, which I would come to shortly. [*Crosstalk*] Yes,

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in five minutes' time. But it is amazing that we live in a country with so many tall buildings with the best of technology and so on, but we are still haggling about water.

So let me just raise this, because in the two Trinidad's that I was referring to—there are two Trinidad's. I was born in Serraneau Road in Belmont, grew up bathing by standpipe, toting water when it comes. In fact, if you are playing football, your mother would shout down the road. “Water come”, and game done for everybody because you have to tote water.

And do you know, Madam President, I have cause to be in Belmont regularly and nothing has changed, and Belmont is a PNM stronghold that never left the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] So when I heard the Minister talk about fake stories, I wonder if the protest in Morvant was fake. So let me give an instance of what is not fake.

I no longer live in Belmont. I have been living in west Trinidad for eight years, and I cannot remember a single day in west Trinidad that I did not have water. [*Desk thumping*] What it tells me is that this Government—and as I say this I remember the words of my very good friend, Dr. Cuthbert Joseph who was a Minister of Education and who told me about politics. He told me, listen you cannot give people everything they want. You have to keep them wanting. It is amazing that we are keeping the people of this country wanting for water of all things. [*Desk thumping*]

The murky lagoon comes to mind when I see the discrimination, because it does not have a water shortage in Hillsborough, Maraval where the Minister lives. [*Desk thumping*] It does not have a water shortage where I live [*Desk thumping*]

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but somehow in certain areas that rejected the PNM, they are somehow being punished by lack of water. That must be amazing, but let me say this.

Since it is fake, let me go on to something, yesterday. Something happened yesterday. I was in Tobago and whilst I was waiting on the court to open someone posted something on Facebook, a real person, by the way, Surujdeo Mangaroo. Hear his post. I always like to give credit where credit is due.

A big thanks to WASA for reinstating our water supply to normalcy in the San Francique area.

So then I went on. I say, listen man, water is your basic human right, you do not have to thank them, they are not doing you a favour that is your right. But what I found interesting—and if time permits I can read the comment of everybody else—everybody else is talking about the area they hail from which happens to be UNC areas, rural areas, and all of them, they are calling the different areas—“45 days we eh have no water. Two months we eh have no water”, and it goes on and on and on. I believe the profile is an open profile, so you can go and look at it. Sorry, the Minister can go and look at it and see that they are real people—
[Interruption]

Madam President: Sen. Sturge, your time is up.

Sen. W. Sturge: Thank you—who have this issue.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I just want to deal with three issues very, very briefly. First and foremost is UNC's statistics on water. From 1995 to 2001, Mr. Panday or Mr. Ganga Singh, whosoever it was, they coined this “Water for all by 2000”. That was the phrase at the time, and they

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invested heavily into WASA. They made you believe that they were almost reaching their target. But lo and behold the PNM came into power in 2001, 2002 and governed until 2010, but for some strange reason after we invested heavily into WASA, still when PNM left office 18 per cent was a 100 per cent supply, 38 per cent five days a week. Something is inherently inconsistent in the statistics. [*Desk thumping*]

From 2010 to 2015, Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the People's Partnership came into office. When they demitted office, all of a sudden, it is 60 per cent, 24/7 and 80 per cent, five days a week. I assume you include the 60 per cent, so that also qualifies. So I am clarifying it for you, Mr. Ramdeen and then into that. So you do not use statistics to play the fool and try to fool the population. [*Desk thumping*]

The second thing, Madam President, is that—let me give you all a technical discourse on water. You have a water source and the water source is impounded reservoirs which the Minister alluded to. There is a groundwater supply that is there that is caused by percolation. To correct Sen. Dhanayshar Mahabir, to trap groundwater you need aquifers. Aquifers are not ubiquitous all over Trinidad, so you just cannot drill anywhere and find water.

There is Desalcott which is treatment of saline water to make it into potable water, and there is direct intakes from water courses which is like north Oropouche, which we have. Then you have a water source, then you must have a transmission system. The transmission system is to take water from where the water source is to where you want it to be.

After your transmit water, which is on the big pipelines—the 36-inch

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pipeline, the 42-inch pipeline and the 28-inch pipeline—then you must have a distribution system. The distribution system is a smaller pipeline network. It is like your veins and your capillaries. The distribution system is like your capillaries, and the distribution system must have booster stations to keep carrying the water.

Trinidad, as the Minister said, Trinidad produces 243 million gallons of water per day. We do not have a problem with water supply, you know. That works out to 187 gallons per person per day. That is higher than the UK; that is higher than Israel. The issue is not production of potable water, the issue is in the distribution, the distribution network which has aged and which is inadequate.

The communities that are on the extremities of the distribution system are those that suffer is one thing, and then there are communities that are at high elevation where you need booster stations to take the water to Belmont, to Tunapuna on the hills, to Paramin, to parts of Maraval, to parts of Rich Plain and some of these places. That is the system in which we operate. Plus there is the ageing infrastructure with the leaks that the Minister spoke about.

So we understand what is happening, but it calls for proper water resource management, it calls for proper management. This country suffers from management because whether PNM is in power, whether UNC is in power, if WASA's management is poor, it is poor. The issue is Governments come and try to install people into these institutions and sometimes it does not work.

The issue with the water supply is that it is twofold. Those that are close to the source, those are on the distribution system and those who are on the transmission system get a 24 supply. With all the political will in the world, we

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cannot give Fullerton a 24/7 supply, as we speak, because Fullerton is at the extremity of the system and the Cedros/Icacos area has no groundwater potential.

Madam President: Minister, your time is up. Your five minutes is up.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Okay. And that is the case of the water situation. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Khadijah Ameen: Madam President, I stand in this debate as a resident of Evergreen, Carapo that has had no water for more than three weeks. [*Desk thumping*] I listened to the response of the Minister and his arrogance is exactly why people have such a negative attitude towards governance and politicians in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, at the end of this one hour of discussing this very critical issue, the people of Evergreen, Carapo, the people of all the other areas throughout Trinidad that were mentioned in this debate, do not have a sense that the Minister has the problem under control or has a clear way forward.

The dry season is correct, six months, January to sorry—six months of the year you have the dry season, six months the rainy season—four months into the dry season, the Minister holds up a document which he says is a schedule that he worked out with senior officials of WASA sometime recently. I got the impression it was over the past week—four months into the dry season.

Clearly, either the officials at WASA who are responsible, who are reporting to the Minister or the Minister is failing in ensuring that water gets to the people of this country. [*Desk thumping*] The fact is that there is a problem, and all the issues that were mentioned about corruption and the airport and “de whoever and who give pipe”, the people in Trinidad and Tobago do not want to hear that. [*Desk*

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thumping]

When they have no water to bathe in the morning and they have to go by a friend—I spoke to a journalist yesterday, a professional woman who lives in Movant by the way. She told me she spent \$40 in water that day to buy bottles of Blue Waters to bathe. Do you know what she was asking? She wonder if the Government is working in the interest of the owners of the water company. [*Desk thumping]* So the fact is the problem exists and there are places and spaces to talk your politics and talk your robber talk and big time talk. There are places and spaces for that, but when you are dealing with an essential thing such as water, the Minister had 20 minutes and these are the nauseating things that people face when they expect politicians to solve real problems. [*Desk thumping]*

The water shortage, whatever you want to call it—whether you want to call it a shortage or not—the fact is the lack of water for weeks at a time, in some cases months, the fact is it exists. The fact is, I am not satisfied that the Minister is currently addressing the situation and this evening, really I am sure that all those areas where people whether they voted for the UNC—it is not UNC people alone—because the PNM is known to be devious and abusive of their own constituents. [*Desk thumping]*

I saw a newspaper article where the MP for La Horquetta/Talparo, a Member of the Government said it was a fake protest. Weeks the people have no water. All these people cannot be faking. When I see a man such as the hon. Minister of Public Utilities who has served in office and served in Government for so long, these are the examples of why people despise politicians [*Desk thumping]* because you use the opportunity here to come and talk “all kind ah thing” about

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way back 20 years ago and things that are totally irrelevant and you still have not given an answer. [*Desk thumping*] This very Minister has come under fire from his own political leader and own Prime Minister for not performing, for not going out. He was fired as a Minister from another Ministry for not going out and dealing with people and staying in his office. Today he comes again with his incompetence.

Madam President, I live in a community, I do not live in the west. I do not live in those areas, one of those areas that might be considered a priority.

Madam President: Sen. Ameen, your time is up.

Sen. K. Ameen: Thank you.

Madam President: Sen. Ramkissoon, you have four minutes.

Sen. Melissa Ramkissoon: Madam President, I might just take two. Madam President, all I wanted to just add is that I understand the issues with no water because I also face that case being from south Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*] It is a real issue and without water it is just very, very difficult to do basic things. People cook, wash, everything you need water for. It is something that happens and the heat is not helping the situation.

Now, what I really wanted to add to this discussion is Sen. Khan alluded to the management of WASA. Sitting last term on the PAAC, we had a public hearing and the report was laid before Parliament where WASA was one of the entities that came before the Committee. They boldly said, the management then said that they were implementing recommendations from 2008. We are in 2017. Now, yes underground piping is very difficult. We understand that, but we are in a dry season. What it is that we are doing now that is going to be different? We

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understand that crime, the people are stealing truck borne water. It is now a market, but really that is not helping anyone. We need to know what can be done now.

We feel a shortage Minister, even though you do not feel it, we feel a shortage, because we are not getting water in our pipes. Thank God for tanks and pumps. Now it is a necessity to have it in your home. So what is happening now, what are we doing differently. We have WASA that is not under control. Maybe the management needs to do something different, because today I was listening to a programme, a call-in programme on television this morning before I came to the Parliament and about four callers called in with major leaks in their areas that WASA was not addressing. They said two months old. Now, I do not have that case, but they said they made reports and no one was coming to their home. So, again, this is a situation that WASA needs to look at because they cannot be wasting water on the one hand and then tell us to conserve with another. So those were just the points I wanted to raise at this time. Thank you.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Madam President: Hon. Senators, at this juncture we will revert to item eight on the Order Paper. You may recall that an urgent question is to be answered by the Minister of Education who is here.

Just one thing, hon. Senators, just one fact to note, there is only one minute remaining for Urgent Questions, so I am asking for your leave to allow the Minister to answer his question and for the time to just be extended to allow him to answer the question. Is that the will of the Senate?

Hon. Senators: Yes.

Assent indicated.

Madam President: Very well.

URGENT QUESTION

Fire at Cunupia Government Primary School

(Alternative Arrangements)

Sen. Wayne Sturge: Madam President, to the Minister of Education. In light of the fire which prevented the re-opening of the Cunupia Government Primary School yesterday, what alternative arrangements are being made to facilitate the students and staff?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Madam President. Yesterday we got notice that there was an air-conditioning unit in the school that caught afire. Immediately upon hearing this, we dispatched our officers from the Ministry of Education and also officers from EFCL to conduct an investigation. This was done and it was found that a simple matter of an air-condition unit having an upsurge in electricity that caused a slight burning.

What we have done so far is, we have engaged an engineering assistant and also our Health and Safety Officer to look at this matter and report to us. We are also looking to get expert advice from the Electrical Inspectorate so that a thorough investigation can be conducted as to the cause of this upsurge in the electricity supply.

We have also commissioned our EFPPD, department of the Ministry of Education to conduct a scope of works so that the unit will be replaced. I can safely say that very shortly that unit will be replaced and everything will return to normalcy. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Madam President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to

Adjournment (cont'd)
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Tuesday, the 2nd of May, 2017 at 1.30 p.m. At that point in time, Madam President, we plan to do—there should be a Motion in the other place on Friday, a Motion to approve a report on the proposed salary of the Procurement Regulator. Once that is passed in the House on Friday, we will want to do deal with that on Tuesday of next week. If not, we will deal with a Bill entitled an Act to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chap. 48:50 which is listed as No. 2 on Bills Second Reading under “Government Business”.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, before I put the question on the adjournment, leave has been granted for a matter to be raised on the Motion for the adjournment of the Senate. Sen. Chote, you have 10 minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

**Non-Provision of School Meals
 (Carnival 2017)**

Sen. Sophia Chote SC: Thank you, Madam President, for granting me leave to raise this matter on the Motion for the adjournment. Because this had been on the Order Paper for some time, I think I will just read it very briefly so that we will know what we are talking about. The matter was the need for the Minister of Education to explain the non-provision of school meals during the weeks before and after Carnival 2017.

Now, shortly after Carnival 2017, I received information issued by the National Schools Dietary Services Limited, which has a calendar for their School Feeding Programme for each term, and the calendar showed for the period between January to April that the School Feeding Programme was shut down from the Friday before Carnival. It was shut down obviously for Carnival but, more importantly, it was shut down for the three days after Carnival.

7.05 p.m.

So it means that for six days no meals had been provided to the schools.

UNREVISED

Non-Provision of Schools Meals (cont'd)
(Carnival 2017) (cont'd)
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What is interesting, as well, is that apparently whenever there is a holiday the meals are not provided for the day before and the day after, because for Shouter Baptist Day, which was the 30th of March, and I know I am digressing a little bit, but if the President would allow me, I see that on the schedule no meals were provided for the 29th and the 31st. Now, this might seem like a small matter for us, but what is the point of sending children to school with hungry bellies? Part of the School Feeding Programme, as I understand it, was to ensure that children who could not afford, first and foremost, would receive meals depending on the recommendations of the school principals.

I understand forty-something thousand students have breakfast in school every morning, and I think it is something like 150,000 have lunch at school every day. So it means that for all of these days, not only the days that I have highlighted, but days for which there is no excuse for non-provision of meals. If a child goes to school he goes hungry, and that, with all due respect, is something that I would ask you, hon. Minister, to look into, because when this special purpose state enterprise was set up under your Ministry to provide meals for students it was for a variety of reasons, not only to make sure that our children were fed so that they could learn and study and excel, it was also to ensure that we could use it to kick-start our agricultural sector, because we use locally produced material in the meals that are prepared.

Now, what concerned me even more was when I read the report of the Auditor General, which carried out a special audit of the School Nutrition Programme, which was managed by the National Schools Dietary Services Limited, and it appears as though this company, this special purpose company, has not been performing in the way that it should, and it appears as though there is no

oversight with respect to how they do their job, and there is no accountability for when they do not.

Now, I noticed that in the last budget the School Feeding Programme, and I use it loosely, received less money. What I would like to find out, is this the reason for these children not getting food in school? And, if so, were they notified before? Were the schools notified before? Were the principals told that on these days, the days before a public holiday or the day after a public holiday, are the schools and the principals being told that they will be sending no meals to the schools for these children? Perhaps that is related to some of the bad behaviour that we are reading about in the press.

Now, the Auditor General's report also concerned me because it pointed out that there was significant wastage in the School Feeding Programme, and I cannot understand that because how can you have wastage of meals and, at the same time, cut back on the number of meals that you are supposed to be giving, legitimately giving schools. All these things concern me, and the Auditor General said, really there is no data because no data is collected, electronically, or otherwise. So has any mechanism been put in place to have some kind of oversight of this facility?

I ask all these questions, but I do have a fundamental problem with children going to school with no food in their stomachs. That is unacceptable by any standard, and I do not think anybody should stand here and try to excuse that. There should be an apology for that, and those who made those decisions should be held to account. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Minister of Education, you have 10 minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much,

Madam President, and thank you very much for giving me the opportunity, not only to participate in this debate but to respond to some of the allegations made by the good Senator, because most of what she said simple do not bear facts. Let me, from the very beginning, say, and inform this honourable House, that the School Feeding Programme is really an integral part of the education landscape in Trinidad and Tobago. We on this side view the school feeding programme as essential. It is our objective to ensure that our students are given the right diet, the right food and the right encouragement, so that the quality of education that we provide they would be able to benefit from it.

It is our intention, Madam President, to ensure that we are responsible in everything that we do, including the provision of meals. Let me state quite clearly what has been happening with respect to the week before the Carnival and the week after Carnival. Historically, the week before Carnival, on the Thursday and the Friday, the principals had been writing to us asking either for a reduction in the number of meals or no meals at all. And the reason for this is that they have been telling us that a number of programmes have been planned in their schools that will negate the need for having meals served.

In some instances, there are activities in the school that form part of their fundraising activities, and because of that they asked that no meals be served, historically. This year, 2017, we provided meals up to the Thursday before Carnival. No meals were provided on the Friday before Carnival, and this was because of two things: one, the request made by several principals, and, secondly, because of the history where this is concerned, in that on Carnival Friday the absence of students in the schools is very large. There is a large amount of students who are absent from school on the Carnival Friday.

With respect to the three days after Carnival, Ash Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, it is correct to state that meals were not served, but, again, there was a reason for this. Madam President, the entire country would know that the statistics that we were able to provide showed that on Ash Wednesday and on Thursday, and on Friday there was a large amount of students who were absent from school. In fact, at the primary level the attendance was somewhere in the vicinity of 22 per cent, whereas at the secondary level it was even smaller than that. If we were to serve meals at the same level that we serve during the week then there would have been a great waste, wastage. And the simple reason why meals were not served was simply because we wanted to prevent wastage.

Madam President, just let me share with you some figures. We are responsible for providing approximately 58,000 lunches on a daily basis, and—let me change this, I made a mistake—we are responsible for providing 88,000 lunches on a daily basis, and 58,000 breakfast meals on a daily basis. Madam President, the cost per lunch is \$9 per day and the cost for a breakfast is \$6.63. It is estimated that per day we spend approximately \$1.3million on providing meals for our students, and when we have a large number of our students absent it makes no sense providing meals on those days.

The question was asked, Madam President, whether the school authorities were informed; I think this question was answered by the Senator when she quoted the information that she received from the School Feeding Programme in terms of the calendar of events, or the calendar of school feeding, because it was made specific on that calendar that no meals would be served on the Friday before Carnival and on the three days following Carnival. In other words, the principals, and all those who reside in the school were well aware that meals were not going

Non-Provision of Schools Meals (cont'd)
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to be served on those days. Secondly, as I stated before, the principals had been writing to us requesting either a reduction in the number of meals, or no meals at all. And, of course, as I said before, the attendance of our students during those four days, Carnival Friday, Ash Wednesday, the Thursday and Friday after Carnival.

Madam President, I am on record for asking our parents, making an appeal to parents to allow their children to come to school on the days following Carnival. I have been pleading with parents, please send your children to school, and if the parents listen and they follow these instructions, or they follow these, pleas, I can give you the assurance that meals will be provided for every child. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.18 p.m.