

*Leave of Absence**Friday, February 03, 2012***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, February 03, 2012*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication on behalf of Mr. Patrick Manning, Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, to be excused from sittings of the House for a period of 90 days due to continued illness.

The Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, Member for Tabaquite and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications, is currently out of the country and has also asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House.

Mr. Colm Imbert, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East is also out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period February 03 to February 13, 2012.

The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Programmatic Loan No. 2617/OC-TT with the Inter-American Development Bank—Sustainable Energy Program (First Programmatic Operation). [*The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
2. Programmatic Loan No. 2600/OC-TT with the Inter-American Development Bank—WASA Modernization and Wastewater Infrastructure Rehabilitation Programme. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
3. Report of the National Insurance Board of Trinidad and Tobago—Special Actuarial Review—Estimation at June 30, 2005 of the financial impact of changes on January 02, 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
4. Programmatic Loan No. 2657/OC-TT with the Inter-American Development Bank—Strengthening of the Financial Sector Supervisory and Regulatory Framework. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
5. Programmatic Loan No. 2659/OC-TT with the Inter-American Development Bank—Programme to support the Climate Change Agenda I (First Programmatic Operation). [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

6. Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission Annual Report for the year ended September 30, 2010. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
7. Loan No. 2599/OC-TT with the Inter-American Development Bank—Social Safety Net Reform Programme (Investment Component). [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
8. Loan No. 2598/OC-TT with the Inter-American Development Bank—Social Safety Net Reform Programme (First Programmatic Operation—PBL Component). [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
9. Administrative Report of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation for the period October 2009 to September 2010. [*The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Chandresh Sharma)*]
10. Administrative Report of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation for the period October 2008 to September 2009. [*Hon. C. Sharma*]
11. Administrative Report of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation for the period 2008/2009. [*Hon. C. Sharma*]

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS (MATERNITY PROTECTION AND THE MASTERS AND SERVANTS ORDINANCE) BILL, 2012

Bill to amend the Maternity Protection Act, Chap. 45:57 and to repeal the Masters and Servants Ordinance, Ch. 22 No. 5 [*The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development*]; read the first time.

FINANCE BILL, 2012

Bill to provide for the variation of certain duties and taxes, the introduction of other provisions of a fiscal nature and related matters [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage of the Finance Bill, 2012 be taken on Wednesday, February 08, 2012.

Question put and agreed to.

**WATER IMPROVEMENT RATE (VARIATION) ORDER, 2011
(POINT LISAS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE)**

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to come here today to address this House. It is my very first time [*Desk thumping*] and I hope that the welcome that I have gotten from both my colleagues on this side and those on the other side

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will continue right through my presentation. [*Laughter*] What I propose to this House today is a Motion that will benefit all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, so that the support of all the Members of this House is sought and expected.

I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name.

Whereas it is provided by section 11(1)(b) of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, Chap. 54:41 (hereinafter called “the Act”) that the Minister may, by Order, impose water improvement rates in respect of all or any classes of such lands and to provide for the methods of calculation and the times and manner of payment of such rates;

And whereas it is provided by section 11(1)(c) that the Minister may, by Order, vary from time to time or cancel any water improvement rates imposed as regards all or any classes of land;

And whereas it is desired to vary the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) Order, 1998 from January 01, 2012;

And whereas it is provided by section 11 of the Act that every Order made under that section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament;

And whereas it is expedient that the Order now be affirmed:

Be it resolved that the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) (Variation) Order, 2011 be approved.

Mr. Speaker, the matter for consideration of this honourable House is the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) (Variation) Order, 2011 and, as I had indicated earlier in reading the Motion, under section 10(1) of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, Chap. 54:41:

“The Minister may, subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament, by Order—

- (a) declare any area in Trinidad and Tobago to be a Water Improvement Area;
- (b) from time to time, vary any such Order;
- (c) cancel any such Order.”

Lands which are agricultural, industrial or commercial within the water improvement area can be classified by the Minister, by Order, subject to affirmative resolution, pursuant to section 11(1)(a) of the Waterworks Act.

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Section 11(1)(b) and (c) of the Act further provides:

“The Minister may, subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament, by Order—

- (b) impose Water Improvement Rates in respect of all or any classes of such lands and to provide for the methods of such calculation and the times and manner of payment of such Rates;
- (c) vary from time to time or cancel any Water Improvement Rates imposed as regards all or any classes of lands.”

Under this legislation, therefore, by Order 196 of 1998, the Point Lisas Industrial Estate was declared a water improvement area as follows:

“All that area of land situate in the Ward of Couva in the County of Caroni in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago bounded as follows:

On the North by Waterloo Road;

On the South by the area designated as Reclamation Area;

On the East by the Old Southern Main Road;

On the West by the Gulf of Paria.”

By Order 195 of 1998, a water improvement rate of \$4.00 per cubic metre was prescribed for the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

I pause to indicate that I will argue the case for the increase in the water improvement rate this afternoon by bringing to the Parliament about 11 points of discussion:

1. the background to the establishment of the desalination plan;
2. the cost of the water increasing to WASA over time;
3. the reasonableness of the figure of \$8.50 for the increase in the water improvement rate;
4. the issue of the effect on the Point Lisas companies of an increase in the cost of water;
5. a discussion of the jurisdiction of the RIC as against the Minister in this particular matter;
7. the comparative cost of water when compared with the cost of water in other countries and, in particular, the cost of water to industries in other countries;

8. to argue the case for WASA's current financial difficulties and its cost of operation as against the revenue it generates;
9. to discuss the issue of WASA and the effort it is making to become a more efficient utility and to argue that we have a responsibility here as a Parliament to assist WASA in being put on a sounder financial footing and that this Motion presented today seeks to do that;
10. to point to the issue of money saved that could be used to extend and to improve the water service to customers throughout the country and, in particular, those customers at the very Point Lisas Industrial Estate;
11. to argue that there have been several projects that we have completed that would help to improve the water supply to customers in the country.

So, Mr. Speaker, by way of background, the desalination plant came into being in order to provide a secure water supply to the Point Lisas industries. Up until that time, the Point Lisas industries were supplied by water from the Caroni Arena Treatment Plant and at the time the Point Lisas industries were consuming around 12 million gallons increasing to 19 million gallons of water per day.

1.45 p.m.

When that water went to the Point Lisas industries it meant that there were around 19 million gallons that were not available to the ordinary consumer. In those circumstances, considerable hardship was being borne by the ordinary consumers in central and south. To alleviate those difficulties for those consumers, it was argued that if a dedicated plant was put in place to supply the needs of the Point Lisas industries, then the water that would formerly go to the Point Lisas industries could now be sent to consumers in the central and southern parts of Trinidad, thereby relieving those difficulties and, at the time, those difficulties were considerable—back in the late '90s.

In order to facilitate the supply of that water to the Point Lisas industries and, in addition to the proposed desalination plant, some considerable amount of infrastructure work in terms of pipelines were put in place, and that original transmission pipeline was replaced sometime later with a 600-millimetre-diameter pipeline over a distance of four kilometres within the Point Lisas area. In addition, around 1998, the Caroni Treatment Plant was upgraded to produce 75 million gallons per day from the original figure of 60 million gallons per day. So that there were certain infrastructure works that were being done to secure and provide additional water that would go to the industries in Point Lisas.

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In 2002 a further re-enforcement of the transmission system was done, with approximately 2.5 kilometres of 900-millimetre-diameter pipe being installed. The argument, therefore, Mr. Speaker, was that before you could put a water improvement rate in place, you needed to ensure that works were done or carded to be done that would benefit the industries in Point Lisas, and that would have helped to bolster your argument for the institution of a water improvement rate. In the instant case, Mr. Speaker, in order to bolster the argument that we are presenting today for an increase in the water improvement rate, I wish to inform this honourable House and, by extension, the national community, that the Government, through WASA, proposes to dual the Caroni South Trunk Main.

Mr. Sharma: Excellent!

Sen. The Hon. E. George: The Caroni South Trunk Main was put in place, if you recall, sometime in 1985, and it consisted of a 54-inch main taking water from the Caroni Treatment Plant and sending that water to the central and southern areas via the Caroni South Trunk Main. There is also a 48-inch main coming from that plant that brings the water down the East-West Corridor to Port of Spain, but we are focusing on the Caroni South Trunk Main which we are going to dual. There was an allocation in this year's budget, I think, of about \$200 million to facilitate the installation and dualling of this Caroni South Trunk Main. I want to explain a little about why the dualling, and why the benefit of that dualling will redound to the customers along the way, but also to the Point Lisas industries.

The 54-inch main blew sometime in 1999, and for about nearly two weeks there was considerable distress along that route of the main for those persons who were being supplied by that main. I know that most of us have long memories, so that we would recall the distress that was caused to persons in the central and south areas and also—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for St. Joseph, I am hearing you distinct, so I would ask you to just reduce your tone. Continue, hon. Senator.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, that Caroni South Trunk Main blew in 1999, and the repairs took nearly two weeks to be undertaken, meaning that for two weeks—I think it was between 10 days and two weeks—there was no supply going from the Caroni Treatment Plant to the central and southern areas thereby causing considerable distress.

Since that time, fearing that main will blow once again, the pressures that WASA sends through that main have been reduced. In those circumstances, there is

less water going to the central and southern areas than could be possible, if the pressures were up to what they were prior to the main blowing out in 1999. That is one of the reasons we are now attempting to dual that main so that we have some redundancy put in so that if anything should happen, we have another means of taking water to the central and southern areas, and that in a manner further guarantees the Point Lisas industries a water supply.

You would recall that although the desalination plant is dedicated to supplying the Point Lisas industries, from time to time, the plant has to be shut down; and to ensure that we have water going to them continuously, if that desalination plant shuts down, we have a dualling of the main.

Now, you would also recall that a few weeks ago, I think it was just before Christmas, the desalination plant had to be shut down for repairs and those repairs were expected to take about three days, but in fact they took eight or nine days to be done, causing considerable distress to persons in central and south Trinidad, in particular regarding their water supply. So this dualling of the Caroni main would provide that we can send additional water to the central, southern and Point Lisas areas should the desalination plant be forced to shut down for reasons of conducting repairs.

So the argument is, the Point Lisas industries benefited from the installation of the desalination plant and continue to do so, and that benefit would be re-enforced by the expected dualling of the South Trunk Main and the other works that we plan to do at the Caroni Arena Plant. Part of what is expected to be undertaken also at the Caroni Arena Plant is to move the existing 75 million gallons a day production to about 100 million gallons a day.

I now move to the second point concerning the cost of the desalination water to WASA. Now, Mr. Speaker, at the time that the agreement with the desalination plant was signed, the cost of water to WASA was \$3.52 per cubic metre and that was some 10 years ago. Since then, the cost has gone up in 2002 to \$5.70—no, \$3.52 per metre in 2002; \$5.70 per metre in 2011 and it is expected to rise to \$6.72 per cubic metre in 2012.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the water improvement rate was put in place at \$4 in 1998. Since that time, the water improvement rate has not changed but, as I just read, the cost of water to WASA from the desalination plant has been increasing. So that whereas the water improvement rate has stayed constant at \$4.00 per cubic metre, the cost of desalinated water to WASA has been increasing over time from \$3.52 and it is now \$5.70, and it is expected to reach \$6.72 in 2012. That would mean

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that WASA continues to lose considerably on this particular arrangement. So, we are arguing that WASA is losing on the deal and, therefore, subsidizing the companies in Point Lisas. Now, those companies in Point Lisas are very, very, large companies that export their outputs overseas and are profit-making companies. So, it seems to be illogical that WASA will be subsidizing those companies while they continue to make profits and WASA itself is a losing entity.

The matter was discussed with the executives at the Point Lisas companies sometime in December, and we argued with them the reasons for the increase in the price. Of course, their position was that they understood the position that WASA was in—the fact that they are a losing entity; the fact that the Government continues to subsidize WASA and that WASA, in those circumstances, should not really be subsidizing the industries at Point Lisas.

Mr. Speaker, we are also arguing that the increase in the water improvement rate will go from \$4.00 currently to \$8.50 by the addition of \$4.50.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So much?

Sen. The Hon. E. George: The current price that is paid is \$7.50 which comprises \$3.50 for the normal commercial rate and the water improvement rate of \$4.00. So the normal rate that is charged is \$3.50 which is the commercial rate—some people call it the consumer rate—and because you are in the Point Lisas water improvement area, you pay the water improvement rate of \$4.00 making a total of \$7.50. We propose to increase that from \$4.00 to \$8.50 and, therefore, the total cost from \$7.50 to \$12.00.

Now, one may argue—and the argument has also been presented—what is the jurisdiction of the Minister in this particular case? Under the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, the Minister has that authority. The Regulated Industries Commission's authority to set rates for WASA covers only the commercial or the consumer rate that we had referred to.

So the Regulated Industries Commission is empowered under the law to address the \$3.50 or the commercial rate, but the law gives the Minister the authority to designate the area a water improvement area, and thereafter to impose the water improvement rate on industries in that area. So the argument that it should be the RIC that is setting the water improvement rate, and the Minister has no jurisdiction, is an argument that one could throw out the window as indicated in the Act.

2.00 p.m.

The comparative cost of water internationally: I want to argue, that the cost of water, internationally, when compared to the cost of water at the desalination plant here and the contribution of that cost to the cost of production of companies in Point Lisas is as follows:

On the basis of a study done by the economics of sea water desalination in the Red Sea region of Egypt, the production cost of desalinated water is US \$2.23 per cubic metre. If you multiply US \$2.23 by the rate of 6.4, it means that you are getting close to TT \$14 or TT \$15. In Houston, USA, the cost to produce a cubic metre of desalination water is US \$1.22; in Blue Hills, Bahamas, US \$1.34; in Texas, US \$1.53.

Mr. Speaker: Someone's cell is on and that is not permitted in the Chamber. So could you switch off your cell, whoever that person may be? Continue, hon. Minister.

Sen The Hon. E. George: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Did Dr. Browne turn off his?

Dr. Browne: Oh please, have some behaviour.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: At the prices quoted, the cost of desalinated water in Trinidad continues to be very, very competitive, and should pose no real problem in terms of its contribution to the cost of the industries operating out of Point Lisas, and to their competitiveness abroad. That is reinforced by data that shows in respect of the contribution of water to production costs in various industries, that contribution to production cost is extremely small, and therefore, should not again be an issue in determining whether or not it has a significant effect on the various industries.

I will quote again here:

The percentage contribution of water to the total cost of the industry in petroleum and mining is 0.1 per cent, in food processors and drinks the percentage cost of water in production is 0.2 per cent, the cost to textile garments, footwear and headwear is 0.04, printing publishing paper 0.07, wood and related products 0.04, chemicals and non-metallic materials 0.09, electricity and water, 3.92, on average; in distribution, 0.32.

So the argument is that water as a percentage contributor to the cost of production of various industries is small and, in particular, in respect of the Point Lisas

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industries is comparatively small. So we are arguing that the increase that is proposed in the water improvement rate should not have an inordinate effect on the competitiveness of the products that are produced by the companies in the Point Lisas area, and which, for the most part, are exported.

Mr. Speaker, the desalinated water is currently sold by WASA to customers at the industrial estate at \$7.50 per cubic metre. The increasing cost of purchasing desalinated water for resale has significantly eroded the financial position of WASA, with estimates for 2011 indicating a possible \$26 million loss on the purchase and resale of desalinated water. Conservative estimates also indicate that for 2012, \$92 million will be lost in respect of the purchase of water from Desalcott if there is no adjustment made to the water improvement rate.

The cost to WASA purchasing desalinated water: I want to present some of the larger figures in respect of WASA and what it is costing WASA. The cost of WASA purchasing desalinated water as at September 2007 was some \$203 million. The end of 2008 saw it rise by some \$9 million, and in 2009 it rose to approximately \$237 million. In 2010 it rose to \$259 million, and up to September 2011 the cost was some \$272 million. So the cost to WASA of this desalinated water is rising, at the same time that the price WASA is receiving from the companies in Point Lisas remains the same. The proposed price increase will give WASA a 78.6 profit margin, but it is still considerably lower than the 113.1 profit margin that existed in 2001.

As I indicated, this matter was discussed with the representatives of management of those companies, I think it was on October 14. As indicated also, it is estimated that the typical cost of water supplies to these companies amounts to, approximately, 1 to 2 per cent of operating costs, so that water, as an input for ammonia, methanol and direct reduced iron, is not considered a significant component.

I need to point out that when compared to similar plants in Germany and Luxembourg, the price of water is some US \$3 per cubic metre, which is about TT \$19, and it is even higher in places such as Jordan and Israel. In Jamaica it is US \$2.67, which is about TT \$18, and in Barbados it is US \$2.33, which is some TT \$15. So in each case, the \$12 that we are proposing as the total cost of water to the companies in Point Lisas per cubic metre of water, compares very favourably with the countries that we referred to here.

When all things are taken into consideration, namely, the cost of the desalination water, the rise in inflation since the rate was first established—and I

am informed that the inflation rate, when compared to 1997, today's prices are some 109 per cent above what they were at that time—is another argument for the proposed increase in the price.

We are ensuring the reliable backup supplies to Point Lisas by some of the work that we have proposed to do and have done, and we expect that the quality of the water would continue to be of a high standard. For all these reasons, we can understand that the request of WASA for an increase in the water improvement rate at Point Lisas is quite a reasonable one.

Mr. Speaker, we need to place WASA on a sound financial footing. As we are aware, WASA is in considerable financial difficulty. Work is being done across the board to improve WASA's supply to customers, generally, and we have commissioned the Talparo Water Treatment Plant which will provide an improved water service for those people. WASA has to be subsidized by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and I think that this year the subsidy would be in the region of about \$1.6 billion to \$1.8 billion. While all that is taking place, WASA is subsidizing industries in Point Lisas, and it seems to me that that is not an acceptable situation at all.

So we are saying that we will be doing all we can, not only to accommodate the demands of Point Lisas, but also to address the needs of ordinary consumers and ordinary customers in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to refer to some of the areas that have received an improved supply of water since the People's Partnership Government came into power on May 24, 2010.

Mr. Speaker, I have in my possession a document that indicates that for the period of the financial year 2010/2011 October 2010 to the end of September 2011. This does not include the period from May to September—the Ministry of Public Utilities and WASA have completed some 87 projects in various communities in Trinidad and Tobago, and they are scattered all over the country. Before I identify some of the areas, I want to make mention of two or three in particular, because I think that it is important that we point these out.

One would recall that when the People's Partnership Government came into power in May 2010, the Ministry of Public Utilities requested of all MPs that they present a document or information about all the areas in their individual constituencies that had difficulties with their water supply. We did get from some Members, and not from others. In that regard, I want to make particular mention that the very first response I received came from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who identified the areas in his constituency that were having

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difficulty receiving water. I did get from others, but I am referring to the Leader of the Opposition because his came to me first. He identified in that document some of the areas in his constituency that were water distressed.

One of those areas was Abbe Poujade, heading up into Scorpion, the elevated area in Carenage and, by chance, my secretary, whom I met for the first time when I went to the Ministry of Public Utilities in May 2010, lives in Abbe Poujade. Her family lives in the area of Scorpion, which is higher up the elevation, coming off of Abbe Poujade in Carenage. When I asked my secretary what was her water supply like, she said: “Well, you know, if I receive a water supply maybe about once a week, I get plenty.”

Hon. Member: Shame on them! Once a week!

Sen. The Hon. E. George: So I promised her that on the basis of the document that I received from the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, I would pursue to try to help her. I can boldly state that within a year, that was by the middle of last year, Abbe Poujade began to have virtually a 24/7 supply.

2.15 p.m.

It begs the question, Mr. Speaker, what was being done—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Member for La Brea, you bathe?”

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—by the former PNM Government to provide water—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Zero.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—to the constituents—

Miss McDonald: “Yuh come back with that.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—of Abbe Poujade and the elevations in Scorpion.

Before I go, I want to mention the progress that we have made in providing an improved water supply to the people in Covigne, which was another area that the Leader of the Opposition identified as a stressed area in his community. I must indicate that I have been receiving calls from a woman who lives in Big Yard in Carenage. This woman has been requesting that the same assistance that has been given to the people in Abbe Poujade, and which she has heard has been provided to the people in Covigne, be extended to the people in Big Yard. I am saying to that woman, today, that I will do my best to assist the people in Big Yard as we have done with the people in Abbe Poujade.

I want to speak now about the people in Covigne, because some time around June or July of last year, we had undertaken a project to bring water to the people in Upper Covigne. There is also a story behind that. A very good friend of mine had said to me that there was a woman in Upper Covigne who wanted me to come and see the residents there, to see the distress that they had been suffering, because of a lack of water and to address their problem. So some time in May of last year, we went into Upper Covigne and met with some of the residents there. What they explained was that some time in 2007, waterlines were laid all up the hill—just before the election. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: As usual.

Hon. Member: What did the MP do?

Sen. The Hon. E. George: The repairs were done to the road, but since that time in 2007, not a single drop of water had come through those pipelines.

Hon. Member: PNM representation.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: So again, I said to them, I would do my best to help you.

By November/December of last year, those people in Upper Covigne had a considerable improvement in their water supply. I want to say that not only have the people in upper Covigne received an improvement in their water supply, but there are areas close to Upper Covigne that are benefiting from the work that was done.

I want to congratulate, in particular, Mr. Hooker, who is a WASA worker, and an excellent worker at that, and his team for all the work that they are doing in the area. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Member: The People's Partnership.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Mr. Hooker has led the charge and has been very, very cooperative, and he is really a wonderful support in this entire exercise. He goes with me to see the people, and he leaves no stone unturned in attempting to get the projects done well, and done quickly. I want to pay tribute to him.

Some of the areas that have benefited from the work that we have done there, at upper Convene: Covigne Road Extension, Espanol Road, Espanol Road Extension, Cemetery Street, upper Cemetery Street Extension, Francis Circular and Roxborough Street. They all benefited from the work that we had done. I do not know whether *[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: Who is the MP there?

Sen. The Hon. E. George: The MP? The Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Member: What!

Dr. Griffith: No representation.

Hon. Member: “After so long dey now get water?”

Dr. Moonilal: “That is not we policy.”

Dr. Griffith: “All yuh send him back to Tobago.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that what we are attempting to do by bringing water to all these communities, some for the first time, some in improving the reliability, some in improving the frequency, is to ensure that, little by little, we would get to all the communities in Trinidad and Tobago that need water.

Mr. Sharma: Well done, well said. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: There is no Mandrake thing in this. I am not a magician, so I cannot wave a wand and get water to every single community, but we will get to them one by one.

Mr. Sharma: Water for all.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: As I explained to the woman from Big Yard, we will attempt to deal with her issue and the issue of her neighbours in due course.

I happened to be home around seven o’clock one night, which is rare for me, because I get to work between 6.30 and 7.00 every morning, and I do not leave until it is very late, so that the news that I would normally see is about 10.00 in the night—but I do not want to boast about that. This is not about me. [*Interruption*] I want to refer to the fact that I saw the Leader of the Opposition in a news clip addressing a meeting in Febeau Village, San Juan.

Dr. Griffith: About 10 people were there?

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Well, I would not remark on the number of people, but I think you are very close to the numbers that were in the meeting. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: A cottage meeting.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: The Leader of the Opposition—this was just about two weeks ago—was saying to the people gathered there that the Government, “gallerying” all over the place and “ent” coming to bring water to “all yuh”.

Hon. Member: O, Lord!

Sen. The Hon. E. George: I am saying but I mean—[*Interruption*] [*Inaudible*] I mean, what is this? Here is your constituency, Leader of the Opposition, which has been suffering for water—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Griffith: You should be ashamed.

Hon. Member: Suffering.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—in a situation where you can get water to them and satisfy their needs within a year. As I had indicated in respect of Abbe Poujade, you can do the same for Covigne. Ms. Cora—what is her name—had not gotten water for 43 years; living up there for 43 years and had not gotten water. You are not seeing about them, but you are going to San Juan—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Griffith: And talking to 10 people.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—and saying that we are not addressing the water needs of the people. I find that is really a bit disingenuous of the Leader of the Opposition. We, this Government, will do everything we can to get to all those communities, one by one. [*Desk thumping*]

As I have said, there is no magic wand that we will wave to bring them all water at the same time, and solve the problems within the space of a week or two, or a year or two, but certainly our performance over the last 20 months indicate that we are walking the talk. [*Desk thumping*] We are not going to be laying pipes in any area, and for four years not having a drop of water go through those pipes. We are not into fooling people about water.

The second thing is that we are not going to be giving people 24/7 water in all these areas as quickly as they would like, but we will be making an effort to gradually get their supplies up so that at some point we will be able to provide the level of service that they all expect from the utility, WASA, and this Government.

Hon. Member: With Rowley or no Rowley.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Mr. Speaker, I am arguing that we have been doing all that we could, and even a little more, to get water to people. I mention all the time too that all these proposals, recommendations and projects that we do, have nothing to do with us as parliamentarians, but is really to focus the interest

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on the people who need our services, and who expect us to provide these services for them. To me, being a parliamentarian is of no significance unless I can deliver to the people. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: And all of us have to keep in mind—
[Interruption]

Dr. Griffith: I “ent” really hear that. Say that again.

Mr. Sharma: You cannot be useless.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: None of us are important in and of ourselves. Our importance in this Chamber or in this Parliament arises from the fact that we can deliver a service to the population and make their lives a little better—not to put them in any Utopia, as I have said before, but to make their lives a little better, so that they can take for granted that water will flow in their taps when they turn those taps, and therefore, go about their business.

There are other areas that we have been servicing over the period. The other thing is that there is no discrimination in providing water to these various communities that now suffer as a result of a lack of water.

In respect of Point Fortin, I am going to say here that the Seven Seas Desalination Plant that we expect to have established there—let me say that, the establishment of that plant was negotiated by the previous government. *[Interruption]* There are a couple of things I could say about it, but I will not because it will again be beating up on them. I will say this in passing: when the desalination plant in Point Lisas was first mooted, there was a hue and cry about, “We do not need any desalination plant in Trinidad.” *[Interruption]* There was a big hue and cry, led again by the Leader of the Opposition, and it was strange that people would take that position.

Mr. Speaker, desalination as a source of water is just one other option in terms of sources. It is not a thing that you eliminate and throw away without thinking. Since that time and because of the position they had taken, they have been always beating up on desalination, and they never wanted to follow up on the good work that was done by putting a desal plant in, until 2010, when the dry season hit them. When the dry season hit them, two things they realized: one, if it was not for that very desalination plant—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: We are coming to that.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—we would have been in serious trouble. The second thing they did was to run and recommend the installation of five other desalination plants—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Shame.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—including the one for Point Fortin. They ran very quickly and saw desalination as the only solution.

Mr. Sharma: They “doh” run fast, but they ran. *[Interruption]*

Sen. The Hon. E. George: There were five others.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It was not the only one.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the desalination option is one that you always have to keep. Even though we are a country where we have a lot of rainfall and a lot of water flowing, desalination is just another option, and you have to keep it. All the negative “ol’ talk” about desalination suddenly hit them, as I said, in 2010, and they ran to have five desal plants put in place.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that there has been no discrimination in where we have been assisting people in improving their water supplies. Let me see if I can just call out some of these, because water is life—you can have no discrimination. We are helping people in Carenage and we are helping people in Penal. We are helping Moruga and we are helping people in Diego Martin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Not D’Abadie, O’Meara. *[Interruption]*

Sen. The Hon. E. George: We are helping people in Talparo as we help people in Biche. So here are some of the areas: Lewis Avenue; Barataria, San Juan; Tobago West; Mt. Pelier Trace; Tobago East; Rose Hill, *[Interruption]* Scarborough; Zion Hill, Belle Garden, Tobago; No Name Street A, Malabar Branch Road, Arima; *[Desk thumping]* Quesnel Street, Arima; Co-operative Street, Sangre Grande, Cumuto, Manzanilla; Claxton Bay; Diamond Village Extension, Pointe-a-Pierre; Francis Trace Extension, Santa Flora, La Brea; *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Roberts: “PNM ain’t give you no water, look dey getting water.”

Mr. Sharma: “And you aint bathing.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Digits Trace, Temple Street, Penal; this is in Oropouche East.

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Mr. Speaker, it is all here, there is no discrimination—Polyben Trace, Rancho Quemado, SS Erin Road in La Brea; Paradise Street off the Naparima Mayaro Road in Princes Town; Tahadeal Road, Felicity in Chaguanas West; Mendes Village in Siparia; Red Brick Trace Extension, Dow Village, South Oropouche in Fyzabad. [*Desk thumping*] [*Continuous crosstalk*]

So, all over, there are 87 projects here where we have been helping people. [*Interruption*] We feel that to be able to do more of this, WASA needs to have additional resources; and our argument today—that this water improvement rate, the increase from \$4 to \$8.50 will put a little more money in WASA's coffers that would enable WASA to undertake more of the work of providing water, for the first time in some cases, and an improved service to customers in other cases, throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

In conclusion, I think that, as a Parliament, we as parliamentarians have a responsibility to improve the lives of the population. This is what we are here about. It is not about personalities; it is not about being Ministers going about with our chest puffed out that I am a Minister and about rank and so on; it is about servicing the people of Trinidad and Tobago and improving their lives. I am arguing with my colleagues opposite and my colleagues on this side that we support this initiative, increase the water improvement rate for the water improvement area in Point Lisas.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make a few comments on the Motion before us as put by the hon. Minister.

I take careful note of the fact that the Minister spent a lot of his time talking about Diego Martin West and the Member for Diego Martin West, and I wonder why. It seems as if the justification for this matter before the House, somehow, has some particular interest to Diego Martin West, or that the work programme for WASA, somehow, is focused on Diego Martin West. But if I was asleep or had my eyes closed and I only heard what was being said and I did not know who was speaking, I would have known that it was a member of the UNC Government, because once again, here is an individual trying desperately to take credit and to praise himself in whatever else is happening, but please praise me, praise me, praise me. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me respond to the question about my representation in Diego Martin West: I have been the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West for 21 years. *[Interruption]* Over that period of time, Mr. Speaker, as you know—you are from the area—Diego Martin West is a very hilly area, and it is a work in progress. On the hillsides around my constituency in the last 20 years, if you compare what is there now with what was there in 1991, you would see significant growth uphill. What has been happening with the supply of utilities, especially water, is that persons in the upper reaches have difficulty and continue to do so, because as fast as the system supplies people up the hill, other persons go beyond that so the need grows and grows uphill.

So, 10 years ago, 15 years ago, there might not have been those persons up the hill that ask for water—so, any Minister at any point in time—WASA has the constraint of meeting people, who, as I speak now, are going up the hill. So, when the Minister comes here and tries to represent that the people who need water in the upper reaches are needing it because they have not been supplied with it for how many years by the PNM government, that is misrepresentation. *[Interruption]* But more importantly, he speaks about empty lines with no water. The Minister does not have the facts. The lines were laid in Covigne with the understanding that water would be supplied. There was a concrete reservoir in the lower reaches of Diego Martin which serves the whole area. The well field provides water into a concrete reservoir; that reservoir, at about the same time those lines were laid in Covigne, was found to be broken and leaking and had to be replaced. WASA issued a contract to replace the underground concrete reservoir with an above-ground steel-tank system.

There were difficulties with the contract in WASA. So, the lines were laid down; the contractor could not perform; there was no water to expand the service, and until WASA solved that problem by replacing the underground reservoir with the above-ground steel tanks there could not have been a supply of water to go into an expanded service. That is what happened. It was Minister Penelope Beckles, who, as Minister of Public Utilities, came to the site and was shown the issue. It took WASA some time to move from the underground concrete reservoir to the steel tanks. Now that water is being provided to the people served by those tanks, within the one-year period of this Minister, it has nothing to do with this Minister doing anything extraordinary. It has to do with WASA having improved its reservoir storage—not under his stewardship—and now being in a position to put water in the lines that were laid down. It is as simple as that. *[Interruption]* But he comes here and makes himself out to be something special—“it is he do it

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in a year”—completely ignoring the fact that the lines were part of a wider system which had a problem in WASA and that problem has now been solved. So I would ignore the Minister and just go on to the point before the House.

Mr. Speaker, the matter before this House today is a matter which should be of some serious concern to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. As I look around my colleagues here I think there might be one person who was in this House when this matter had its genesis. So, I crave your indulgence to give me certain latitude to deal with the matter before the House today so that the people of Trinidad and Tobago could understand that what was said in 2000 in this House is now relevant today, because the chickens have come home to roost. [*Desk thumping*]

When the idea of a desalination plant was mooted in this House by the UNC in the late 1990s, there was a debate as to whether we needed desalinated water or whether we should make maximum use of our fresh water supplies and so on. That is not being debated today, we have passed that stage. When we debated then whether we should use brackish water from the swamp or sea water—that was a debate then that is not before us today. What is before us today is the fact that we have to deal with a request for a price increase for the desalinated water supply, and I want to focus my contribution there.

What is the story? The story is that we are being asked to do the following: to raise the price of the water improvement rate from \$4 to \$8.

Hon. Member: Eight dollars and fifty cents.

Dr. K. Rowley: Eight dollars and fifty cents. I am using an approximation, leave out the cents. At the time when the Government took a decision to desalinate, the Minister for WASA was a Minister called Ganga Singh and the Permanent Secretary was my good friend, the Minister who is here today. [*Interruption*]

We told the Government then that there were going to be serious cost increases associated with supplying water by desalination and we should do everything possible to extract as much as we could from fresh water supplies. The Government proceeded to obtain the desalination plant. What was the story? What was the story? The first thing the Government did then under the Minister who was then—who is today the head of WASA, who the Minister just told us recommended the price increase that we have here now. That Minister proceeded to prevent PowerGen, which was a 51 per cent state-owned agency, with excess heat in Point Lisas, which was in the best position to desalinate—for reasons best known to the Minister then, who is today head of WASA, PowerGen was not

allowed to bid. And the desalination scandal began with the Government of the UNC of the day entering into an arrangement, which we in the Opposition then suspected was corrupt because we did not see the transparency in the procurement process, and we saw a number of developments which caused us to accuse the Government of encouraging a corrupt act.

However, the then Minister gave us all sorts of assurances then that there was no basis for our concern, and I go to the *Hansard* of November 26, 1999 in a Motion brought by the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South on this matter. Listen to what the Minister said then, the Minister who is today the CEO at WASA. He said to the Parliament and the country:

“I want to thank the Member for Port of Spain South, for his presentation because it gives me an opportunity to establish the transparency of the process to the hon. Members of this House...”

He said that what is in the newspaper was based on “lies, half-truths and innuendoes.” These were the allegations about corruption or perceived corruption in the creation of the desal plant.

As the Minister comes here today to ask us to increase the price that WASA pays to the desal plant, one fundamental issue troubles me and should trouble all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and it is this: insofar as price increases are being requested and being had, who are the beneficiaries of that increase? Are we satisfied that we know who the beneficiaries of the increase are? The reason for that concern is that we have never been satisfied that we know who the real owners of the desal plant are. [*Desk thumping*] Trinidad and Tobago is today in a unique and peculiar position that we may very well be in the Parliament being asked to approve an increase, being asked by persons who are themselves approving their own benefits, because we have not been able to determine who all the beneficiaries are in the desal plant.

2.45 p.m.

What we do know is that under the last UNC Government the Minister is today the head of WASA—and I will come back to that—and the then Minister’s PS is now the Minister, who comes here and makes a big issue about his work in Covigne, but I hope when he winds up he would be able to tell us, convincingly and comprehensively, that he has the answers for the 10 questions put to him by Camini Marajh which he has not yet answered and failed to answer. [*Desk thumping*]

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You see, Mr. Speaker, the impressions of corruption were not just parliamentary talk—the perception of corruption with this plant is not just parliamentary talk—the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has conducted significant investigation into the corrupt practice of the award of this contract, resulting in charges being laid against persons for corruption in the creation of this plant, and I want to draw your attention to one particular development in that police investigation which involved the police and the DPP. It is this: They found in the investigation that certain trust arrangements have been put in place for unnamed public officials in Trinidad and Tobago who are beneficiaries of about 25 per cent of the desal shares.

Hon. Member: What!

Dr. K. Rowley: These are the facts of the police investigation. So as we are meeting in the Parliament today to approve an increase for Desalcott, having not had the completion of those criminal investigations to answer specifically who are those beneficiaries who are covered by the trust, we may very well be approving an increase for somebody who has made his own recommendations. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss McDonald: That is it; himself unto himself.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, it is common knowledge that Hafeez Karamath was charged for corruption in this matter. He died and that matter died. But it was not only Hafeez Karamath; it was a team. Let me explain to you, Mr. Speaker; this is why I asked for the latitude. There was a team of people—let me tell you how it was done, and the Minister would not be unfamiliar with what I am saying, and I do not want to violate any parliamentary Standing Orders here, so I will be very careful with what I say.

What happened was that the Government took a decision to build a desal plant. Over and above all the negatives—“don't do it; don't do it; don't do it”, the Government said, “Yes, we are going to do it.” We have gone past that stage. The Government then took a decision to get advice as to how to proceed. Fact! The Permanent Secretary, acting for WASA under the Minister, sought to get technical advice. The police investigation shows that the advice to proceed in evaluating the proposals and recommending the preferred company was had from a person who was in the employ of the person who received the contract.

In other words, at the level of the Ministry where the current Minister was the PS, where the current head of WASA was the Minister, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago got advice in the evaluation process in a marvelous

bid-rigging exercise, because Hafeez Karamath contrived to have his man be the advisor to the Government team to advise the Government team that Hafeez Karamath should be given the contract to supply the desal plant. Fact! And that did not come from the street; that is the finding of the Lindquist and the police investigations. It is on that basis that Hafeez Karamath had been charged for corruption and the specific charges were: falsely pretending that the said process was open, honest and competitive, and that the manipulation of the desal bid evaluation committee to the grant of the water supply contract to the said Desalcott was predetermined.

So while the Ministry was being advised as to which of the many bidders—and that is after they excluded, for strange reason, PowerGen—those who were allowed to bid, when they think they were bidding in an open process, the man who was doing the evaluation, a fellow called Ben-Dak, was in fact Hafeez Karamath's man on Hafeez Karamath's payroll, and the police investigation shows that that man was known to the Minister at the time, who is today the head of WASA. That was part of the investigation.

Look at what the numbers are. Any person who wants to know the details of the numbers, there was a debate in this House in 2000 when all the details of what the implications for that were—We worked out and calculated that it was a \$4 billion exercise over the life of the contract, and that the company stood to benefit to the tune of approximately \$2 billion. We just heard from the Minister that WASA is paying about \$200 million a year to this company. This is 10 years later; \$200 million a year times 20 is how much?

Miss McDonald: “Dey car even add it up; is so much.”

Dr. K. Rowley: It is \$2.4 billion. But when this was put down the country's throat, the PR campaign was, “Not one red cent”. Government “eh paying nutten”. Cast your mind back. There were ads in the papers. “Not one red cent”; that was the PR campaign. Today we are hearing that the water is being bought from the business house at approximately just over \$200 million a year. It is a 20-year contract.

Hon. George: It is being sold too, “eh”—

Dr. K. Rowley: I know. I will come to that. I am glad you mentioned that, because, you see, at the time when this was entered into, WASA had as its main income stream, the payment for water from the Point Lisas Estate. And, yes, they were diverting 12 million gallons down there to get that money, but, of course, those 12 million gallons could have been supplied from somewhere else if you put the effort into it.

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However, when WASA entered into this arrangement and they started supplying in 2001, what is the story? In 2001, WASA was getting its margin of \$3.50. It was buying the water from the desal plant at \$7.50, paying them \$4 and making \$3.50. So the users were paying \$7.50. The water improvement rate was \$4, so WASA had a margin of \$3.50. So, in fact, let me tell you what the Minister said against that background. Listen to how it was said in the beginning. You just heard the Minister say how WASA is in a money-losing situation and a subsidizing situation. If we do not get this big increase, WASA will continue subsidizing the users. But at the time when this was sold to us, listen to the Minister:

“So, you see, when we say not one red cent, we are getting the water. We are fulfilling the needs of the industrial estate, and I will come back to that because, you see, the industrialists have written me and said, ‘Minister, now that we recognize that WASA is getting a windfall from the desalination plant at Point Lisas, will you lower the price of water for us?’”

So when it was sold to us, it was sold to us as WASA receiving such a huge windfall of money that users are saying, “Give us a lower rate because you are into this big thing of getting so much money from the desal plant.” We are hearing now that it has evolved to a money-losing situation for WASA, and I could say: but we told you so. Because you see, what are the numbers? In 2001, water improvement rate of \$4; WASA getting a margin of \$3.50, so you are charging the users \$7.50 and \$4 is going to the desal plant which includes their profit.

By 2011, the desal people, who incidentally are not subject to the rigorous evaluation of the RIC, as the Minister correctly said, they are fixing their own price. All they have to do is tell WASA what they want for their water and there is no RIC to examine their books and their profit margin, and their reasonableness or so. They simply set their price. So by 2011, the water increase rate was \$5.70. What was \$4 is now \$5.70. If WASA does not increase the rates, the margin for WASA now moves downwards, from \$3.50 to \$1.80. That is 2011.

By 2012, we are being told the price from the plant—water improvement rate is now up to \$6.72. If WASA does not get an increase, the margin now is 78 cents. You see where it is going from? From being in a \$3.50 profit—they were making that—down to 78 cents. And, of course, we are being told that it is now to go to \$10.70, and if WASA does not get an increase, WASA is now paying the plant a whole lot more than it is getting for the water. That is why this is required.

That is why there is a requirement to increase the rate. But if you notice, as you increase the rates over the years, WASA’s earning potential does not change

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for the better, but the owners of the plant and the business, they have a guarantee on that side in the water improvement rate which has moved from \$4 to \$5.70, to \$6.72, to \$10.70. That water improvement rate moved for them over the years, so their business “fix”; their profit “good”, and the price that they set for the water improvement rate is not subject to any examination by any significant third party—by the RIC.

This is why I am saying, the concern to the people of Trinidad and Tobago should be this: who are these people on that side of the equation who have been so lucky to be so favourably treated to have got this plant under the conditions that they got it; who have now found themselves in that situation where, yes, the country and the Parliament have to approve an increase for them; they will continue to make their profits, and the musical chairs from that time to now is a very significant musical chair.

The Minister is now head of WASA; the PS is now Minister; and then we are in Government and a strange thing happens; a very strange thing happens. Let us assume that all I have said before was just pure happenstance. When this Government came into office, within a matter of days this current Minister—I am not even sure if he had warmed the chair in the Ministry to any considerably rising temperature, when he did something that caught my attention. He appointed his former boss, Ganga Singh, as acting CEO of WASA. And how was that done? Incidentally, just before the Government changed, WASA had gone out, through local and international bids, to invite proposals for a CEO of WASA.

That process ended, I think, in April of 2010, with a new CEO having been obtained by a detailed process of talent search. An experienced person was hired as the CEO of WASA. As soon as the Government came into office this person was made to give up his job, and even before any board was put in WASA—while there was no board in place—this Minister, on his own admission, sought, obtained and appointed Ganga Singh as acting CEO of WASA. We objected at the time.

3.00 p.m.

I think it is the Minister himself who brought the letter here in the Parliament, where the person who had been hired to be the CEO, said to the Minister in his office—I am reading here from the *Trinidad Express*

“Ganga Singh is new WASA chief.”

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Remember there was no board in place. This was done by the Minister who was the Permanent Secretary when the desal plant was built, who signed a letter to one man and one company, received a reply from a different man in a different company and proceeded to act. We ended up with Karamath's man being the Ministry's advisor who advised us to give Karamath the contract. As soon as he became Minister, the first thing he "find to do" was to appoint Ganga Singh as head of WASA, while there was no board at WASA. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Shame!

Dr. K. Rowley: And when I raised that matter in the Parliament, by way of a question, the Minister said it was only an interim arrangement. I am quoting the Minister here.

"Singh will act as CEO until a substantive one is appointed,..."

And of course, he gave this Parliament the assurance that the board of WASA would proceed in a transparent manner to source a CEO.

But, let me finish the point about Mr. Smith, who was the man who was there when the Government changed. Mr. Smith, was made to leave, was paid up until September. He got, I think, three months' salary and he left. His letter to the Minister is quite clear that he was not very happy to go because he said he liked the job. He said he would be willing to remain, but of course nobody encouraged him to remain. He was encouraged, obviously, to go and he left so that the vacancy could be created and the Minister duly filled it, and he filled it with Ganga Singh. The Opposition protested. The Minister came to the House and he gave the House the assurance that the board would hire a CEO in a transparent and open process.

Mr. Speaker, having told that to the Parliament—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. McIntosh: To the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. K. Rowley:—the next time we heard from the Minister was when he was forced to admit that Ganga Singh had been appointed substantively as CEO of WASA with no transparency, no competition and the board had secretly made Ganga Singh CEO of WASA. *[Desk thumping]* This is the same Ganga Singh who started the desal scandal, "who the police trailed—the whole operations end up" with Karamath being arrested, other persons being charged, where Ben-Dak is now in Israel, he cannot leave Israel because extradition procedures are in place for him; Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to extradite him. So, the whole question

of the corruption of the desal plant is alive and well because Ben-Dak cannot leave Israel. The day he leaves Israel Trinidad and Tobago's request for extradition kicks in.

Another one in the United States challenged the extradition in court and the United States court ruled that in the extradition proceedings, insufficient information was provided and, therefore, the court did not uphold the extradition procedures. Trinidad and Tobago was in the process of resubmitting—*[Interruption]*

Hon. George: “ah ha”.

Dr. K. Rowley:—their information to get the one in the United States to be extradited here. *[Interruption]*

Hon. George: “ah ha”

Dr. K. Rowley: “He bawling “ah ha” like he something “ah ha.” *[Laughter]* The bottom line is, since this Government came into office, maybe the Minister could tell us now: what has the Government done with respect to bringing Hoffman here? *[Desk thumping]* “Ah hear him bawling aaha, aaha,aaha, aaha.” That means he knows something. *[Interruption]*

Hon. George: He had eight years to do it. You have no evidence.

Dr. K. Rowley: The bottom line is, as I am speaking to you now—and the Minister will have his opportunity to respond and I am hoping when he responds—and I said earlier on, it would be useful to the people of Trinidad and Tobago if he answers all the questions in the Parliament—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Public Utilities and Member for Point Fortin, avoid the crosstalk. Take notes, okay. Continue, hon. Member. Could you refer to the date of the *Trinidad Express* article that you made reference to?

Dr. K. Rowley: It is July 28, 2010. But, Mr. Speaker, let me summarize for all the new Members in this House and the general public, in the context of what is before us, which is a price increase for water, for a significant benefit to the owners of the desal plant where it is an issue as to who all the owners are.

I crave your indulgence to read liberally from a summary done by the fourth estate. I heard the Prime Minister praising the fourth estate, the media, so I hope they will have no objection to me using the summary of the fourth estate, to encapsulate what I am talking here. I am reading here from the *Sunday Express* of September 12, 2010. I want to talk about the man called Dr. Joseph Ben-Dak, a

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man identified as chairman of a US-based shell corporation, an old friend and business associate. He masterminded an elaborate bid-rigging scheme that stretched from 1996 through 1999 when the contract was awarded to a joint-venture company of Karamath.”

A number of questions arose out of this, as to how this could have happened, and the questions were put to the Minister. And I hope, today—he gave us so much information about the Member for Diego Martin/West—he will take the opportunity today to put on the parliamentary record, answers to the questions about Ben-Dak and Hoffman; [*Desk thumping*] questions that were put to him by Camini Marajh, as published in this newspaper. Mr. Speaker, the Minister claimed that he did not remember, and we all forget things, so I am not holding it against him. We all forget. But, interestingly enough, another person involved in this is a fellow called Kansham Kanhai. He was head of WASA at the time. He flatly refused to talk to the police on any matter concerning WASA. That was his position. As for the one called Ganga Singh, he is still trying to convince us that everything was transparent and above board, notwithstanding the fact that the investigation resulted in Karamath being charged and extradition proceedings being laid against Ben-Dak and Hoffman. The head of WASA is still trying to tell us that everything was fine.

There is one particular point I want to make and it is the timeline of a bid-rigging, again published in the *Express*, and it starts with:

“Documents seized in a police-conducted raid”...

at Hafeez Karamath’s office, point to a confidentiality agreement struck between old friends and business associates, Karamath and Israeli national, Dr. Joseph Ben-Dak during the latter’s visit to Trinidad. That was in 1996. And, by September of that year, Karamath told Ben-Dak in a particular letter, which backed the acceptance of the Government, that the proposal was perfect and it was sent to Permanent Secretary George, but there was a slight change to the schedule, and Hoffman came to Trinidad and continued to advise the Ministry. It is all here; questions without answers.

The Lindquist report on this matter, because Lindquist was hired to investigate it. It is published here, September 18, *Sunday Express*:—

Lindquist. Opportunity for corrupt influence obvious

Those were the Lindquist findings of the bid-rigging as described there. And then, this one of September 25:

“Mystery over offshore trust”

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and I need to read a bit about this, because I am focusing today on the question of who the beneficiaries are,

it mystery over the offshore trust:

“...Somewhere in the offices of an attorney in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) or someplace else, there is a file of great interest to officers of the Anti-Corruptions Investigation Bureau (ACIB).

Investigators believe that this file or trust instrument could identify the beneficial interests of an entity called RD Ltd which they believe owns a 25 per cent shareholding in Desalcott, the company owned by the Karamath/General Electric consortium which won the controversial water contract. The value of the 25 per cent interest in Desalcott is said to be worth well over US\$ 5 million.

Documents seized in a police-conducted raid from the San Juan business office of a contractor... point to an offshore trust in the BVI for the benefit of interests not yet known.”

And therein lies my concern. The people of Trinidad and Tobago still do not know because the matter has not been concluded, but the facts of its existence are still there, unchallenged.

I quote:

“...an offshore trust to hold 25 of the 60 per cent interest he has in Desalcott, through one of several of his companies, Hafeez Karamath Engineering Services Ltd (HKESL).”

The seized documents show that HKESL which is Hafeez SL Company created the trust for the benefit of RD Ltd, a company operated in the BVI.

“The name Randy is an apparent reference to Randy Depoo, a former US embassy official turned lawyer and close associate of former public utilities minister”..

Ganga Singh, who is today the head of WASA. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Aye ah yah yaye”

Dr. K. Rowley:—RD Limited. This is what the trust says.

“That 25 per cent of the proceeds of the sale of HKESL shareholding in Desalcott after deducting any monies owing by HKES...”

is the benefit of RD Ltd.

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“And, RD LTD agrees:”

Listen to what RD Limited agrees to

“RD Ltd shall not be entitled to vote or direct the voting of 25 per cent of the shares of Desalcott.”

In other words, RD Ltd only owns the shares to get the profit, not to have any say in the conduct of the business of the company.

“That RD Ltd shall not require that the legal title to 25 per cent of the HKESL shareholding in Desalcott be transferred to RD Ltd.”

So, in other words, RD Ltd agrees in the trust arrangement, to forego any legal title to the 25 per cent shares. So, RD’s interest is only insofar as those shares are available to pay a profit to RD Limited. So, you own 25 per cent of RD Limited. You gave up your voting rights, you do not need that. You give up you legal title, you cannot sell them. You will only hold them to receive the proceeds that come from them.

Mr. Speaker, we heard about Africa, we heard about South America, we heard about Asia, this is Trinidad and Tobago in the West Indies. This is classic corruption. And the people of this country must know that this matter is not dead, it is alive and well. [*Desk thumping*] So, when they come here today to ask us to make these dramatic increases, to pay the Desalcott plant these increases, know that you are paying the money to RD Limited, know that. And until you know who RD Limited is, you do not know to whom you are paying that bribe. [*Desk thumping*]

“The State-hired forensic investigator Bob Lindquist, in his report on allegations of bid-rigging on the desalination project noted that during his questioning neither of the two lawyers made any comment or offered any explanation.”—

For these positions taken by RD Limited.

3.15 p.m.

“In a subsequent interview with Depoo,”—that is Randy Depoo who is still in Trinidad today, very close to this Government, being directed to get a law contract from the AG’S Office—“who was provided with a copy of the Declaration of Trust in advance of the interview with investigators, he acknowledged that RD were his initials but maintained that he had no knowledge of what he described as a ‘curious’ document...”

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Pressed on the name on the trust, Depoo said: ‘RD could be Randy Depoo but it has nothing to do with me. I have not had any beneficial or other interest in that company. To be honest, I don’t know what it stands for. I don’t know what was Mr. Karamath’s thought process. I don’t know what Dr. Denbow’s assignment was. I saw a document and I was asked about it. As far as I know that document got nowhere.’

‘The transparency in arriving at the final selection has already been provided by the UN’s study group which examined the proposal of the interested parties and rated them accordingly.’”

which gave Karamath the contract.

Mr. Speaker, this investigation pointed out that Hafeez Karamath was in a position to tell his foreign partners that an advertisement was coming even before it came out, and he was able to tell them that the advertisement was to provide the requisite transparency in the selection process so that no one can legitimately complain after. We complained from the beginning, but they put things in place so as to make the complaints appear not to have any merit. But, the police investigation and the Lindquist forensic investigation was able to ferret out the details to let us know, in fact, that there was a problem, a very real problem, which has and should end up in front of the court, and that is the position today.

So, we are being asked today to make these increases available to the Water and Sewage Authority, in the full knowledge that WASA will not be the major beneficiary of this. But, we have to do it because if we do not do it, as the Minister said, WASA is contracted to buying the water at a price and selling it at a lower price, and therefore would be losing money—in effect, subsidizing the industries at Point Lisas. So, to deal with that problem, knowing that we know that there is a sleeping—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made. That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank very much, Mr. Speaker. So, I am saying we have to swallow what we know, what we suspect, and go along and increase these rates because we are not to be in a position to be subsidizing industries at Point Lisas, and therefore we have to raise the rates. But, we are doing so against a

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background that the company that is setting the base of the rate increase, which is the water improvement rate, is a company which was conceived in iniquity and its birth was marked by the corruption of 1999/2000, when the company was formed; and the investigations that subsequently followed showed that there are people with questions to answer and that there are beneficiaries hiding under trust deeds in the BVI.

We can bring that right up to this very point. Today, there is a Member in this House of the other place who must be asked by those of us in this House—if we have any respect for this House and the people of Trinidad and Tobago: why you gave this House a commitment that the strange appointment of Ganga Singh in September 2010 was not effected in the way that you gave the House a commitment? When a Minister gives the Parliament a commitment, that is a sacred commitment which must not be violated. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss McDonald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: When the Minister was challenged about putting his partner as head of WASA, against the background of all that I have just said about the corrupt practices of the Ganga Singh regime, he told us: “It is interim and the board will open it up, they will compete for the position and a CEO would be chosen in a transparent process.” Today, I am demanding of this Minister that he accounts to this Lower House and tell us why that was not done. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, we could be taking for granted that all I have said about the history, from 1999 to now was just pure happenstance, was just coincidence, and most of the MPs in this House were not there when these things took place. But, you were here when the Minister told this House that the problem that he was confronted with, he will fix it with transparency and accountability. Once again, he has done the opposite. [*Interruption*]

Miss McDonald: Yeah, the new politics.

Dr. K. Rowley: And you must remember, he is no ordinary Minister, he is no ordinary person. He is a Minister who was a Permanent Secretary who affixed his signature to Minister’s letterhead and has not now, up to this point, explained that. That was the basis on which the contract was awarded to Karamath.

Miss McDonald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: Karamath invested \$500,000 in this project. Today, it is worth US \$25 million. It must be the best investment ever made in Trinidad and Tobago. The current Minister was the Permanent Secretary, who wrote to “Mr. A”

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of “company B”, got an answer from “Mr. C” from “company D”, and he saw nothing wrong with that. To him, it is more important to come here today and talk about who got water in Covigne Hill, misrepresent the facts and attack my stewardship in my constituency where I have been elected six or seven times. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss McDonald: That is right!

Dr. K. Rowley: But the bottom line is, election or no election, we have time for that. There will be time enough for campaigning when the campaigning comes. but today, in this House, he must answer these specific questions. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss McDonald: I agree.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am putting this specific question to him today: respond to the commitment you gave to the Parliament about Ganga Singh. He has just told us that it is WASA, equals Ganga Singh, who recommended these increases. Mr. Speaker, I find that difficult to swallow. I find it hard to take, that this “musical chairs and tic-tac-toe” between the Minister and Ganga Singh puts this country in a situation where we have to believe that the people asking for this increase are likely to be the people to benefit from the increases that they are asking for themselves. Those are the facts of the situation. [*Interruption*]

Miss McDonald: Scandalous!

Dr. K. Rowley: And they could get up, and they could bad-mouth me, they could bad-mouth the PNM and they could bad-mouth the history. The bottom line is, let them address the facts of this issue. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss McDonald: The facts are there. It is hard to disappear.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am raising it, Mr. Speaker, not that it is something new, against a background that the public would have seen the individual pieces in the newspapers, and now they have come face to face with the outcome of it. “Look it here”:

“On the trail of bid-rigging”

This is from the *Trinidad Express* of September 12, 2010.

Hon. Member: What newspaper?

Dr. K. Rowley: *Trinidad Express*.

Miss McDonald: “But he jus’ tell yuh dat.”

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Dr. K. Rowley: This is from the *Trinidad Express* of September 18, 2010:

“Bid-rigging: Govt fails checks and balances”

And all the details of what that means. Bid-rigging reaps big profits and we are here in the Parliament to approve increases. Increases equal big profits for the beneficiaries of the original child of the corrupt actions of the Ministry of Public Utilities in 1999/2000. Look, it is all here—October 09, 2010:

Bid-rigging reaps big profits.

Those are the details and we as a country cannot pretend that we do not know this. This is not politics or partisan positions. None of us in this House should take a position of defence of this. None of us! *[Desk thumping]* Because, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, it is the little people, and the other people in Trinidad and Tobago, who pay the price for these profits. Let us not fool ourselves.

I went to see my colleague in Oropouche last Tuesday. *[Crosstalk]* *[Interruption]* I was in Union Hall and he was on Cucharan Trace, *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: In the mih people area.

Dr. K. Rowley: But had I ran into him, I would have invited him to Canaan Presbyterian Primary School, and if he had the time, I would have had a drink with him. I ran into my former colleague, Trevor Sudama, who was MP for Oropouche. Mr. Speaker, we have to get serious in this country. I have no enmity with anybody in any political party across from the PNM. None! We would take issue with their policies. We would take issue with their programmes. And, therefore, when we have to deal with matters of State, where wrongdoing is wrongdoing, it would be surprisingly unacceptable that if people in this House believe that the way to deal with these things is to just refer to the PNM, demonize the PNM, and have Ben-Dak laughing in Israel, Hoffman laughing in New York, Ganga Singh laughing in WASA and the Minister pretending he does not know what I am talking about.

If that is the case, we will never be able to raise our level in the corruption index because people keep pretending that they do not know what we are talking about. That is why I was not surprised when I saw in today’s newspaper, in an article on page 15 of the *Newsday*:

“No contracts signed for Invaders Bay”

And listen to the Minister of Planning and the Economy, who is seeking to respond to a position of the Opposition on procurement—this is a procurement

matter because 99 per cent of the corruption associated with the public administration is in procurement—where a government spends money to get goods and services or gives benefits to people for State resources. Hear the Minister of Planning and the Economy:

“No contracts have been signed for the Invaders Bay Development Project, there are no procurement issues linked to that project...”

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you read the newspapers. You would have heard the JSC and others taking objection to how the Government was going about using our real estate assets at Invaders Bay; objecting to the procurement process and procedures. Yet, the Minister is telling the *Newsday*

“there are no procurement issues linked to the project”

But he is saying that no contracts have been signed. The signing of a contract does not deal with the issue of the procurement process. The size of the contract does not, by itself, deal with the issue; it is whether the process is the one that has the integrity that it ought to have. So, while he is saying that there is no procurement issue and a contract was not signed, he goes on to say, and I quote:

“No contracts have been signed so far for Invaders Bay but the recommendations have been made to Cabinet which have been accepted,”

So, you finished the procurement process, it has gone to Cabinet. You are telling me now that it has been accepted. So, the procurement process has delivered a Cabinet decision on the issue. How then, in God’s name, can you say there is no issue with the procurement process, knowing what others have said in the country? Now, you are telling me, for the first time, that Cabinet has agreed to what you have put before the Cabinet. I do not know what you have put there, but you said that they have accepted it—because, you are pretending not to know that this is a procurement issue.

We are not taking any confirmation from you that all is well, because I told you earlier on, I read for you what Ganga Singh told this House in 1999/2000. He gave the House every assurance that all was well. It is not the first time, I have been in and out of government where Ministers, when confronted with problems in their baliwick, in their portfolio, come before the House, and rather than confront the issue from a position of principle, they confront it from a position of politics and lie to the House and lie to the people.

We were told by a Minister that UDeCott was fine and all was well. We were told by Ganga Singh that all was fine at WASA. “Next thing you know is police,

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police, police.” Now we are being told: “nothing wrong with Invaders Bay, no procurement issue.” But, we are not stupid people. And, therefore, all who believe that we are stupid, a day will come when they have to answer for assuming that we are stupid.

3.30 p.m.

There is a problem with respect to Invaders Bay and its handing over to the private sector, because the process has not been very transparent. It has been accelerated to a point of ineffectiveness, in-so-far as high integrity is concerned, and there have been strong objections to it. And before we could deal with that we got another one: the Rapid Rail—light rail transit. You invite proposals, you invite expressions of interest at the beginning of a process, which could *surreptitiously* creep to a contract or an award and you say, “No, it is not a procurement process.”

How could we be embarking upon the building of a light rail and it is not a procurement process? How in God’s name does a Minister want us to understand that? If this country is going to establish a light rail anywhere the Government has to be integral into it. Any contractor who builds it, is building it, as a financial proposal to get a financial reward, one way or the other. It is either he is paid upfront, he is paid on the use or he is paid in the end. If we pass State assets to anybody in an auction, it is a procurement process in some form.

These Ministers are pretending they do not understand so as to carry out corrupt activity, and it is the same UNC behaviour that took place in 1999—2000 when Eric Williams moved the following Motion. The Motion was moved on April 28. The original Motion was moved on November 26, 1999, and for my friend from Pointe-a-Pierre who was not here, let me tell you what the Motion was. No, you were not here; I am bringing you into the picture, citizen.

On November 26, 1999, Port of Spain South, Eric Williams moved this Motion:

“Whereas serious concerns have been expressed by some members of the public as regards transparency and equity in the award of the contract for the construction of a Desalination Plant;

Be It Resolved that this House condemn the manner in which the contract has been awarded for the Desalination Plant and also call upon the Government to cancel this controversial contract.”

That Motion was moved in this House, and I had the opportunity to take part in that debate and, Mr. Speaker, the Government's response to those concerns was as I described earlier, Minister Ganga Singh pooh-poohing it, dismissing it, and giving water an ironclad guarantee that all was well and there was no need for concern. Yet a few years later, Lindquist and the police could go in there and find this whole basket of information leading right down to the RD Limited where money was being held for somebody who cannot dare make themselves known to this country. So what? So, we learn nothing from our experiences, nothing? We learn nothing, Mr. Speaker?

And today—the French say the more it changes, the more it remains the same. When Ganga Singh was challenged on this matter in the beginning before the plant was built, listen to what he said: “If anybody protests now, it is because de PNM will contrive to bring about those protests.” That was his response on April 28, 2000. Tell that to Ben-Dak, who is cooped up in Israel; he cannot leave. Tell that to Hoffman, who has been unmasked as Karamath's man in the process, recommending Karamath for projects. Just mention PNM, “bad-mouth PNM, cuss de PNM” and all would be well. That is what happened in 2000, and I have no doubt that is what is going to happen again today.

The Minister spoke about areas of water improvement. I have a question to ask him. Is it that where these water improvements have taken place we are to expect an increase in water rates? I want an answer to that, because you see this increase in Point Lisas is a *harbinger* of things to come, and this country must disregard any comforting statements from the Government, and pay attention to the economics and the logic, because insofar as there is any improvement in your water supply, expect that there will be an improvement in your rates. Do not believe anybody who would tell you otherwise, and that is not an unreasonable position. But the Government must know and must say so and the payer must know, because, you see, I have a property in Tobago. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Still?

Dr. K. Rowley: Yeah, still. I have been paying my water rates, and one day I got this letter—I mean, I get a fair supply of water and I must admit that the supply has improved in the last couple of years. [*Desk thumping by Hon. George*] You are only here a year and a half “what yuh knocking for?” [*Laughter*]

Mr. Warner: Shot boy! Shot boy!

Dr. K. Rowley: “He is ready to take credit, eh!” It has nothing to do with you. The improvement took place as a result of WASA drilling some wells in and

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around my village and nearby, and the supply has improved. But listen to what the letter says to me, and I am assuming that this is not personal, I am assuming that this is policy in Tobago.

Review of rates and charges good.

So there is a review of rates and charges.

Effective November 01—

Now, this letter is dated Friday, December 02:

Effective November 01, 2011 your quarterly bill will reflect a 35 per cent increase in rates. This increase is being applied pursuant to Order No. 83 of 1993 issued by the PUC which gave the authority the approval to increase the water and sewerage rate for unmetered domestic customers and charitable institutions in keeping with fairness to all parties involved. The increase was not levied before due to level of supply to your area; however, due to the improvements to your water supply it is now being applied.

It is in that context I am asking the Minister if all the persons who have now received an improvement in their water supply are to look forward to a 35 per cent increase in their water rate? And if that is so, come out and tell the population, tell them that. Let us know how we are being governed, what is happening.

This letter was a big surprise to me, WASA has the authority to do it, but it is being done. “In light of the foregoing...” Hear it:

In light of the foregoing—that means what I just said to you—your next quarterly bill will reflect the 35 per cent increase.

But most interestingly, Mr. Speaker, please note also—Mr. Speaker, please?

Mr. Speaker: Member for Point Fortin, this is about the second time —
[*Crosstalk and interruption*]

Hon. Members: Always!

Mr. Speaker: —I am asking you. Member for Point Fortin, would you be quiet and observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c) respectively? Continue, hon. Member.

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Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have a word with her behind the Chair. But over and above the 35 per cent increase, it says:

In light of the foregoing your next quarterly bill will reflect a 35 per cent increase. Please note also that your account will be adjusted retroactively not exceeding one year.

So in other words, after I have paid off WASA for a year, WASA would go back into my account, when I thought I paid my last year's water rate, retroactively increase what I should have paid by 35 per cent. Is that what all other users are to expect when there is an improvement in the water supply in their area? And, of course, improvement could mean one day going to two days a week, two days going to three days a week, whatever the improvement. WASA—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. K. Rowley: “Nah it does not go down at all, it never goes down. It is a ratchet, it only goes up!” [*Laughter*] But I am saying here it is, without any advertisement to the public, without any campaign of information, because we know how they could establish these campaigns, some of them quite nonsensical. There are some persons who are selling products here by monopoly, and advertising like mad in the state sector. I do not know who they are competing against, but they are advertising. They did not see it fit to tell the public that water rates were being increased by 35 per cent, retroactive to one year. And I put that in the context of what the Minister has said as to what is going on now. If all these improvements are taking place, tell me today that what applies in Mason Hall in Tobago—and I presume throughout Tobago—applies everywhere else in the country. Because if you do that, you would be the first person announcing to the country that there is a substantial increase in water rates in this country, because most persons are in line for some improvement in their water supply and—[*Desk thumping*] [*Inaudible*]

We know our water system. Most persons do not get a 24/7 water supply and, therefore, there is room for improvement virtually across the country. If that is so, whenever that improvement comes, it comes with a 35 per cent increase and a one-year retroactivity. If that is so, and it appears to be so, I want the Minister to not stay as silent on this matter as he was when he was asked about Ben-Dak and Hoffman. Tell—[*Interruption*] No, I would hate to believe that WASA treats me special, right? I like equity. I would like to be a part of the crowd. I have a yard tap—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: “Yuh have residential!”

Dr. K. Rowley: I am a user, but I must say I was surprised by this, because I would have thought that a policy like that would have been made known to the public. A 35 per cent increase is facing you, if any increase comes your way, and since the Minister has told us about all these areas where improvements have been done, then there ought to be a 35 per cent increase there. This is bad news for Covigne, bad news for Big Yard—[*Desk thumping*] bad news for Scorpion, all around.

Hon. Member: “Yesterday he get water!”

Dr. K. Rowley: I am not saying no, but I am saying we need to be told that there is this policy at work. My constituents are saying to me that they believe they are being overcharged by some utilities that are making charges on them which they do not understand. That is an error which needs to be examined. To what extent can they be satisfied that the charges are true and fair and not filled with error or, in fact, chiselling by the authorities?

Mr. Speaker, today is a day that I am concerned about, because the Minister has said that the basis on which they are advancing and accepting these increases from WASA is because the rates are lower than worldwide rates. He comes and tells us about Qatar, Barbados and elsewhere. If that is the basis on which the increases are being levied, there are other utilities and services provided in this country that are below world rates; T&TEC services for one, government services for another, the fuels, gasoline.

If that is the basis on which increases are being levied in Trinidad and Tobago, because there are cheaper prices elsewhere in the world, then we want to hear from the Government how that policy is going to be applied to gasoline, LPG, government services and so on. Because we know notwithstanding all that we say about this country and bad-mouth our quality of life, these costs are substantially lower than they are in a vast section of the world. So Trinidad and Tobago, watch out, the Government is on the basis of price increasing based on what prevails worldwide. [*Desk thumping*]

3.45 p.m.

Utilities are increasing rates surreptitiously in the face of any miniscule or other improvements. That is a fact. The increases are retroactive to one year—fact. And the Government is keeping very silent hoping that you do not observe it, and the Government is prepared to accept standards of integrity, levels of corruption that should be intolerable to the vast majority of decent people in Trinidad and Tobago.

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This desal plant is a stain on the country and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The fact that we are today being asked by this Minister, on the advice of that CEO at WASA, should make every one of us go to bed tonight thinking, “What is happening here?” Mr. Speaker, we have questions, questions, questions and we hope that the Minister, when he winds up, will give us answers, answers, answers.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to join this debate on a very important Motion in the name of the very distinguished Senator, the hon. Emmanuel George, Minister of Public Utilities.

The objective of this Motion is to provide, on the one hand, a measure of equity in the distribution of the responsibility of paying for utilities; while, on the other hand, to provide additional revenue for a public provider of a utility that has had its fair share of stress over the years in terms of its financial position.

I must say that we were treated to quite a lively contribution by the Leader of the Opposition. I want to point out that I found that the Member for Diego Martin West appeared to be revitalized, re-energized and reinvigorated. I do not know what could have happened in the last week or two that would have led to this sudden discovery of energy by the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Speaker, it may be a visit to south, but I am sure it is not a visit to Oropouche East. It may have been a visit to San Fernando. For months, persons have been remarking that they have found the Leader of the Opposition to be losing his renown oratorical skill, his platform skill; but today he has demonstrated that he feels revitalized. He feels that the moment has come that he can be returned and that energy may last beyond 90 days I am sure.

During the week, we were discussing this Motion—several colleagues who are, incidentally, carded to speak today—and when in our caucus we raised the issue of what would be the likely response of the Opposition, we were clear on two points. We were clear on who would be the first speaker, taking off from the blocks on the Opposition and we were so clear on the content of that contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

We knew, when we looked at the content of this Motion, that we would see Mr. Ganga Singh’s name there. When we looked at it, we saw Desalcott; we knew the arguments that were coming. We knew there would be this issue of who is

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receiving benefits. We knew this would go back to 1999/2000, on the initiative of the UNC Government to introduce Desalcott and desalination. We knew that and, picture perfect, we are now in a position to respond to that.

Before I get to that issue, I just wanted to begin—during the contribution of the hon. Opposition Leader, at one time I wanted to catch myself. I thought it was really Kamini Marajh responding to the Motion. There was an excessive dependence on a particular journalistic piece, which I have no problem with. It is good. That is why I kept asking every moment, which newspaper, only to be told the *Express*, the *Express*, the *Express*. We knew it; we read it. It was an exposé based on, I think, affidavits, which were published in the newspaper. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is within his rights to quote from the newspaper on these matters.

I want to begin with a quote from the *Newsday*, so we will have the *Newsday* as well. Today, February 03, 2012, in a column written by Suzanne Mills, on page 10, Miss Mills begins with this line, which I thought was a good line to begin with. I like it. She says:

“The PNM have got to be the most shameless, boldfaced politicians this country has ever seen. It cannot be the same set”—I am quoting her, Mr. Speaker; I do not speak in this way—“who left us with 500 plus murders a year and gangs running amok who are now engorged with moral indignation...”

Mr. Speaker, I thought that would set the backdrop for me. When I heard this energized contribution, I could not help but ask myself, “Where are we going? Are we talking about corruption? If we are, who is raising this issue? Which party is raising it? If we are raising the issue of procurement, who is raising it? Which party is raising it? I could not believe myself.

I know there have been a change in leadership and a change in apparel as well. That is a big word. Clothes! Clothes! The tie! So there have been a change in clothes and a change in leader, but there is no change in DNA. As a dear friend of mine, the former Member for Couva South, Kelvin Ramnath, used to say in the House, “We must remind them of their sins.”

It is not only the big issues, but the small issues. The Opposition Leader came to the end of his contribution and sought to continue this campaign of fear, telling his listeners, “Look out, WASA may come with a rate increase.” He concedes that the distribution of water is better, but it means a rate increase. It might come.

Then I asked the Opposition Leader—I think the property he is referring to is property in Tobago, the property that was rented to Landate. There was a yard tap account which became a residential service and on that basis an increase was sought. I could be wrong.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I trust that my colleague will confine his argument to things that he knows. There is no truth in what you have just said. Please talk about what you know about.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. We will check that billing because that is the information we have; that we move from a yard tap to a residential service.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate at the outset that one has to put this Motion in the context of WASA. How did WASA arrive here? It was not Desalcott, Karamath, Ben Dash, Ben Hack or whoever. It was not them. It was not Hoffman, Michael or Dustin. [*Laughter*] WASA did not arrive here because of that.

The former Prime Minister—and we want to go on record again and wish him well, recovering from the ailment—on Tuesday, July 11, 2006, had what he was accustomed to hosting, a function called “Breakfast with the Prime Minister” to which he would invite all the state enterprises to buy tickets to go to breakfast with the Prime Minister. It was very interesting; all the state enterprises, T&TEC, Petrotrin; they all made out cheques and these cheques went to an advertising company.

Let us talk procurement. They went to an advertising company and, for paying thousands and thousands of dollars of taxpayers’ money, you get an opportunity to get some bread and cheese and drink some tea with the Prime Minister; have some “strimps” and guzzle some whisky; but the taxpayer was paying for that.

When the board chairmen and all of them went to Paria Suites in San Fernando on this fateful July 10 to have brunch and engage, they were doing that at the expense of the taxpayer. The former Prime Minister says:

“WASA a \$27 billion headache, says Manning. He says: A massive shape up is coming at WASA as Government moves to deal with its \$27 billion debt. He says: Just as Caroni Limited and BWIA, WASA were the main challenges faced by his Cabinet, blaming solely the management of these companies for the recurring financial woes.

This is the Prime Minister of the country then, blaming the management of WASA for the financial woes. He made this statement, just for the record, at Paria Suites in San Fernando, La Romaine.

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Mr. Manning went on:

WASA is a big challenge. It is a \$27 billion headache.

When they interviewed the then Chief Executive Officer, a fellow who goes by one of the most inappropriate of names to be heading a water company—the fellow’s name is Errol Grimes—if anybody has the wrong name to serve in a water company, it would be him. When Errol Grimes was contacted, he said, “That is news to me. I was in meeting all day; I do not know what the Prime Minister is talking about.”

Mr. Roberts: What he placed in the interview process?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He placed about tenth and they had five people.

Mr. Speaker, so when we got into office we inherited this monumental mess at WASA. WASA was in a financial crisis characterized by high expenditure low revenue stream, deteriorating assets, unacceptable customer service; questionable management systems; a lack of performance indicators. It fell to this government to treat with a company in a debt of \$27 billion. That debt is higher than the debt of about 75 independent countries in the world. That is what they left for us. That is our inheritance. That is a tragic inheritance. The Member will not tell us about that. I took note of the Opposition Leader’s words. “These are the facts.”

He said:

“Quoting from a journalist’s account, based on affidavits”, he said, “these are the facts”.

Quoting from police reports, which I assume he got somewhere because I understand police email and reports reach the Opposition now—I am not saying that the police report is wrong, but quoting from a police report, he said, “These are the facts.” He called the names of the people because their belief is, if you dramatize, scandalize and criminalize all these processes, you will undermine confidence in the State and the Government. That is the strategy.

Quoting about Ben-Dak—he did not tell us, and he knows there was an extradition matter in a US court and the Trinidad and Tobago Government could not even satisfy the minimal level of probable evidence to even get an extradition treaty to bring Ben-Dak to Trinidad and Tobago. He knew that, but he did not tell us that. So the listeners out there are hearing about this man on the run, but when the Trinidad and Tobago Government found him in New York, went to court and said we go to a US court, extradite him to Trinidad to face charges, the US justice system said, “You did not have probable cause; you cannot.”

Dr. Rowley: That is Hoffman. You are misleading the House.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, he is telling me now that it is Hoffman. I would not have had that doubt if you had said in your contribution that your Government could not win an extradition matter in the United States. I would not have mixed up that.

You said Hoffman was supposed to be extradited, but the Government of Trinidad and Tobago could not get an extradition matter against him, so he fled somewhere. That is the implication. Those are the facts he was stating. He said that there was some hidden trust fund and so on, but I am asking the Member if he knows the name of beneficiaries, public or private. It is in the national interest for him to tell us.

4.00 p.m

We discovered that the extradition matter was against Hoffman; the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has failed; and we are hearing that there are secret beneficiaries to Desalcott and these moneys are supposed to go to them, but the Member will not tell us who are these secret beneficiaries. Is it the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West? Is a secret beneficiary the Member for Point Fortin? I do not know. Is it the Member for Laventille West? [*Crosstalk*] I know you have a lot of "cattles" down there to take care of now. You have "cattles" and cows down in Point Fortin. You do not have the problem, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please. When the Opposition Leader was on his legs, we gave him full protection, and I would like Members on the Opposition Bench to just give the courtesy, not only to the Chair, but to the House, by allowing the Member to speak in silence. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: When the cows come home this happens. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, let me get back quickly to this issue where the Member for Diego Martin West paints a picture in 75 minutes or so of secret beneficiaries, based upon his reading of the newspapers; based upon police accounts; and based upon Lindquist and so on, but to this point the Member will not tell us who are these beneficiaries. Are they members of the People's National Movement? Are they members of the National Alliance for Reconstruction? Are they members of the United National Congress? Are they members of the Congress of the People? Who are they? So why, Mr. Speaker, he would do that is because he wants to continue that process of scandal.

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In those police matters and so on, to this day, unless I am mistaken, I am not sure—again, I stand to be corrected—if anyone has been convicted of any offence. Certainly, there are matters before the police, and certainly there was a Lindquist report, but the fact is there have been reports, but to his point in time I am not sure—I could be wrong—if anyone has been convicted of any offence. You see, Mr. Speaker, whether it is Khansham Kahani or Ganga Singh or whoever, we are not here, first to debate the issues of 1999 and 2000. It came via the Leader of the Opposition. What the Leader of the Opposition referred to as facts are matters that are the subject of affidavit, police report and Lindquist. You know, to this point in time, no one has been convicted of any criminal offence, maybe as yet.

I know the Member for Diego Martin Central is excited about these issues, and when he speaks he will tell us. Maybe he knows some of the beneficiaries. We do not know. You will tell us about those standards. I understand that you were one of the privileged few to have access when the Leader of the Opposition was denied.

Hon. Member: Ohoo!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, in May 2010, WASA was in a bankrupt position. The revenue collected from WASA was \$560 million while expenditure was \$1.7 billion excluding finance charges. Mr. Speaker, WASA had a situation where 46 per cent of its operating expenses was personnel emoluments. The increase in staff from an approved structure of 2,033—their approved staff structure is 2,033. Do you know how many persons we found working in WASA? Mr. Speaker, 4,974.

Hon. Member: Shameful!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, any of them was Ben-Dak and Hoffman and, who else? They had somebody there, the husband of a former Minister was hired.

Hon. Member: “Nah man, no!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “He job was to fix the leak.” Chief of what?

Dr. Gopeesingh: —of security.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, he came there. They hired the husband. Now, that is what I call a factor.

Mr. Roberts: Was it advertised?

Mr. Sharma: Why did he not pass the police promotion exams?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is another matter. [*Crosstalk*] He talked about corruption. Who talked about corruption? I did not start that. So, do not start the issue and then run from it. Let us confront it face on. The former Minister of Planning and Development, a great colleague, ally, accomplice of the Member for Diego Martin West, had her husband working in WASA to fix leaks. Was it advertised? Did anybody see an ad in the newspaper, “leak fixer required”? [*Laughter*] Did anybody see it at WASA? But he went there at high salary levels. Anyway, I could say more of that, but it might be unparliamentary.

So, Mr. Speaker, WASA’s challenges were the subject of a great challenge facing this Government. The Caroni Arena Water Treatment Plant—WASA’s flagship water treatment facility—was in a state of total disrepair. For water distribution, WASA had approximately 7,000 kilometres of transmission and distribution pipes. It is estimated that non-revenue water was over 50 per cent as a result of leakage. Over 50 per cent of the water that WASA pump would leak, and they had somebody there to fix the leak. Mr. Speaker, leaks were about 3,500 per month, and that contributed to high operating costs and reduced levels of service. This is what we found: a \$27 billion debt; 3,500 leaks per month.

In the area of waste water, service coverage is 30 per cent of the population, and WASA had serious problems also with the EMA for waste water discharge and so on. So a major rehabilitation was needed, and the Minister spoke of some of those issues.

In our first year in office, we had a day in Ste. Madeleine when we went to commission the Navet Trunk Line. They fixed a line, a major supply line to central and south, and it came in under budget within time using WASA’s workforce, in less than the time allocated. They saved how many million dollars? Mr. Speaker, \$86 million—

Mr. Warner: It is \$186 million.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: WASA saved \$186 million using its own workforce. I never forget the day, Minister Rambachan was next to me and he said, “If the PNM had to do that they would have had cost overrun of \$186”. I never forget that. You see, Mr. Speaker, that brought water to central and south Trinidad under the very CEO who they came today to drag from pillar to post.

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The last time the Navet Trunk Line was fixed was under the British. The British fixed it before they left in 1962, and since then the PNM never touched it. Today there are villages in central and south Trinidad with a better and more reliable water supply as we have never had before. [*Desk thumping*] I could tell you from my constituency. In Chitar Trace, the pipe extends wider facilities; in Cuchawan Trace—I am happy to say that in Talparo, I think, a few weeks ago—the people there have been waiting 166 years for water—that is when they first arrived. [*Laughter*]—and they got it—the same CEO that they are attacking and the same Minister—they got it. In Digity, in Penal, in Couva and Carli Bay and another very nicely named trace—we have some exotic names here. People and villages that have been neglected for decades and decades are getting water for the very first time in their history. That is delivery and performance. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, that happened under the same CEO and Minister, and then the Opposition Leader jumps up and says, “If we are returned to office, we will put a ministry for rural development.” [*Laughter*] Now, in the 46 years or so they were there, they had no ministry for rural development, but we must have a ministry for rural development now, when the people of Chitar Trace finally got water; when the people of Ramdhanie Trace got water; and when the people of Roopsingh Road, Carli Bay, and Scopion—

Mr. Sharma: Tahadil Trace.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: A next place? Tahadil Trace.

Mr. Warner: Tahadil.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Tahadil Trace—

Mr. Warner: In Chaguanas West.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You have a lot of touring to do to see these people in neglect. We have Sonnylall Road and others. You must not only go to these bourgeois places and so on. Get into the traces, and see the people who need the help.

You see, Mr. Speaker, WASA is confronting—Maybe the Member for Diego Martin West said it and I missed hearing him. During his contribution, I had cause to leave the Chamber at one or two points, so I missed—

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, please, could you relax yourselves? [*Laughter*] Just relax yourselves, and allow the Member to speak in peace. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I missed when the Member for Diego Martin West told the House that the benefit to WASA from this measure is \$150 million per year. I missed when you said or you did not say it.

Dr. Rowley: I did not say that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay, he did not say that. So, let me tell you now for the record—I am informed that the benefit from this measure to WASA is \$150 million. [*Desk thumping*] I am further informed that this measure is one that will meet and treat with the customers in the Point Lisas area on the basis of equity; their capacity to pay. This is not a situation where there are persons in a squatter settlement somewhere where you have poor, underprivileged people and you are raising the water rate. When the Member realized what was happening he came in the end and said, “Be warned, they may do it for the poor as well.” That was the little trick.

The Member kept talking about procurement and procurement and the Member alluded to secret beneficiaries from this Desalcott deal, but could not tell us who those secret beneficiaries were. He left it to the imagination, while “calling people name all over the place”, because he knows if he does that it is the Privileges Committee, and he is outside for the year because he has no evidence, and he has no proof and that is “mauvais langue”.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a matter on procurement. You see, on the eve of the May 2010 election, there was something happening at WASA which became a matter on the platform and, at that time, the People’s Partnership had to make a commitment to the national community on a WASA-related matter. I may have missed it, but I do not think the Member touched on it.

You see, Mr. Speaker, WASA became a mess and entered that situation that the former Prime Minister described as a major headache for several reasons, but when they were in office they did not provide the visionary management to get water, and they did not provide the management either to properly manage the utility. What did they do? I want to raise this issue of procurement. I was not surprised by the position of the Opposition. This is a party in Opposition now that was in Government for 85 per cent of our independent history, and they brought no legislation to deal with procurement; they brought no legislation to deal with integrity in public life; they brought no legislation to deal with corruption, but they are talking about it when they are in the Opposition. You have to look to the NAR administration and the UNC administration to find all the laws governing this country dealing with anti-corruption and integrity. [*Desk thumping*]

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Again, if anybody could think of one significant law that was passed by a PNM administration to deal with corruption and integrity, let me know. It was Prime Minister ANR Robinson in 1987 who brought that legislation to deal with corruption in public life; it was the UNC administration that brought legislation to deal with integrity in public life.

Mr. Roberts: “What dem bring?” Calder Hart!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So, when today they conveniently “jump out of the procurement boat”, I remember Francesco Schettino, the famous captain of *Costa Concordia*, when that ship capsized, the first thing the captain did was bail out. [Laughter] His explanation was more plausible than the Member for Diego Martin West. He said he was walking along the corridor and he tripped and fell into a lifeboat and this lifeboat just happened to be on the move, and when he discovered what was happening, well he was unsafe. [Laughter] He appeared to be more believable than the Member for Diego Martin West.

4.15 p.m.

They bailed out of the procurement boat because they knew if they stayed there what would happen; they would not be able to come back and engage in corruption and mismanagement and deals. They know that. [Desk thumping] And I will give you one, in June 2009—who was in government in 2009?

Mr. Roberts: “dem.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Right. There is a frame agreement between WASA and Mekorot Development and Enterprise of Israel—approved. This agreement in 2009 signed with Mekorot Development and Enterprise (MDE) for short, is for a long-term collaboration in the development and implementation of water services and projects in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Roberts: Long-term.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: In November 2009, representatives of WASA went to Israel. Remember they bought some equipment there too. In November 2009, WASA signed a memorandum of understanding with MDE in Israel—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: MMD.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: MMD (Merhav Mekorot Development) for the implementation and design of systems for WASA, completion of a hydraulic network for Trinidad water, review of various alternatives for the south-west Tobago waste water project, and the replacement and rehabilitation of high leaky

mains. Mr. Speaker, hear how this story unfolded. January 2010, WASA was advised of approval by the Minister of Public Utilities. Who was that? Who was the Minister of Public Utilities in 2010? “Anybody know?”

Mr. Roberts: Abdul-Hamid.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mustafa Hamsho?

Mr. Roberts: “De man who dive in de drain.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker, someone very well known to them. He was here for a while. The Minister signs or gives approval for a contract with MMD. The WASA board approved the contract because the Minister had signed off. In April 2012, WASA signed the engineering procurement construction agreement with MMD at a cost of US \$110 million. “How much Trinidad and Tobago dollars is that?”

Hon. Member: Billions.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: How much?

Hon. Member: Six hundred and forty million Trinidad and Tobago dollars.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Six hundred and forty million Trinidad and Tobago dollars signed with a firm, an engineering procurement and construction agreement. I ask the hon. Member for Diego Martin West: “Was there any procurement? Was there any tendering?” And I will tell you: “No, there was none.” [*Desk thumping*] No procurement, no tendering, but went to Israel and signed for TT \$640 million. “Yuh know for what?” “For dey to come to manage WASA.” It was not a management contract. It was the most nebulous agreement. [*Interruption*] “De first time you hear about that?” The first time they heard about that. “First time all yuh hear about that too, all “ah all yuh” in the front?”

Miss McDonald: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: First time everybody heard about that. Okay. Member for Diego Martin Central, is it the first time you heard about that too? When you were in Luxembourg, you heard anything about this? Mr. Speaker, so they go and they sign away in April 2010, \$640 million—no tendering, no procurement, no water, and it is not for a management contract, it is for nebulous services.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we cannot be shouting across the floor, in language that I would not like to have recorded. You know who I am talking about. I am talking about the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara. I am saying you do

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not shout across the floor. That is the point I am making. So could I ask Members, if you want to shout, write it on a piece of paper and when you get up to speak, speak to the issue.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I was on this matter of a procurement construction agreement without tendering, without transparency. “Fellas just leave, jump on a plane and gone to Israel and sign.”

Hon. Member: First-class.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They were signing in Israel, in Tel Aviv, and the money \$640 million, but there was another sting in the tail. In April 2010, the Parliament was dissolved. You all remember? I think it was the 23rd, but Parliament was dissolved. An election was imminent, although the Prime Minister then did not give a date. Why would he not give a date for election when he dissolved the Parliament? It is self-evident, but there were a few things that they had to do, so they wanted to keep the election date on an outer boundary so they could complete some business.

You see, in May 2010—election was in May of that year—WASA signed an undated escrow agreement with Merhav Mekorot Development; WASA was required to deposit US \$25 million within 30 days. The Member for Diego Martin West knows a lot more about commercial and financial matters than I do, so he was telling us about blind trust and all these things with these trust agreements and so on. He knows a lot about those things, but he must also explain to us the effect of placing money in an escrow agreement, and who could access it and when, because, if you could answer those questions you would know why WASA wanted to take 25x6—TT \$150 million—out of WASA before the general elections, and put it in an account where only one party could access it.

So before the general election, WASA signed an escrow agreement for TT \$150 million, payable immediately. So get it out before the election, we do not know what would happen. You look stunned by that one. It was the Thursday before the general election. The Member of Parliament for Siparia was at Palmiste Park, where we had a national meeting. At that meeting the Member for Siparia gave a commitment, that if the partnership would get into power we would not pursue this corrupt deal with MMD. And so it was left to WASA, under the stewardship of the Minister, Sen. Emmanuel George, that on entering office—to this day I am instructed that WASA has not paid that money into the escrow agreement, and would have saved \$150 million. [*Desk thumping*] That is what you call corruption.

You see, \$150 million gone. They wanted to put it in the escrow agreement, but it is \$640 million. When we enquired, what is this? What is this about? At the Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago (Iscott), some of you would know history, when Iscott moved to Ispat, there was a management contract. They came and they were managed—[*Interruption*—Ken Julien would know about that—different state enterprises would have management contracts, but this was not one. This was to provide procurement and contracting services, so that if they wanted to buy a van, a truck or a car, these people would give them advice—“Buy an Almera, you know.” If they wanted to buy pipeline, tell them what kind of pipeline to buy. That was what these people were getting \$640 million to do, and the local management team could not do that.

The PNM administration signed the construction agreement with MMD, and I will spell it for the record—Merhav Mekorot Development of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for \$640 million. Mr. Speaker, we will get the agreement. I just want to put on record that we were instructed that there was no procurement, no tendering. It was based on private arrangements and discussions; I will not use the word “deal”. “Private arrangements and discussions.” It was felt that MMD was the best provider of some service to WASA to the tune of \$640 million, when they had a debt of \$27 billion. That is how they were managing their affairs.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West as well raised other issues, and again, trying to create the whole feeling, the climate, that what we are about today, the resources that we would raise from this would go to secret beneficiaries who—unnamed secret beneficiaries according to the Member for Diego Martin West. There is an agreement between WASA and Desalcott. The Member did not tell the national community in his speech that clause 64 of the sale agreement between WASA and Desalcott has a corruption clause, 64.1:

“In addition to any other right of termination herein, WASA may terminate this Agreement in the following circumstances...

If the Seller has engaged in Corrupt or Fraudulent Practices in competing for this Agreement or in the production and sale of water to WASA...”

There is a corruption clause. So if there are issues of corruption, the contract itself would have dealt with that.

You see, the Member for Diego Martin West did not tell us another piece of history. There was a committee between WASA, Desalcott and the Government to deal, on a regular basis, with all the matters pertaining to Desalcott and desalination. That committee was disbanded by the former administration. There was a committee established to deal with these issues.

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Why was the committee established to monitor the interaction and the dealings, a coordinating committee as provided for in the contract between WASA and Desalcott, to agree to price and so on, why did the PNM stop the functioning of that coordinating committee? Why did they do it? Because if they had the coordinating committee, that would have led to transparency, to openness and to enquiry, but when you disbanded that committee—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members for Port of Spain South and Diego Martin West, I am hearing you clearly.

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I know, but keep it down, please. Continue hon. Member, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that there is a lot of information that the Member for Diego Martin West did not have enough time to give the national community. I am sure if he had more time he would have told us that those matters that were before the court are no longer there, the extradition hearing. He would have told us that the money to be raised here was \$150 million to go to WASA. He would have told us about the debt of WASA and, more importantly, I am sure if the Member had more than 75 minutes, he would have told us about this deal between MMD and WASA. I am sure if he would have had a discussion with the former Minister of Public Utilities, the former Minister, a colleague of his, he would have informed him that there was the matter of the \$640 million deal with WASA on the eve of the election.

But you see, this comes back to procurement, and today the People's National Movement has taken an approach that we are on the finishing line with our procurement legislation. Sen. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie is the Chairman, full committee, there are proposals before that committee. The construction sector, the JCC and others are eager to finish this matter. The Prime Minister has said on several occasions that she is eager for this matter to reach a conclusion, and the Opposition, like Francesco Schettino, “jump out, bail out”—they “fall” on a lifeboat and “gone” because they do not want to be part of that, because you asked for their proposals. It was the same thing on hanging. We came to this House and they defeated a Bill that would have led to executions. They said: “No, the Bill would not have led to that.” We say, “Okay, this is your view, give us your views, give us your proposals.”

The Attorney General of this country writes the Leader of the Opposition, inviting him for his proposals in a succinct manner, “Give us your specific

proposals on legislation.” That is not a letter inviting you to an all-inclusive fete, you know, “We wish to invite you to a fete and two tickets are attached.” That is a letter inviting you to bring policy and law. The role of the Opposition is not to draft law, but the role of the Opposition, one of its several functions—we were there many years—is to bring your proposals so that you could enhance law-making. Why did you not reply to the Attorney General’s letter? Why? You do not have to draft the law, there are people paid to do that in the Government. Tell us the proposal is one, two, three, four, five, and if we would come to Parliament with those proposals, you are prepared to accept.

Mr. Roberts: They must read their *Hansard*.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, we must read the *Hansard*. We must read their *Hansard*. They talk for seventy-five minutes. I think all of them talk? So that is about how many thousands of minutes. We must read the *Hansard*. But you know why I want to go on record as telling the Leader of the Opposition we cannot depend on the *Hansard*, because there are Members on the other side who would speak and they would contradict each other, so whose views we should take? [*Desk thumping*]

There are Members on the other side who speak, and they contradict each other. “One bring policy A, one bring policy B.” So as a responsible Government, we write to the Leader of the Opposition. Is it the Leader of the Opposition or not? We write the Leader and say, “Mr. Leader, could you please on behalf of your team give us your proposals?” So they bailed out of the procurement legislation process, and then they will complain when it comes to the House, that that is not good enough and it is not workable. Bailed out! So, again I call upon the Leader of the Opposition to rethink that position. The media, the editorials have spoken, members of the national community; rethink that position.

4.30 p.m.

That does not mean you cannot go out on the street and make noise every week and so on, you reserve that right. But making noise on the street is not a substitute for bringing your concrete proposals in writing to the Government on a key national issue that faces our community. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, a responsible Opposition would do that. I remember when the former Prime Minister met a delegation including the Member for Siparia, the Member for Couva North at the time and others, we met around a table to discuss police reform, and from that we were asked to bring in writing our proposals, but we met, we discussed and we followed up with writing, and we came to the House and supported. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Before you continue, may I remind members of the public, if you have cells on, you switch them off, and if cells continue to disturb the proceedings, I will have to ask the Marshal to take steps. Hon. Members, at this time I want to suspend the Sitting and we shall resume at 5.10 p.m.

4.32 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. As I was saying before the break, the Opposition came with a game plan today, and it was to drown Ganga Singh. It was to attack and go back to the years 1999—2000, to portray the original deal, in a negative light, and therefore, question the Motion before the House today, which deals with raising revenue for WASA to assist with their ongoing financial challenges to provide a better supply of water.

I also went at length to identify and itemize the work that WASA has been doing in the last year or so to improve the supply of water in various communities, to ensure that persons who have been disadvantaged and underprivileged—as far as the distribution of water was concerned—would receive a proper and regular supply of water. You see, Mr. Speaker, the current Government inherited a situation where water was a highly volatile national issue. Nobody could forget the trauma faced by citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to obtain so basic a necessity as water.

About four or five years ago I think, I had cause to lead a protest march between Debe Junction to the water office in San Fernando. The Member for Fyzabad, who always finds himself on the battlefield, on the front line of social action, joined us in that march from Debe to San Fernando with women with their pots, pans, buckets, begging and pleading for water. We had residents who would have to go to a well and collect water for their homes, by the pond. Children would stay at home because they had no water to prepare for school.

Mr. Roberts: Was this in rural communities?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, this was in rural communities and elsewhere, where WASA could not provide water. Citizens throughout this land had to march and demonstrate on a regular basis for this basic utility.

We are happy that over the last year and a half or so, the population has been spared this tragedy of protesting for water. Because of the initiatives of WASA, they have been able to upgrade their systems, in part to provide a more efficient service, so that today, water is not a charged national issue as it was before. Today, of course, we are grappling with the issue of crime, but water is no longer that charged national issue. It is still a very important concern, and the work that WASA has embarked upon suggests that if they stay on that path, we will reach the situation where our citizens can feel confident that they will have a regular supply of water throughout their land. [*Desk thumping*]

We do not want to go back to the days when, for example, in April 2010, “WASA to probe truck water for swimming pool;” where at a particular home in an “up to do” part of Trinidad and Tobago—Westmoorings was it—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Diego Martin West.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: —the WASA trucks were used to distribute water for a swimming pool: That is what we left. They were pumping drinking water into a swimming pool at a private residence.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The people protested.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The people were protesting about that as well. You see, they had no water for the poor people in the villages; no water for Chitar Trace, no water for Carli Bay, but drinking water to put in a swimming pool in Westmoorings.

Mr. Roberts: Unbelievable.

Mr. Volney: That was for the then CEO.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Whose house was it?

Hon. Member: It was the CEO.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It was the Chief Executive Officer of what company?

Hon. Member: The CEO of WASA.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The CEO of WASA?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, they were pumping water into the swimming pool, when the people of Penal, Barrackpore, and Debe did not have water to drink for weeks and weeks and weeks. There was a fire in Port of Spain,

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and when they went to the fire hydrant for water—I will never forget; the fire service blamed WASA, and WASA blamed the fire service—it had no water. So that two agencies of the State were competing for blame.

Then who could forget, the former Prime Minister made the fascinating revelation. He said:

The problem we have here is not with WASA. It is that we do not have enough rain. People are burning tyres for water because we do not have a good rainy season.

So they blame the weather, God and nature. When it flooded they said a cloud was stationary for too long. They had every single excuse, except dealing with the management of WASA, and dealing with their outdated and archaic physical infrastructure. When they had scarce resources, they chose to embark upon grandiose contracts that gave excessive spending to private contractors and even to their own.

During the last 10 years do you know that even the salary of the Chief Executive Officer of WASA became a topic for debate in this Parliament; and his bonus? And you know today they talk about a Porsche, but I failed to hear them mention that the CEO of WASA's was worth \$450,000, with all the benefits off.

Mr. Sharma: That was procurement too.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: As I said in the beginning this is the attack, the way that they approach things. It is the only way they know; so in all fairness we have to understand that that is the only way they know.

The Leader of the Opposition spent a lot of time seeking to castigate the present CEO and the present Minister of Public Utilities, and drew conclusions of his own. But he was not explicit in his conclusions, as he was not explicit about those he thought were benefiting, because those are things that you can say off the bat. You do not need to say names because you could get yourself in trouble, and he has already gotten himself in a lot of trouble in other areas.

The Member did not tell us about the exorbitant spending of WASA on board members and CEOs over the past 10 years. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: The spouses of workers!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He did not tell us about the hiring of spouse, and right through the speech you got this undertone of abuse of office. They really believe—I do not know, but they may have grounds for believing—that if you say

something often enough and loud enough, you communicate, because people out there would generally feel that office holders would abuse. So if you point it out often enough and loud enough, you would pick up somebody in the national community who would believe you.

A few days ago, a revelation was made in the newspaper, and unless I am mistaken—because I do not have too much time to read every story—I did not hear anything from the respective Member. But, Mr. Speaker, a few days ago there was a story in the newspaper as well, alluding to an allegation that a former Minister in the Ministry of National Security had a service from prisoners and, indeed, prison officers, where prisoners would journey to a private residence, in the north somewhere, and engage in work that CEPEP should have been engaged in.

Hon. Member: Landscaping.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Landscaping—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Volney: Cutting lawn.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: —cutting grass.

Mr. Sharma: Cooking too.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Cooking, is it? Maybe cutting hair as well, and they were engaged in that activity—and wigs?

5.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the use of prison officers to go to private residents to cut grass, landscape, cut hair—and whatever—is not a policy of the Government or the prison authority. That is not a policy. They have a policy that prisoners can do community work.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, I do not think we should get into imputing or raising the conduct or making any personal reflection on any Member of this honourable House on both sides, so I would ask you to not pursue that line, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of procurement of services I can just say categorically, it is not the policy of the prison authority to provide any unprocured services to any public official to cut grass, to landscape, to cut hair or to provide any personal services. That is not the policy of the prison authority.

If there is any public official anywhere in the world of Trinidad and Tobago who has been the recipient of that, they are well advised to change direction, they

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are well advised to call CEPEP, their regional coordinator and ask for some help, and maybe the CEPEP can provide that help to them.

Mr. Speaker, I go no further on that matter as advised, but I want to return to a matter that the Leader of the Opposition raised; I think it is the matter of the increase in his WASA bill. The Leader of the Opposition did read from a letter, I think, addressed to himself from WASA and we are advised that that communication and the intention of the communication was done pursuant to an Order 83. That Order provides the authority for WASA to change or increase rates when the level of service improves. WASA only began implementing this Order last year since it was only then that tangible improvements were made in the level of service. They could not charge more for water because there was no tangible improvement in service.

Mr. George: Since 1993.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And the last rate increase in that area was 1993, and it was done pursuant to an Order. I have the Order in my hand, I do not want to read the whole thing, but it does speak to a 35 per cent increase in the water and sewerage rate for unmetered domestic customers and charitable institutions provided that better services and tangible increase in services are provided.

You see, Mr. Speaker, WASA has that authority under the Order. But that is not a blanket authority to go and increase rates every place and claim service increase and that kind of thing. This Government has demonstrated in 20 months certain defining qualities. This is a Government generally regarded to be compassionate, generally regarded to be concerned with the poor and underprivileged. It was just a few days ago that the hon. Prime Minister announced people-centred initiatives in the area of health and transport to bring relief. My friend from La Brea is smiling because he knows he can now go to Tobago free of charge on the ferry. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] You can go at will, but the Prime Minister announced that persons at 60 can now go on the ferry, and as the Member knows before—

Dr. Rowley: He can carry his car too?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He has no car so you do not have to worry about that. [*Interruption*] You know, if it is one person who can testify to the neglect of people in this country under the PNM is the Member for La Brea. [*Desk thumping*] When we got into office—the Parliament was convened—every single week my friend from La Brea came with questions: “When we fixing the bridge? When we fixing the school? When we fixing the community centre? When we fixing the

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recreation ground? When we putting back the cover on the manhole?” Then I asked, “what was the PNM doing there for 10 years?” [*Crosstalk*] That for 10 years the Member for La Brea was in this state of neglect, that today the Member for La Brea is so confident that he would receive help that he files questions with monotonous frequency, asking us when we would deliver in La Brea. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: He sent thank you card to “Jack”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And he sent thank you card, I think, to the Member for Chaguanas West, and behind the card he had another list of 10 things he wanted him to do, I understand that as well. [*Laughter*] So, the Member for La Brea can benefit now, he can go to Tobago.

The Prime Minister announced an important initiative where persons who go to health centres—sometimes elderly persons go to health centres. They go every week, every two weeks, sometimes they reach six o’clock in the morning and they have to wait till ten o’clock, eleven o’clock to get their pills, to get their drugs and their pharmaceuticals. These elderly people sometimes go with a piece of roti in a bag or a bread and cheese, they freeze a “sweet drink” or a juice all night so it would thaw out and by ten o’clock they would put a straw and drink it cold, because they expect to wait hours and hours. In my constituency, constituents go seven o’clock in the morning by the health centre—Debe, the health centre “open at eight eh”, when they reach at eight, maybe it would take some more time to get their pills; somebody arrived late.

The Prime Minister announced medicine on wheels—[*Desk thumping*]—where we would now fill out those prescriptions in the health centre and collaborate with a transport delivery service, get the technical people involved and take a book and go to the elderly people where they are living and say, “look, this is what you were coming for, this basic prescription, take it, sign”.

Mr. Speaker, we receive things by FedEx from all over the world, expensive electronics items; we receive books and all types of documents by FedEx; “you mean we cah take two bottle ah pills in ah bag, seal it and drop it by somebody house in the morning. We cah do that?” Certainly it could be done. There is no technical obstacle there; there is no engineering obstacle to prevent us from doing that. If KFC could deliver and Pizza Hut could bring a pizza by your door, “you cah take two box ah tablet and drop it by somebody house?” [*Interruption*] It was not the concern; it was not the care of the former administration, so to the elderly people, we care. The persons who do not have water, we care. There are many

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communities still waiting for water, still waiting for electricity. I want to tell you there is a community in Oropouche East, it is called Sadhu Village, another exotic name, aka Lawrence Village, but they had no street lights. We called our Minister of Public Utilities, called T&TEC—the people have their street lights. In this day and age there are villages still without street lights, there are homes without water and we are working hard to ensure that in our first term that citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of where you live, can depend on a supply of water and electricity. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are about.

But when we make any initiative the Opposition's role, as they see it, is to scandalize and criminalize. So, anytime you make a move it is a controversial move. So it appears that this Government does nothing that is not controversial. Everything we do—but that is their technique, because they feel they can build; they can build political capital if they do that, but that would not stop us. I want to assure them that that would not stop us from delivering, from ensuring that ordinary citizens benefit from the State on a continuous basis with basic utilities.

The Minister of the People and Social Development was in Penal last week; 300 citizens to benefit from his public assistance programme. [*Desk thumping*] The Ministry of the People and Social Development came up with another brilliant idea. You find these brilliant ideas here, Member for Point Fortin, you do. Not that you all do—you all are brilliant people I confess. The Members opposite are very intelligent people. We do not blame you for the sins of the past, I want to make that very clear—but the Minister of the People and Social Development has now produced temporary food cards. What you do now is, if someone is a victim of some natural disaster: earthquake, fire, hurricane, whatever—

Mr. Sharma: The Member for Point Fortin wants a house card.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We have no temporary cards for residential purposes so dismiss that thought one time. [*Laughter*] No temporary card for house.

Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of the People and Social Development does, he comes now on the scene and when people are in their highest moment of trauma, he is here to say, “a temporary food card, you can get food supplies immediately”. [*Interruption*] You can do that immediately. That is the evidence of the care, and this Government has developed that defining characteristic of being compassionate and you see it with the temporary food cards, you see it with electricity, you see it with housing.

In the area of housing I want to indicate that we work with WASA on a regular basis, and do you know one of the major problems in delivering houses was not the building of the house, it was not the completion of a housing unit. Do you know one of the major problems involved WASA? There were problems where between housing and water you could not, in a timely manner, get the WASA as an organization to work with you, to authorize water supply; in some cases do some type of small projects to ensure you have the proper equipment, the pipelines are a proper width with proper infrastructure. [*Crosstalk*]

Sometimes houses were constructed and you cannot give it out because you have no water and no sewer system. Do you know we have now fixed that, where the HDC is working in conjunction with WASA so that in record time we can build, we can get our infrastructure in, water and electricity and distribute the house, get them out of our hands. [*Desk thumping*] We do not like seeing houses all over the place and people begging for houses, begging for shelter, but WASA plays an important role and, again, I want to put on record, over the last year or so, with the same CEO who they came this afternoon to drown—they came this afternoon to put his head under the water and keep it there, that same CEO of WASA has been able to facilitate the HDC so a few Mondays ago we had the largest single distribution of houses in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, 500 housing units. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: Who build those houses?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I am always kind to the Leader of the Opposition, I am always like that, and I want to indicate that some of the houses, not all—when he served for a short period as Minister of Housing and the Environment, he came to Wellington Road, I would never forget and invited me to turn the sod for the Wellington Road Housing Development, that housing development cannot be opened today. [*Laughter*] We cannot distribute that—no fault of his—because when they built that they then discovered that they did not do infrastructure and the houses started to move. [*Interruption*] When you look at the PVC lines that—

Mr. Warner: How much money we lost so?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We are now spending over \$100 million on infrastructure.

Hon. Member: “Oooh”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: When you look at the homes where they put the PVC and when you go back now and look at the homes that are complete, the PVC

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moved six inches to eight inches, so the housing had shifted because of the failure to put infrastructure on what was Caroni cane land. The houses are not bad; the houses are not bad at all.

I am sure if the Member for Diego Martin West was allowed to continue his good work in housing that would not have happened. That could not have happened. [*Interruption*] His tenure was short lived because he made some revelations there, and his then leader had some difficulties with him and that is history, we all know that. But his tenure was short lived and that is the housing we got; today WASA is working with us. We have a collaborative effort with WASA and the HDC to ensure—and the Minister of Public Utilities, he is available all the time, you call him and tell him housing estate here has a problem, electricity, he quickly moves with T&TEC, if it is WASA he moves with WASA to ensure that these matters are addressed in a timely manner. He has done this work working in collaboration with his state sector leaders, and we today must commend them for the work they have done and continue to do to provide us with the opportunity to deliver goods and services.

5.35 p.m.

I want to tell Members of the Opposition, I am sure you all have areas that need water, electricity, houses and so on. You must. Do not be too aggressive. It will come your way. The services are coming to you. The Minister of the People and Social Development is in your area.

Mrs. McIntosh: Koon Koon Trace—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: In where, Koon Koon Trace? Koon Koon Trace is in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West?

Mrs. McIntosh: I “doh” know. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I want to assure my friend from Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, that even Koon Koon Trace will get their supply of water and electricity. I want to tell you—and they raised this issue too—when we increased the old age pension, when we increased NIS, when we increased the minimum wage, we did not do it for any one section of the national population. We did not come to the Parliament and say, “Everybody who supported the UNC, we are increasing your minimum wage; everybody who supported us, we increase the pension; we did not say everybody over 60 who support the Government is riding free to Tobago. No, no, no. It is all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—all—regardless of where they live; who they support.

When we distribute houses—and I want to say this and put it on record, that today in Trinidad and Tobago—and I challenge anyone from the Opposition to dispute me—every single citizen of this country, regardless of race, creed, belief, political persuasion, feel assured that if they have a need, they are deserving and they qualify, they can get a housing unit in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Member for Fyzabad, could you have said that before May 2010?

Mr. Sharma: Not at all.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: My friend the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West said no. When our citizens in Trou Macaque in Laventille, when the place burnt down there, we did not look at that and say, "Tell me the polling division. How much vote we get there?" We went immediately. And today I signed a letter congratulating the HDC on the work that they did in Laventille, when that building was burnt, in a record one day—their house burnt one o'clock in the morning and by eight in the night they had a roof over their heads, courtesy the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] Did we ask for the polling division number?

In San Fernando East, in Pleasantville, there was a fire at an HDC apartment building, you remember. The Member for San Fernando East got on the phone and called me. I was honoured that the former Prime Minister would seek me out this way. He said he needed help. I said, "Mr. Manning, do not worry, I will work on that for you." In a record time we had Mr. Manning next to me, Member of Parliament, and we relocated the people of Pleasantville. [*Desk thumping*] Did we ask who they voted for? St. Ann's, within hours, we helped them. We did not ask for their polling division number; who they voted for. Laventille, Pleasantville, these are not areas that are known to be supporters of the UNC, the COP, MSJ, NJAC and so on. No. But it does not matter for us. A cry is a cry. A human cry is a human cry; it does not matter.

Members opposite, they are honest. I mean, they are very noble and dignified people opposite us here.

Mr. Roberts: Uh huh?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: What? Do not be too angry. They are dignified; they know when they call the Minister of Housing and the Environment and they ask for any assistance and so on, they know it would be forthcoming. They know that.

In Point Fortin—I want to assure the Member for Point Fortin that as soon as they round up all this cattle and all this cow and so on, and they have that under

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control—I do not want to come down there; I understand it is unsafe down there. So as soon as they take care of that cattle problem, I am making a tour of Point Fortin and La Brea to look at our housing infrastructure—[*Desk thumping*]*—*and those Members will join me. Those Members, if their busy schedule permits, will join me, and when we are distributing houses we contact the MPs where the houses are.

Mrs. McIntosh: “Eh heh?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Which houses we distributed in Point Fortin? None. We distributed none in Port of Spain. We distributed in Port of Spain South.

Mrs. McIntosh: Not by me.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Ask your colleague. Your colleague came into the HDC with a book recommending people, and she said that was volume one, [*Laughter*]*—*and at the end of the day she was present when we distributed. And do you know what was nice, Mr. Speaker? When people received their houses, they shook the hand of the Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and the Environment and their MP was there and they said, “MP, thank you very much”, acknowledging their PNM MP who would have recommended them and so on.

No difficulty! But when they opened Retrench in Oropouche East—when they opened the Golconda Estate— “big, fancy thing”. I passed one day and saw “big tent”. “Ah say, ‘wha happening’? They say the Prime Minister and Minister of Housing opening an estate in Golconda.” I am the Member of Parliament.

Mr. Warner: He?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not think so.

Mr. Roberts: Calder Hart had fired him already.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It was the one who was trying to lock you up. What was her name?

Mr. Warner: “De, am, Dicksy.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The one who was trying to lock him up was down there.

Hon. Member: Dick-Forde.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They were trying to lock him up. They could not invite me to the ceremony; they were busy trying to lock him up. But friends like that, I want to tell you, you could watch forward here and be assured that these are

your friends on this side here. [*Desk thumping*] You see here? These are your friends. Let me tell you something, you “doh depend on right and doh depend on left”; look forward, these are your friends.

In closing, may I commend the Minister of Public Utilities again, on this Motion. May I commend WASA and the work that they are doing and I, of course, ask my colleagues on both sides of the House to support this Motion and they, too, will get water flowing in their pipes, but not soca flowing like water.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Hon. Members: “Ohhh.”

Miss Alicia Hospedales (*Arouca/Maloney*): Mr. Speaker, I would like to get your protection, please.

Hon. Member: Already?

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join this debate on the water improvement rate for the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, the Variation Order. I listened to the Member for Oropouche East and I thought that the Member would have answered all the questions that were posed by the Opposition Leader and Member for Diego Martin West. I honestly thought so, but what he did was give us a round-the-town trip, telling us about all sorts of things. He failed to realize that the campaign is over and the members of the population are looking at them.

Rather than give an account of their stewardship, he took us all over the place. I thought the Member would have told us why the country’s corruption rankings worsened under them. In the *Trinidad Guardian* of December 02, there is a report by Transparency International and a survey that was done on Trinidad and Tobago with respect to its corruption perception. What it said was that:

“Trinidad and Tobago’s corruption rankings have worsened over the past year”—in 2011—“according to the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2011, which was released yesterday”—on December 01, 2011—

“For the 2011 ranking, T&T placed 91 from a list of 183 countries with a score of 3.2 out of 10. Not even 5 out of 10; not even 4 or 6 out of 10, but 3.2 out of 10.

The report also stated that there were several events in the past year that created the opportunity to raise questions about the current administration’s—

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the UNC-A Government—avowed commitment to transparency and accountability.”

One particular example they gave was the fact that a Minister who has a corruption allegation against his name is still in the Government. The other was that they failed to bring procurement legislation.

Added to that, in an article in the *Mirror* dated December 30 the Government also failed to extradite two businessmen—I would not call the names; we all know who they are. They failed to ensure the prosecution of a single corruption allegation over their 18 or 19-month period in office.

Additionally, Transparency International gave information on the methodology used for the peer review of Trinidad and Tobago and under Compliance with Standards, there are three categories, and one of them, (a) is “Availability of Information”. If I were to evaluate their ability to provide information, especially to an international agency such as Transparency International, I would say: Difficult and not readily available. The information that the Transparency International required was not readily available. So I would give them a 1.2 for that.

“Access to information”, I would say that would have been very difficult for them, so I will give them a 1. And “Exchanging Information” with Transparency International, I would say they would have been very hesitant to do so because they have transparency issues themselves, and I would have given them just 1. If the issue of Ganga Singh and the whole Desalcott issue; the issue of corruption surrounding that—and all of that would have been included in this report—Trinidad and Tobago would have gotten zero, ranking in last place with Somalia.

So the Member came here and went all over the place, talking about this and that, and he has not given an account of their stewardship. He has not told us what are some of the things that they intend to do to ensure that the lowering of their corruption ranking is made better over time. The Member for Oropouche East failed the citizens of this country, especially when he said that in the past the citizens were traumatized because of the fact that they do not have water, and in the past they protested and went to the streets, et cetera. It is a sad thing to see that a Minister would come and politicize a resource such as water, a very, very valuable resource as water, because we know we all need water to survive.

He said that since they are in office every citizen in this country has access to water, et cetera. But I just want to make reference to the fact that the residents of La Horquetta, the residents in some areas of Arima, the Maloney area, some parts

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of Trincity, were left without water for as much as two weeks, and WASA had to call for the patience of these residents. They asked that the residents be patient because they said that they are working and ensuring that they get a regular supply of water eventually. Not only that. People in Barrackpore, as well, were complaining that the taps have been dry since before Christmas. This article was written on January 03. In Barrackpore they did not have water since Christmas, and you know, the Minister is coming here and telling us that everybody has a good supply of water since they have been in office. That is not entirely—

Mr. Roberts: I did not say that.

Miss A. Hospedales: I did not say you; I said the Member for Oropouche East. Remember I am rebutting him.

The other thing I want to read is this editorial in today's *Newsday*. It is headlined: "Waiting on WASA." It states:

"When will WASA get its act together? It is now 11 days since I reported a leak to the leak Hotline and I am still waiting on an appearance of a WASA crew."

This is a resident, Rev. Robert Dash, in today's *Newsday*. Rev. Robert Dash is saying:

"Over these days I have made several reminders to the Hotline and every time I call, I am given the same answer that my complaint has been referred to the relevant authority.

It is also very surprising that after seven days, I received a call on my cell by a WASA employee who indicated that she was in the field and needed a more accurate address so she can locate the leak.

I again gave her the address. However she did not appear, neither did any crew.

The water continues to leak and is causing soil erosion on the street my mother resides. This street had a recent landslide development that posed a danger to her neighbour's home. I informed WASA of the urgency of this matter.

The address of the leak is at the top of Robert Village Street, Robert Village, Tableland, 18 mm, Naparima Mayaro Road."

I am reading an editorial from today's *Newsday*.

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5.50 p.m.

Hon. George: Editorial? [*Interruption*]

Miss A. Hospedales: It is a letter to the editor—[*Interruption*]

Hon. George: Or! [*Interruption*]

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What is the difference? [*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: You are not supposed to call a Member's name. [*Interruption*]

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, this Motion— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, do not call a Member by his first name. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is right. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members must be referred to by their constituencies. And, Member for Diego Martin Central, do not engage in crosstalk. Hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney, continue.

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Motion brought by the Minister of Public Utilities, on behalf of the UNC Government, seeks to increase the water improvement rate from \$4.00 to \$8.50, right? As we heard the Minister in his introduction to this Motion, he did indicate that. This Motion represents a breach in the Government's promise to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Since 2010, on their campaign trail, even during the budget debate—and the budget debate for 2011/2012, there was a promise that was made by the Government that they would not increase taxes, and they would not bring new taxes. What they said to the people was that the rates that they were going to pay would be the old rates that existed prior to the 2010 election. I am saying that they have breached their promise to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly those persons who have established businesses at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. I saw the Minister of Public Utilities jeering just now, or saying “aah,” because he was probably saying: “No, I am not telling the truth.”

On September 05, 2010, there was a report by Anna Ramdass. The title of the report is: “No new taxes Kamla's budget pledge.” It was stated in the report:

read my lips, no new taxes, including no property tax, but what you will get is what was there before.

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In other places, they stated what the people of Trinidad and Tobago would have to pay would be taxes at the old rates; there would not be any increases. So, I am saying again, that they have breached their promise.

Located on the official website for the Prime Minister, there is also a heading: “No new taxation to cause hardship to our people”. There is also a statement like that. In the report she says:

we did not raise taxes.

So, I am asking: Why, all of a sudden, 18 months or 19 months later, they have now suddenly decided that they are actually going to be increasing the rates, particularly for water improvement? [*Desk thumping*]

Not only that, the Minister of Finance came to this House on several occasions, and said that there would be no new taxes—what the people of this country are going to be paying for is what was there before, not now. They are not going to be paying for increases now. They said what they are going to be paying for were the normal rates, under the taxes that existed before. I am saying again that they have breached their promise to the people of this country, and it is nothing new.

In the budget debate of 2010, we were told as a country, and as a people, that the Government would cancel the Rapid Rail Project. I am saying that they cannot be trusted. They cannot be trusted. They fell back on a lot of their promises. They cannot be trusted. The Minister of Finance came to this House and he said the Rapid Rail Project is not a viable economic plan and it is a waste of money. He said we will cancel this project and design an alternative transport programme. They spoke about the rapid bus as the alternative. [*Laughter*] Yes, they spoke about the rapid bus as the alternative to the rapid rail. But, then suddenly, on January 28, we saw there— [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: After the trip to India!

Miss. A. Hospedales: Yes, after the trip to India—the Minister of Transport made a grand announcement that the Government is seeking an investment of possibly \$1 billion to construct and operate a light transit system from Port of Spain to Arima. A light transit system is a rapid rail! What they have been doing is playing with words. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Using semantics.

Miss A. Hospedales: That is right. They have been using semantics. For instance, if we say that somebody is a homeless person, one person may say, the person is a homeless person, another may say the person is a vagrant, another person may say the person is socially displaced. But, they really mean the same thing: the person is homeless. I am saying again, that we cannot trust the Government.

We were also told by the UNC-A Government that they were going to cancel the offshore patrol vessels, and they did. They cancelled the offshore patrol vessels. Suddenly, again, in August 2011, we saw that they were in search of patrol vessels. They were in search of the same offshore patrol vessels that they cancelled. So, almost one year after—this is what the article says, and it is found in the *Trinidad Express* of August 28, 2011.

“Almost one year after the People’s Partnership Government cancelled a contract to purchase three Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) from a British ship-building firm, the search is now on for ‘patrol vessels of proven design for the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (Coast Guard).’”

So, I am saying, again that the Government cannot be trusted because they have constantly misled the people of Trinidad and Trinidad. They have constantly told falsehoods. They have not kept their promises. The people of this nation should also know that even though several Members of the Government came and said to them that there would be no increase in taxes, you are going to pay the same amount of money that was paid under the PNM administration; there would be no increases.

On July 21, 2011—and the Minister of Public Utilities can tell me if I am wrong—WASA put into effect a tax increase on building development, such as plumbing inspectorate, sewer connection—so you pay more now, the old rates have now increased suddenly, overnight—swimming pools, pressure testing, inspection of small buildings and medium building development, percolation test, chemical and bacterial analysis and many other increases are attached to that.

The Leader of the Opposition indicated that there is coming an increase in the water rate, and the Member for Oropouche East said: “No, that is not so.” But, we are foreseeing that an increase in the water rate is going to come. So, when the Government says that there will be no increases on existing taxes, we are saying no, that is not true, because the evidence is there to show that there has been increase over time on some of the taxes. So, that is far from the truth. The Member for Oropouche East did not provide us with an analysis of the cost and

revenue situation as it pertains to WASA—the reason why the increase is necessary. There was no real justification, I was listening to hear if there would be a proper justification of this increase and I did not hear it.

What happened in 1998? In 1998, the Motion was brought before the House. The Minister of Public Utilities came and he told us about “some analysis” or “some survey” that was done in Egypt and some other parts of the world. We are not talking about Egypt and other parts of the world, we want to know what is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago. We would like to know if you did an analysis of the existing situation, with respect to costing?

The previous Minister of Public Utilities, who is a previous Minister caught in a “whole lot” of controversy, indicated to some present Members and past Members of this House that they arrived at \$4.00 per cubic metre of waste water at that time. This was based on the results of a study that was undertaken. So, I was listening to hear if the Minister of Public Utilities would have told us that a recent study was conducted, and as a result of the recent study they have now come up with this final figure—I was waiting to hear that. He said the study was undertaken by a firm of London economists, a well-known international firm and in the United Kingdom. In concluding their findings, they decided that the \$4.00 per cubic metre was the best price that they could have instituted for the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. So we had \$3.50 per cubic metre as the commercial rate and \$4.00 as the waste water rate. The Minister did not tell us—even—the Member for Oropouche East did not tell us the—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Water improvement.

Miss A. Hospedales: Yes, water improvement—He did not tell us about the methodology that was used. How did you come up with that formula? What research findings informed the price you came up with for the water improvement rate? The owners of the industries and the large commercial businesses in Point Lisas—I am sure they would have expected to hear a proper justification and have a better understanding of the methodology that was used, with respect to coming up with this price, because they are asked to pay 112 per cent increase on the existing rates that they are actually paying right now.

Added to that, with respect to the methodology used to calculate the increase in the water improvement rate for Point Lisas Industrial Estate, I found that, because we were not provided with the information and we were not provided with a proper justification, there is a lot of ambivalence surrounding this whole pricing of the water improvement rate. There is a lot of ambivalence. So, if the

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Minister would provide us with more information. I am sure the tenants at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate are all listening to probably get some more information, to get a little more clarity, so that they would be able to understand exactly why they came up with that particular price. I am sure they are still, today, asking a lot of questions, because just like us we are very ambivalent. We do not know. You have not really provided us with the information.

I would like the Minister, in his closing, to indicate to us whether or not there were consultations. Why I am asking is because they said to us, they said to the nation basically, that they were going to consult with the people of this country. [Interruption] Yes, they were going to consult and based on the concerns that were expressed, they would make the decisions. We have not heard of any consultations that were held. Who were the target audience? Exactly, how many persons attended those consultations? What were some of the concerns that were expressed, as well as, when exactly is the date? If you can give us specific dates as to when those consultations were held.

We know that the Government has a track record for not consulting with the people of this country. They went ahead and declared a state of emergency and no consultation was done.

They built the “detention centre” in Santa Rosa without any consultation, they consulted after the fact. They did not even consult when they sought to use the— what did they call it? [Interruption] The Crop duster or the light aeroplane or sport plane. Mr. Speaker, again, they did not consult anyone on their hidden agenda to abolish the death penalty. Do you see how silent they are? They know they have not been consulting with anybody. [Crosstalk and laughter]

6.05 p.m.

Miss Ramdial: She is asking the question and then answering it. [Laughter]

Miss A. Hospedales: Again, their lack of consultation with the people has caused a lot of people in this country to become very, very disgruntled with this Government.

Mr. Speaker, the business community in Point Lisas is asked to accept an increase, as I said, without any knowledge of the methodology. One of the things this Motion says is that the increase in the cost of the desalinated water has eroded the financial position of WASA with respect to the purchase and sale of desal water. In 2011, WASA would lose \$26 million on the purchase and sale of desal water and the loss would be increased to \$92 million in 2012, if no adjustment is

made. One of the questions I would like to ask is: Why is it that only the businesses in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate are targeted for this increased rate?

Mr. Speaker, what I need to find out from the Minister, and I am sure we would know the answer, is: are the industries and commercial businesses in Point Lisas the only businesses that are using desalinated water? We know the answer to that question is no. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “Wha is de answer?”

Miss A. Hospedales: The answer is no. The other thing I am asking is: Why are they required to cover the cost of Desalcott’s increase? Can the Minister also tell us whether the industrial estate and the large commercial and industrial businesses outside the Point Lisas Industrial Estate are required to pay the increased water improvement rate? I am asking that because I found it to be a little suspicious that in the Motion itself, the Minister said that the water improvement rate has not changed, et cetera. Then he said that the cost of the water purchased from the desalination company to supply the Point Lisas Industrial Estate as well as other industrial estates and the large commercial and industrial water users in central and south Trinidad has increased, and he noted the increases.

Mr. Speaker, I went back to the Motion by my—[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*] Member for Chaguanas West, this is no joking matter. [*Desk thumping*] I went back to the Motion that was brought by the then Minister of Public Utilities, Mr. Ganga Singh, which was crafted by him or the Ministry at the time, and there was no reference made to other estates in south and central Trinidad. There was no reference made to the commercial and industrial water users as well. So, I am very concerned that the Member would cause the business owners in those parts of the country to eventually pay an increased rate. The Minister needs to be straightforward with the business owners, letting them know whether or not there would be an increase in the future, or if this increase would be taking place with immediate effect. We need to know that as well.

Additionally, the Minister did not tell us whether or not an assessment was conducted to determine the long-term impact of the increase of the water improvement rate on the businesses that are required to pay the increase. He did not tell us whether there had been any sort of assessment, and if there was an assessment, what were the findings of those assessments. [*Interruption and crosstalk*] Of course we would like to know what are the findings of those assessments, because that would provide a little more clarity with respect to why

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the Minister is doing what he is doing, considering the fact that the Government said that people were going to pay the old rates that existed under the People's National Movement administration.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister also tell us what percentage of the increase of the water improvement rate, if any, would be going to WASA? I do not want to take up any more time, and I just want to say, "Thank you." [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Jairam Seemungal (*La Horquetta/Talparo*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please permit me to join in this debate and allow me to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Public Utilities, and the management of WASA for the tremendous work that they have been doing over the last 20 months in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

I listened to the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney with amazement because that is the same speech this House has been hearing for the last 20 months. I am wondering when she would change the speech or even come up with something new at least to assist us in our imagination. The Member for Arouca/Maloney asked: What is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago? I hope that was in relation to what was happening with the water in Trinidad and Tobago. She pointed out the fact that places like La Horquetta did not receive water for two weeks. Permit me, Mr. Speaker, in joining this debate—as it relates to an increase in the rate for water at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate—to point out what is happening in La Horquetta, and some of the things that are happening outside the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and in Trinidad and Tobago.

Prior to May 24, 2010, a number of areas in my constituency in particular, the La Horquetta/Talparo constituency, suffered as a result of an inadequate water supply. Mr. Speaker, a number of areas had no supply at all, such as Todd's Road, Sonnylal Road, Lalsingh Avenue and a large part of the Mundo Nuevo area. There are so many areas within the constituency that do not have a water supply and do not benefit from WASA, but the hon. Minister and his team at the Water and Sewerage Authority are working together with my constituents to ensure that water is delivered to them. There are areas like Fletcher Road and Las Lomas, for instance, where pipelines have been corroded and those lines need to be changed so that there could be an improved water supply in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, apart from the lack of basic infrastructure for the areas that were not receiving water, there was a scheduling issue. This scheduling issue had to deal with whether or not constituents would receive water in their barrels at least once a week or once a month. I recall prior to May 24, in that area, residents were

complaining that water trucks did not visit their barrels for some months, sometimes two to three months—and the discoloration and the odour that came from these barrels were beyond human. It was beyond our bare imagination that people in those rural communities would be treated like that.

Our Prime Minister and our colleagues on this side said publicly that country people were people too, and that they were deserving to be treated as human beings. Water, the basic necessity of life, deserves to come to these rural communities. This is why I congratulate my colleagues for the tremendous work that they have been doing over the last 18 months.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West had some excuses as to why pipelines were laid in his constituency and there was no water supply passing through it. But, in my constituency, some five kilometres of water line were laid in 2005; and in 2011, not one drop of water had passed through those lines. In some of the areas like Mundo Nuevo, for instance, a village that has existed for over 200 years, when our forefathers came to this country and people settled in those remote areas, in the cocoa villages—Mundo Nuevo, Todd's Road—they have never seen pipe-borne water in their entire life.

Hon. Member: Coco Loco Village.

Mr. J. Seemungal: Coco Loco Village; that is how bad it is. In 2005, the previous administration laid five kilometres of line from Talparo to Mundo Nuevo and not one drop of water flowed through. The reason was that the water could not reach up in these remote areas, and they did not have a clue as to what to do to bring water to those remote areas.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, we overlook one of the biggest dams—in fact, the biggest—the Arena Dam. But under the previous administration, the design, the design of the filter system and the purification system of this dam, did not take one drop of that water into the constituency. That water was filtered at Piarco, some 20 miles away and all this water was being sent outside the constituency. Mr. Speaker, it is planning, it is what we think about people who live in the country: “they do not deserve anything”, so take the water from the dam, send it to Piarco, filter it and move it out of the constituency.

So in that constituency, we have to rely on the Hollis Dam, which is located in the Toco/Sangre Grande constituency, in Valencia, and that is where the water comes from. People who are living in Mundo Nuevo, Talparo and Tamana do not deserve to have water in their lines. The water coming into the constituency was from a very low pressure so it could not reach there, and nobody cared. Nobody in the previous administration cared about the people in those remote areas.

Hon. Member: Do not say that.

Mr. J. Seemungal: That is the fact. [*Interruption*] That translated to some 4,000 residents who could not access water for so many years.

Coming into government, this caring Government, our very hard-working Minister of Public Utilities, Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George, decided that we would introduce a new form of technology that could bring and filter water from the constituency, from the local area, and distribute it to the residents of these remote areas.

One of the first initiatives was a new package plant which was located at Talparo in the Todd's Road area.

6.20 p.m.

This package plant was commissioned by our Prime Minister on January 28, 2012, and it is capable of producing 500,000 gallons of water per day. This translates to over 4,000 residents receiving water—most of them for the very first time—in their pipelines. [*Desk thumping*] For the very first time, Mr. Speaker, people can receive water in their pipelines. You know how it was before that: people in these country areas would wait for the truck to bring a barrel of water, and they would have to stand sometimes with money in their hand, and if they did not have the money they would not see water in their barrels.

Single women who did not have babysitters would have to go, with child in hand, down to the river to wash clothes, and in these remote country areas, they may not even have had these little cribs or these bassinets or car seats to put their babies in, so they would have to “spread ah paal.” “Yuh know wat is ah paal? Long time we call it ah bag, but it is ah aloo bag, potato bag on de ground, and put these children on it.” What a shame on the previous administration for not thinking about rural communities, and for not thinking about people who are living in these rural communities, and for not thinking that people are people in Trinidad and Tobago. It does not matter where you live, what colour your skin is, what complexion you are and whatever colour your hair, this People's Partnership Government cares about every single one. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this package plan which was commissioned on January 28 is now capable of producing water for some 4,700 residents, 24 hours a day. Some of these residents have never seen water in their lines and today, are receiving water now 24 hours a day. It is like Santa Claus coming to town—[*Desk thumping*]*—*in the form of our hon. Minister, “Santa Emmanuel George.”

Mr. Speaker, the Talparo Water Project is just one of them, there are areas along Todds Road and Sonnylal Road—Sonnylal Road has never received water; persons have been living there for over 50 years. The road condition was such that water trucks could not even get in there, and the nearest river was some five miles away. Just imagine living in an area like Sonnylal Road and how far the river is located from your home. You have to be walking three miles, four miles just to get there, and then take one hour's rest, then bathe the child and come back home. Thank God for our caring Minister of Public Utilities—[*Desk thumping*] three kilometres of brand new lines went to that village, and for the very first time they will be receiving water in their pipelines. That is what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago; that is what this Government is giving to people in remote areas.

There are some areas where lines were laid, thanks to the previous administration—50 years—but these lines were the old corrugated lines, the old steel lines. Over the years those lines got corroded and the core on the inside, from six inches, was reduced to one inch. So the pressure to reach to residents was very difficult, and this is an exercise that the Minister has also started. The Minister has also started changing these lines, which is a costly exercise, so that persons in Las Lomas, for instance, Fletchers Road, Le Blanc Road, in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, are now receiving a good supply of water for some three to five days a week.

Mr. Speaker, and I am very sure that the Minister—[*Interruption*]—If you had requested, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, like the Member for Diego Martin West, he would have known where to come and bring lines; so I am sure you would have been receiving the same treatment as the Member for Diego Martin West.

Many of the other areas within my constituency—have received a water supply. The Member for Arouca/Maloney spoke of La Horquetta. La Horquetta received 500 metres of new lines under this People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] Those 500 metres of lines were for the changing of an old line, to bring it up to par with the new lines that he is placing throughout the country. That was able to supply La Horquetta in particular, which we all know is one of the biggest housing schemes with water at least three to four days a week. But the two weeks that the Member—you see, if the Member for Arouca/Maloney was probably the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, she would have known that at the Hollis Dam one of the pumps broke down during the Christmas season, and that was why they sent out the message to the constituents that water would be coming

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on a slower basis than before. Now it is back up and running, so we are looking to see all the areas that are not receiving, but should be receiving their regular supply.

Apart from the lines, WASA in my constituency has repaired over 200 leaks over the last 18 months. Because of the efficiency and the new drive and vigour of the workers at WASA to respond to these broken lines, for the very first time, lines are being repaired overnight. Sometimes within 24 hours, at most times, of the report of the leaks, these lines are repaired.

It is not just about running new lines and placing new reservoirs, it is about the management of the water supply throughout. One of the benefits of this Bill is the saving of \$150 million that would assist in bringing new pipelines in areas that have never received water. There are still many areas in my constituency, for instance, that are without water, and there are areas where pipelines were laid under the Rural Development Company and there are no connecting lines between them. One example is the El Quemado Road in my constituency: some one mile away. Half mile of line was placed in a very remote village, but one mile of line to connect the water was not thought about. So that 20 years from now, if we were still under the previous government, they would have never seen water in their line—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Never!

Hon. J. Seemungal:—but our caring Minister is scheduling these pipelines to be laid within the next couple of years. So that in places like El Quemado, the Tamana Road, Arena, for instance, and Las Lomas No. 1, we are now laying lines. These areas: Todds Road, three kilometres of lines and Mamoral Road, from Mamoral Village to Mayani Village will also be receiving lines over the next couple of years. Works are apace at WASA. Works are vigorously taking place, so that all affected residents—it does not matter where they are, where they live, how bad the circumstances are, WASA is there to provide the water and provide the infrastructure.

In Arena in my constituency, again one of the biggest dams, one of the most beautiful sights, we are in talks with the Ministry of Public Utilities, the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, the Ministry of Tourism. We are looking at an ecotourism park project for that dam, which would be welcomed by all, and it would be for the residents of this country, and visitors alike. A very safe place to venture and enjoy nature at its best, that site was closed under the previous administration, but now works are ahead to ensure that we open it so that people of this country could benefit.

I would not take too much time on this, because this Bill is a very simple one. It is about increasing the rates in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, and I have pointed out just a few of the benefits derived from the Ministry and the Minister of Public Utilities as it relates to my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the Minister of Public Utilities and his Ministry for the very hard work that they are doing. [*Desk thumping*] I want also to put on record a couple of the persons who have been working very hard in my constituency, in particular, to ensure that water is received by all residents. Two gentlemen who have been working behind the scenes, are Mr. Doodnath Bhola, the General Corporate Manager of Services, and Mr. Steve Joseph, the Deputy General Manager. These are two gentlemen who have been steering the team to ensure that water is received throughout my constituency.

So let me thank the Minister of Public Utilities and WASA for the very great job that they are doing. This Bill is a very simple Bill, it should be supported by all.

I thank you all. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Patricia McIntosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to make a contribution to the Motion under review in this honourable House this evening, the Water Improvement Rate Order, 2011. WASA is proposing an increase in the water improvement rate for companies operating in the Point Lisas Estate, other industrial estates, and large commercial companies in central and south Trinidad.

The Member for La Horquetta/Talparo told us all about his constituency and all the wonderful work that WASA has done there laying pipes and the number of persons who had water for the first time. I am happy for them. I cannot say anything else, but I am happy for them and I am happy that he has had such good improvement in the water situation in his constituency. While we were very pleased to hear about that, I did not hear him say a single word on the Motion. I thought we came here to debate a Motion in this House and, of course, we could allude to domestic use and go into what is happening in our constituency. [*Desk thumping*] But I thought something would be said on the Motion, and I heard not a word, but I shall say something about it, Mr. Speaker.

The increase from \$4.00 to \$8.50 per cubic metre that WASA is proposing, the hon. Minister tried to trivialize, but it represents an increase nonetheless of 112 per cent, and this means that it is biting into the profit margins of all those companies operating in the estates in central and south Trinidad.

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I would like to refer to an article in the *Newsday* of Tuesday, December 13, 2011, and I would like to see what the Minister is saying:

“Describing the proposed rate as reasonable, George said WASA currently subsidizes industries at Point Lisas in a situation where those industries are profit making industries.”

And he did go on to say that:

“...the companies which have plants on the Point Lisas Industries did not welcome the increase.”

Now, why would they not welcome the increase? Why should they not welcome the increase, Mr. Speaker? Because—I would like to put to this honourable House that the proposal to increase this rate on these companies is contrary to, or defeating the concept behind the development of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and other industrial estates under the PNM Government.

6.35 p.m.

The purpose of these estates was to create an enabling environment for industrial growth, whereby foreign and local companies could take advantage of certain concessions or subsidies, for example, gas, or attractive prices in electricity and water, to make their businesses economically viable entities, which would undoubtedly impact positively on our national economy. Now we are proposing to narrow these profit margins by increasing the water rates for these companies.

I am not saying there is no justification for decreasing gas subsidies, but when we impose all these harsh measures on these companies, where does that leave them? What will this mean for our national economy, which is, at best, just hanging in there and has practically stalled? They had not bargained for all these benefits being taken away from them. I will argue that this is defeating the philosophy behind the establishment of the industrial estates under the PNM administration.

The Minister said there was no increase for the past 10 years. I would like to refer to the Explanatory Note.

“The Water Improvement Rate has not changed since 1997, and over the last ten years, the cost of water purchased from the Desalination Company to supply the Estate as well as other Industrial Estates and large commercial and industrial water users in central and south Trinidad has”—and I would like to

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put in ‘suddenly’—“increased by 62% from \$3.52 in 2001 to \$5.70 in 2011 and will increase by another 18% to \$6.72 per cubic meter in 2012.”

Of course, WASA will lose, in 2011 it is said, \$26 million and, in 2012, it will lose \$92 million.

I want to ask: who is the big winner here? We have many unanswered questions concerning this company as alluded to by my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin West. This company, Desalcott, was established in 2000 under the UNC Government. It was enveloped in a shroud of controversy and allegations of corruption when the current Minister of Public Utilities was the PS in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the current CEO, the Minister of Public Utilities.

The controversy still persists because of many unanswered questions due to these high-ranking governmental officials patently refusing to answer pertinent questions to clear the air because of lapses of memory or blunt refusal to answer. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The citizens of this country just have to take this and swallow it.

Ten years later, in 2011, now that these officials are ensconced at the helm of the Government in the Ministry of Public Utilities—the former PS now the Minister; the former Minister now the CEO—suddenly we have a dramatic rate increase and this increase is coming from Desalcott and this Government is facilitating this increase without question, wanting to pass the financial burden on to industries at the estate. I feel that this is smelly business that needs defouling through a process of desalination.

I would like to know what justification there is for Desalcott. The Minister of Public Utilities gave us a lot of justification. I listened. He said how many pipes they laid and how many people got water; how he is going to improve the water, et cetera and he justified why they need money. I will take his rationale.

I am asking—we have been given reasons—what reasons has Desalcott given to the Government for its sudden increase in 2011 and its proposed increase in 2012? Did they upgrade their plant? It is happening all over the world and I will refer to that as I go on. Plants are being upgraded. Was the quality of water improved? Was the quantity of the supply increased? Was the service to the industries on the estate—was the liability improved? The service, in general, was it improved? How could Desalcott just tell this Government that it is demanding these increases and the Government is just staying there and accepting it?

Let us take a very mundane example. If I am a tenant; if I am renting a house or an apartment, the landlord cannot come to me—it is illegal to raise the rent

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without some justification. He must have improved the infrastructure; he must have done some embellishment or enhancement to the property before he can come to me and say that he is raising the rent. The Rent Restriction Act prevents this. He has to go to the Rent Assessment Board and present his justification to get approval to raise my rent. I heard all different reasons from WASA's end—and I will not argue with you, hon. Minister, but I would like to know what rationale did Desalcott give for raising its end of the bargain?

Mr. Speaker, do you know what I find we are experiencing here? We are experiencing a virtual monopoly on the part of Desalcott on the provision of water to our industrial estate. I would say an unholy monopoly on the supply of water to Point Lisas. I suppose nothing can be done in the short term. We have to suck it up and the industries on the estate have to bear the brunt of it, accept that, swallow it, absorb it and we just have to move on and take it. It is not good.

I ask the hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker: what plans does WASA have in the medium and long term to sever this dependency on Desalcott, to break the monopoly that it is currently wielding over our country?

On the way forward, if the Minister cannot answer my questions, I would like to proffer some suggestions. It might be useful to give companies the option of erecting their own desalination plants. Although the initial expenditure might be prohibitive, in the long run they might find it was well worth their while.

I would like us to look at examples from across the world. I have done some research about the desalination processes around the world and the first place I would like to look at is Israel and the US state of Texas where, after much research, they have found various ways to reduce their costs in erecting desalination plants due to technological advancements.

I would also like to look at Abu Dhabi. They are using renewable energy. They are using solar energy to run their desalination plants. On January 18, 2012, the environmental agency of Abu Dhabi announced the completion of the construction of 22 solar desalination plants. This announcement was made at the World Future Energy Summit, 2012.

Solar desalination is an innovative zero-carbon technology. We are talking about renewable energy—we are talking about the environment, we should be looking at this—that extracts brackish, saline water from ground water aquifers and transforms it into fresh water.

The country I want this Government to look at—and I hear that the Prime Minister is talking about going to China; I hope the delegation is not as large as

the one that went to India. *[Interruption]* They are saying it will be bigger. This is the type of attitude we have from these people. They are saying it will be bigger.

Hon. Member: You asked and we answered your question.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: I expect a sensible answer. I would like the Government to look at China as a model. I have an excerpt here from the *New York Times*, October 25, 2011. It talks about China being the most advanced country in respect of desalination projects. China has been prepared to take a financial loss to get ahead in the business of fresh water; a financial investment. The largest desalination plant in China, hon. Minister of Public Utilities, is a government-run conglomerate called the SDIC and it is moving to quadruple the plant's desalination capacity, making it China's largest.

I would like you to hear what the plant's general manager has to say. He says: Although we are investing so much money initially.

“Someone has to lose money,”—said the plant's General Manager—“We're a state-owned corporation and it's our social responsibility”—to provide water for all.

China is looking at this as an environment-related industry and they are looking at supplying the world with fresh water. I am reading this excerpt from the *New York Times*.

“At the government's order, China is rapidly becoming one of the world's biggest growth markets for desalted water.”

They call it desalinated, desalted, desal; any name you want to use. China is eyeing the global market for desalination technology. As they say, this is an export industry. It is not only about making China green.

There are many countries that have partnered with China in this regard. Singapore, Japan, Spain, Israel, United States; they have all established joint ventures with Chinese partners in respect of desalination projects. Probably our Government should be looking at establishing more desalination plants and, if it is too expensive—they are going to China—we should be seeking to establish joint ventures. *[Interruption]* Yes, my grandfather is from China. I would be happy to go. They should be looking at China to establish desalination plants.

I would like to say, too, to the Members opposite, that Trinidad and Tobago is in a unique position because we have great potential for solar energy. We are in the Caribbean and in the proximity to the sea. In many of these places—China,

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Europe and the Middle East—they are not and so they have to get the water. The Middle East has many challenges with all their deserts, and so and they have to transport the water a long way to the plant. The proximity to the sea in Trinidad is an advantage.

Mr. Speaker, the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top-level state-planning agency gives preferential treatment—hon. Minister, please listen—to domestic companies that build desalting equipment or patent desalting technologies. Tax breaks and low-interest loans are given to encourage domestic production.

This is what we should be doing here—giving concessions to local companies—and here we are increasing rates to our companies. The developed world is telling us what to do. That is why we will always be lagging behind—and be Third World.

I would like to speak also of another area in which I feel WASA could optimize its resources. WASA needs to tighten its operations making them more effective and efficient, especially in the area of watershed management, water conservation and pollution of our watercourses. We have a lot of water in Trinidad. We have an adequate supply of water, but 50 per cent of it is lost in run-off water and if WASA is more vigilant and diligent in respect of water conservation and watershed management, we would be able to increase our nation's capacity for supplying water to all whether it is residential, commercial or industrial.

6.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, while I talk about water conservation and watershed management, I would like to draw to the attention of this honourable House, a community in St. Ann's which has formed itself into a group and is responsible for reforestation; it is called the Fondes Amandes Reforestation Project. This group was formed about 12 years ago, and has been working diligently and in close collaboration with the WASA Resource Management Team and the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs for 12 years now. This group has also been the recipient of funding from the Green Fund, and they are very much engaged in managing the watershed, reforestation and the prevention of bush fires.

I visited the area and I was very impressed to see the number of fire trails that have been cut so that the fires would not devastate the forest, because this degradation could cause a lot of run-off in our rainfall. Mr. Speaker, they also ensure that no chemical run-off gets into the watercourses, because they use only

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organic material. They also train water champions, and this training of water champions is an offshoot of the World Water Champion Project where communities are trained to appreciate the importance of ensuring the quality and quantity of water supply.

Mr. Speaker, this recipient, as I said, has been year after year and term after term, a recipient of funding from the Green Fund, and also has received many international awards for its work in the preservation of the environment. This group has been actually assisting WASA in maintaining the integrity of the quality of water and the supply of water in the St. Ann's area. The Minister will know that St. Ann's has one of the purest supplies of water in the entire country. What do they get for all their good work? WASA now wants to evict them and relocate them to Chaguanas. Mr. Speaker, these people are exercising their social responsibility as good citizens and making a meaningful contribution to our society.

WASA came with a list. They wrote me a letter to that effect, telling me that they are going to evict them and relocate them, because they are on WASA land and they would pollute the watercourses and so on, and they have been doing just the opposite. They brought a list of the persons that they would like to evict—all these persons are in the group. Mr. Speaker, but do you know what I do not like? It is the devious and underhand way in which it was done. I am going to tell the hon. Minister now what they did.

Sometime in October, WASA officials visited the Fondes Amandes community—the little poor people there who are trying and who are involved in this Green Fund Project—and asked them if they wanted pipe-borne water. Who would not want that? “Yes, everybody was running, whey de man, dey come to give us pipe-borne water, so they running and going to get their pipe-borne water.” So the officials took down—“Well, they want your name, address and contact numbers and so on—And watch meh, look they got it.” They got it here to evict them. [*Paper in hand*] They got it and they brought it back to present it. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, I must be upset and so are the people.

Hon Minister, if you know the wonderful job—but you will have a little fight on your hand with that, because why did this Fondes Amandes group win so many international awards? Why do they keep getting funding from the Green Fund? Why were they working with the WASA Resource Management Team and the Forestry Division over the years? Why is the water in the St. Ann's River around which they live so pure and clean? How could you just come and want to

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relocate them to Chaguanas? Some of them have been living there for over 50, 60 and 70 years. All the land, hon. Minister, is not WASA's land.

Mr. Speaker, everybody is talking about their constituencies. I am not going to say much more about my constituency, but I want to jump on that bandwagon a little. I want to refer to a *Guardian* article of Sunday, January 22, 2012. It really dealt with the Prime Minister, and I saw the hon. Member for La Horquetta/Talparo in the picture doing a photo op with water and so on—and, of course, the article says that 122,000 persons do not pay their WASA bills. It talked about the domestic consumers and so on.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was there and she pointed out that \$356 million is owed by domestic consumers and she said that WASA will make every effort to collect their moneys, et cetera, and they are going to embark on a disconnection drive to disconnect people and so on—the same people who need to have water. I suggest you find out first why they are not paying before you disconnect the poor people. Water is their lifeline. We all need two things to survive—all living things: plants, animals and human beings. We need water and air, so you cannot just disconnect people. She said they would turn the deficit into a 5 per cent surplus on its operations. She also said that the Government has demanded a dramatic transformation and improvement of the country's water supply from WASA.

Mr. Speaker, I have two questions to ask here and people have been asking me, and that is why I am asking—all of this they are going to do—if they are going to cut you off if you do not pay, but they are going to improve the water and so on—are they going to increase—a question that has been asked by all the Members who have spoken on this side—our rates and, if so, by how much?

The most important question that I have to deal with here is, when we are talking about improving the supply of water, what do we really mean? Is it improving the quality of the water? I want to ask the hon. Minister, is it the quality of the pipe-borne water? I have to say again, every government has a social responsibility to supply every citizen, regardless of colour, creed, class, race or political affiliation with a safe and reliable supply of pipe-borne water. Notice what I am saying—a potable, safe and reliable supply of pipe-borne water.

Since Desalcott was first instituted, it was trumpeted, "Water for all! Water for all!", and now you come back with, "Water for all" yes, but do you know what I want to talk about? I would still like to say, what about Makai Lands? I thought when the hon. Minister was saying the first person who wrote him, I put up my

hand and I was jumping up, because I thought he would say, Port of Spain North St. Ann's/West, because I swear I was the first person who wrote the hon. Minister. I rang him; I know him; "I know him a long time." [Laughter] "I ring him up."

Hon. George: Dr. Rowley called me first. [Laughter and crosstalk]

Mrs. P. McIntosh: I am sure he did not ring as many times as I rang you. I texted him; I rang him. [Crosstalk] It does not matter, all hours the day or night, I am fighting for my people, Sir. I am a good representative. I rang, I emailed and up to now—he says he is not Mandrake, but he expected the PNM to be Mandrake. When the PNM was in the process of developing an entire water system and housing system and taking this country from where it was to First World status, you all expected the PNM to be Mandrake.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the quality of water from WASA. Very often we see in the newspapers and on the television people bringing water and pouring it out, and they cannot drink it because it is brown and so on, and WASA is saying that it is safe, it is chlorinated and it is treated in the plants and they could drink it and so on, and the citizens are provided with a certain type of water from WASA. Mr. Speaker, WASA's water comes either from surface water sources like rivers, or from groundwater sources like wells. Is that not true hon. Minister? Right! The water goes to a treatment plant where it is treated and then piped to the citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I want to state in this House right now that WASA's methods and strategies of water purification and water treatment are not only archaic and outdated, but extremely hazardous to the health of every single one of our citizens, and I am going to explain why. [Crosstalk] That is a very damning statement, and I am going to explain why. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Sharma: Be brief!

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, no I would not be brief because this is important to people's lives. It is life and death here. You know, the people who are not getting water, it might be a blessing in disguise, because of what I am going to say. We are going to pay for our death here. Minister of Health, I am glad you are here, please take note. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, when the water is treated—I got this from WASA's website—let me just take a small drink of water. [Laughter]

Hon. Member: Is that WASA water you are drinking?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: No, I understand that this is foreign water. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, I do not want WASA water. [Crosstalk] Sorry, Sir, thanks, but no thanks.

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Mr. Speaker, when WASA water goes to the treatment plant, they use alum, better known as aluminium sulphate, chlorine as a disinfectant and other things like liquid polymer which is a flocculant, and they put other chemicals in the water.

Mr. Speaker, I did some research. [*Crosstalk*] It will do you all good to listen. Mr. Speaker, I looked at the US Department of Labor Guidelines for Chlorine, and I can give the website, www.osha.gov/sltc/healthguidelines/chlorine/recognition.html. I also looked at another website, www.prweb.com from the University of Wisconsin site. I also looked at another website www.ecosmarteusa.com. Mr. Speaker, these websites revealed very disturbing information about the use of chlorine and alum in water, and I am going to reveal them now, because the public has to hear it. Minister, is this really WASA water? I hope it is not, because I need some. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, exposure to even low levels of chlorine could result in:

“...eye, nose, and throat irritation, sneezing, excessive salivation, general excitement, and restlessness. Higher concentrations causes difficulty in breathing, violent coughing”—I heard the Member for St. Joseph coughing today—“nausea, vomiting, cyanosis, dizziness, headache, choking, laryngeal edema, acute tracheobronchitis, chemical pneumonia...exposure to low levels of chlorine gas can result in a dermatitis known as chloracne, tooth enamel corrosion, coughing, severe chest pain, sore throat, hemoptysis and increased susceptibility to tuberculosis.”

Mr. Speaker, tuberculosis is on the rise. What I am saying is, very often when we get allergies, asthma and bronchitis we do not know if we are suffering the effects and the consequences of all this chlorine in the water.

Mr. Speaker, some of these warnings were issued more than 20 years ago. I would like to quote them for the education of the general public through you, Mr. Speaker. I am quoting the *Washington Post* from June 1994 and it says the EPA which is the US Environmental Protection Agency—“has raised skin absorption of chlorine to its top 10 carcinogen watch list.”

I will quote now from the US Council of Environmental Quality. It says:

“Cancer risk among people drinking chlorinated water is 93% higher than those whose water does not contain chlorine”

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I would like to quote Dr. Robert Morris, Medical College of Wisconsin research team:

“We are quite convinced, based on this study, that there is an association between cancer and chlorinated water...There is a clear pattern between consumption of chlorinated water and rectal and bladder cancer.”

7.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the *American Journal Of Public Health*:

“Up to 2/3 of the harmful effects of chlorine are due to inhalation and skin absorption while showering.”

I would like to quote the BreastCancerFund.org:

“One common factor among women with breast cancer is that they all have 50-60% higher levels of these chlorination by-products (THMs) in their fat tissue than women without breast cancer...”

I would also like to quote the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*:

“Long-term drinking of chlorinated water appears to increase a person’s risk of developing bladder cancer as much as 80%...”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: That is why I say it is not so.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to quote a study entitled *Coronaries/Cholesterol/Chlorine* by Dr. Joseph M. Price PhD:

“We are learning the hard way that all the time we thought we were preventing epidemics of one disease, we were creating another. Two decades after the start of chlorinating our drinking water the present epidemic of heart trouble and cancer began.”

I looked at another website www.greathealthconnection.com, and I saw that the ill-effects of alum in drinking water which poses serious health risk.

“Water treatment plants use large amounts of aluminum sulphate (a salt) to remove organic matter from water.”—which WASA does; it uses large amounts of alum. “Once we absorb aluminum into our bodies, it is hard to remove it. It tends to accumulate in our tissues and over time it may hasten alzheimer or parkinson disease...Aluminum damages our nervous system.”

In the developed world, many people, many countries, most countries are using different strategies and different methods of water treatment and water

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purification, and what they are using is ozone-based water purification. In an article by Marisa Rodrigues published on April 05, 2002, in the Engineering News online, www.engineeringnews.co.za, I would like to speak of the new method and probably educate the hon. Minister and the hon. Members on the other side of the House and, indeed, the public about this—it is not a new method, but this method that is used in all developed countries, and I would call them—United States, Canada. I will name them just now.

“Ozone-based technology, which is believed to produce water that is far healthier than chlorine-purified water for the end-user, is used abroad extensively and is being promoted by the Green Party movement in Europe to become the primary method of sanitization in the European Union because of its high efficiency and lower production of detrimental by-products. Traditionally, chlorine is used to purify and clean water for human consumption. Chlorine is toxic, which makes it dangerous, and there is also evidence that it is carcinogenic.

The technology”—which is the ozone-based water purification technology—“is a safe alternative to chlorine, uses ozone (a naturally occurring gas that protects us from the sun’s rays) to purify water. Ozone is not just safer, but also the strongest oxidiser that can be used safely for water purification, destroying bacteria 3000 times faster than chlorine.

Apart from destroying all known bacteria, viruses, fungi and mould in the water, ozone removes iron, manganese, heavy metals, cyanide, phenols and sulphides, as well as, soaps, oils and greases—and it controls the colour and odour of water.

Ozone also leaves no unwelcome chemical trail in the form of harmful residues or by-products, as once it has done its oxidation work it reverts to oxygen and uses up no natural resources. Using ozone as a disinfectant is not a new discovery, as it was initially used as a disinfectant in 1886, and used commercially in Holland in 1893, when the first full-scale drinking application was implemented.

The technology is widely used in Europe, the US...Australia...and...South Africa. The technology is also being used to remove pesticide, arsenic and iron from water. Other applications of ozone technology include using it to kill the smell of hydrogen sulphide at sewage works and cigarette smoke in smoking areas. It is also used widely worldwide in air-cooling towers because ozone kills the bacteria that cause Legionnaire’s disease.”

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Mr. Speaker, I am hoping, having read this, and having educated the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, that in his plans to improve the quality of water that WASA is providing to our citizens that he would take this ozone-based technology into consideration as a safe, non-toxic option, to chlorine and alum. If we want to call ourselves a first-world country, that is what we need. Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: I thank you.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: You better know who you want to thank over there, you better be careful. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, having said all of this, I would like to call for a commission of enquiry into the levels of toxicity in water produced by WASA to the citizens in this country. I would like to call for a commission of enquiry into it. [*Interruption*] Yes, Member for Oropouche East. You know why? Because we could be killing people with all of these chemicals, the chlorine and the alum, and they are paying for it. We are paying to hasten our death; to hasten our journey to the grave. They might be collecting moneys from delinquent and recalcitrant consumers, but what about the quality of water they are providing to them. I would also like to call for the development of an action plan by WASA to replace the archaic and hazardous methods of water treatment, and replace it with ozone or other safe and non-toxic methods that have been utilized for decades in the developed world.

Mr. Speaker, raising the water rate will make WASA's balance sheet look better—"yuh gonna look good"; we do not know who is benefiting the most, but "yuh gonna look good"; but it will not improve the quality of pipe-borne water to the ordinary citizen; nor will it provide water for all as for my people in Mackai Lands and other areas that do not have a supply of pipe-borne water.

The reality is, to deny a person the right to a reliable, safe, non-toxic and potable supply of water is to deny that person the right to life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development (Hon. Ramona Ramdial): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to address the Lower House this evening, where we seek to have the water improvement rate made by order of the Minister under section 11 of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, Chap. 54:41, which allows the Minister to increase the rate in a water improvement area according to section 10(1).

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Just give me a moment to read section 10(1), which states:

“(1) The Minister may, subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament, by Order—

- (a) declare any area in Trinidad and Tobago to be a Water Improvement Area;
- (b) from time to time vary any such Order;
- (c) cancel any such Order.”

And of course, section 10(2) reads:

“An area shall not be declared to be a Water Improvement Area unless the Minister is satisfied that the area generally has been, or may be expected to be, materially benefited by means of waterworks carried out in the area or serving the area and unless such waterworks are for any of the purposes mentioned in section 4.”

So with this background, the water improvement rate was first made, and it was made in 1998 by the Minister under sections 10 and 11 of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, increase the water improvement. The water improvement rate, instituted at that time \$4 per cubic metre of water provided to the estate, and since that time, since 1998, the water improvement rate has not been changed. So, today here, in the Lower House, we are coming to seek an affirmative resolution to change that current rate of \$4 to \$8.50.

First of all, I want to make reference to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, where, generally, the area has been or maybe expected to materially benefit from the works that are being carried out there. In the first case, when the desalination plant was put into place in 1999/2000, it was to provide for the Point Lisas Estate to have a dedicated supply of water. Up until that time, the water supply to the estate came from the Caroni Arena Treatment Plant, and the estate started off by consuming about 11 million gallons of water and then it increased over time to 19 million gallons of water. And, of course, the Point Lisas Industrial Estate was given priority during which time, 19 million gallons were consumed on the estate preventing many of the consumers from the central and south areas from having an adequate water supply.

Mr. Speaker, the water improvement rate of \$4 was added to the then commercial rate of \$3.50 to make a total of \$7.50 per cubic metre paid by industries in Point Lisas. So, of course, in 1998, the Point Lisas industries were

guaranteed their source of water by the agreement that the desalination plant will be established. Of course, with that arrangement, they went on to implement the water improvement rate.

Right now as we stand here to debate the water improvement rate, new projects are being considered to improve or to secure the supply of water to Point Lisas. One such new project is the dualling of the Caroni South Trunk Main and, of course, that dualling of the Trunk Main will secure, even further, the supply of water to the Point Lisas area. So, of course, with that new project to be implemented, a necessary increase in the water improvement rate to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate is required to sustain such.

I also want to refer to the cost to the Water and Sewerage Authority of the purchase of water from the desalination plant in order to supply the Point Lisas industries. When the water improvement rate was first instituted, the cost to the Water and Sewerage Authority of a cubic metre of desalinated water was \$3.52, and that was around 1999, when the first supply of water from the plant was supplied to WASA, via WASA to Point Lisas. Since that time, there has been an increase, and it has increased to \$5.70, and next year it will increase to \$6.72.

Mr. Speaker, \$7.50 was the original price, and it has not changed, so that WASA continues to receive \$7.50, and that was the original cost instituted by WASA to the total cost of water to Point Lisas. This year WASA now pays \$5.70 per cubic metre and next year will continue to pay \$6.72 per cubic metre. So if we do not have an increase in the water improvement rate, that we are proposing here, WASA will lose an estimated \$26 million on the deal this year, and then will further lose \$92 million in 2012. So, if there is no change in the water improvement rate—therefore, we are proposing in the Lower House today that we affirm and approve the increase in the water improvement rate.

7.20p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to draw reference to the subsidizing of the industries in Point Lisas that WASA continually does. There is a situation, at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate where these industries are into a profit maximizing activity, they are profit-making industries and therefore, it is a bit unfair, as the Hon. Minister of Public Utilities would have reiterated earlier on, that WASA has to be subsidizing those industries when it is in turn making a loss, not only on the arrangement for the purchase of water from Desalcott, but overall. So, with this point we should also bear in mind that it is necessary for us to approve this water improvement rate.

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I also want to touch a little on—in the final analysis, the State subsidizes WASA, and that subsidy has been rising over time. Of course, it would be to the cost of Government in the range of \$1.8 billion to subsidize WASA in order for it to run efficiently. For that reason especially, we are saying that there should be an increase in the water improvement rate.

The order that we seek to affirm here would increase the rate by an additional \$4.50, making the improvement rate a total of \$8.50. When that is added to the \$3.50 commercial rate, it would bring the total amount paid, per cubic metre, by Point Lisas industries, to \$12.00. This is the improvement rate that we seek to have passed here today. It is a reasonable figure, I am advised by the technocrats from the Ministry of Public Utilities. Meetings were held with the Point Lisas Industrial Estate stakeholders and when they realized that—firstly they were in disagreement, I am told; but then they realized that it had been 13 years since an increase had been instituted in the water improvement rate to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

As a Government we may have to look at incrementally increasing this rate within a shorter space of time, Mr. Speaker, but as it stands right now, this would be the first time after 13 years that the water improvement rate is going to be increased. I think justifiably so, this is something that the Parliament, both Lower and Upper House should support, because it is reasonable and we have had buy in from different stakeholders throughout the country. WASA will be looking incrementally to probably put in a system that would accommodate for such increase in cost later on.

Other than that I just want to draw reference to global trends and patterns, and I want to refer to a White Paper that was laid in the American Congress, where it is, just by summary, if you would permit me to quote some of the stuff. What is happening here is that in this developed country—and like America and other developed nations—it has been identified that people worldwide are not accustomed to paying and have been largely unaware of the true cost of treating and delivering clean, safe water to their taps.

It is very historic that there is underpricing of water globally, and that is largely due to the perception that water is a free natural resource, and it is a fundamental human need supplied by the earth itself. The vast infrastructure required to treat and deliver that water where it is needed, however, is far from free.

When my colleague, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, makes reference to global trends and patterns, the first and the closest developed

nation to our country is America; and here in their White Paper they are instituting an increase in water rates, not only to industrialized areas, but also to domestic consumers across the board.

Mrs. McIntosh: The quality of their water.

Miss R. Ramdial: The quality of the water is something that can be addressed.

Mrs. McIntosh: Ozone-based technology.

Hon. Member: What ozone-based technology?

Miss R. Ramdial: Again, referring to the White Paper that was laid, the price tag to bring water and waste water systems up to date is projected to be close to \$1 trillion over the next 20 years, a cost that consumers would have to share in America—\$1 trillion. Of course, because the majority of water funding comes from revenues generated by pricing, it would take a major shift—and the way water is priced to meet its infrastructural needs, it will not succeed. Therefore, there is a requirement for the pricing of water to be changed, where higher values would be added to this public utility.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in developed countries, there are encouraging signs of acceptance of this new water reality. People all around the world are coming to terms with the value that is water, and the economic value associated with water. Therefore, they are accepting the new trends in bringing about and bringing up to standard the rates that are charged for water.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make reference in this debate between bottled water versus tap water. You know in Trinidad we have this culture thinking that bottled water is safer than tap water. For many years, and I am speaking globally now, bottled water was perceived to have a greater value than tap water, a result of successful marketing strategies and a price tag that, depending on the brand, was more expensive than tap water. So, from the 1990s to now, the sale of bottled water tripled. The reality is 25 to 40 per cent of bottled water sold in the US and other countries comes from the tap water, and it is just bottled and sold to consumers throughout.

What is more revealing is that 60 to 75 per cent of the bottled water that is not sourced from taps has a potentially bigger downside, because the FDA standards regulating bottled water are far less rigorous than those set by the EPA, which governs tap water.

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The point I am trying to draw here is that tap water is safer to drink than bottled water, and this goes across the board globally, for both developed and underdeveloped nations. Therefore, in Trinidad and Tobago, by instituting the water improvement rate, I am sure our Minister of Public Utilities would be able to deliver a better quality of water. So I hope that answers the points made by the Member for Port of Spain North.

With all these factors taken into consideration, I want to say that this Variation Order is very forward-thinking. It will of course bring a lot of benefits to the consumers, the population of Trinidad and Tobago. It will be a source of additional revenue to us, and I want to support my colleague in debating this Motion in terms of improving and increasing the water improvement rate.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to permit me some time to go to my constituency, where again I must commend the Minister of Public Utilities. In the constituency of Couva North, so far to date I have had 20 water projects undertaken in Couva North. Out of that 20, five are new areas, where for the first time in 30 years the people are getting a pipe-borne supply of water. I am going to identify these areas; they are Mc Leod Trace, Freeport; Roopsingh Road, Carapichaima; Derek Road Extension; Palm Avenue, Carli Bay; and Ramja Street, Waterloo. These five new areas have benefited from WASA's ongoing project of delivering water for all, across the board. Thank you very much, Minister of Public Utilities. Those are the five new projects.

There are 15 other ongoing projects, where WASA has come in and done improvement works. I want to say that I am one of those very fortunate Members of Parliament who have been able to get public utilities in my constituency. I want to say this evening, that a total of 12,189 residents of Couva North have benefited from the WASA improvements within the constituency. [*Desk thumping*] Those areas which have gotten a new pipe-borne supply of water that never existed before, they are also very grateful and they have praised WASA to the fullest extent.

Mr. Speaker, without going on much longer than necessary, I want to say that this increase in the water improvement rate will only be positive for the people who are going to be utilizing water within the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. I want to say to the Minister of Public Utilities that he has our full backing. The Government is behind him 100 per cent. I know that he means well and he is one of the hardest-working Ministers in Government. I want to support this Order. Thank you very much.

Mr. Nileung Hypolite (*Laventille West*): Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker, and permit me to start by quoting from the United Nations Secretary General's speech he made on March 22, 2011 on World Water Day.

He said:

“As the world charts a more sustainable future, the crucial interplay among water, food and energy is one of the most formidable challenges we face. Without water there is no dignity and no escape from poverty. Yet the Millennium Development Goal target for water and sanitation is among those on which many countries lag the most.”

Trinidad and Tobago as one of the countries lagging in achieving this target of development of the United Nations Water for All. As a promise coming from the United National Congress from 1996 to 2000, where they made mention that there would be water for all, after so many years we are still in a position whereby less than 30 per cent of the population gets water on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, today a Motion is brought to ensure water for Point Lisas from the desal plant; today a Motion is brought to increase the cost of the water supply; today we see the United National Congress Government seeking to raise revenue by new water rates and a benefit to private owners. Members before thanked the Minister for the amount of work that would have been completed within their constituencies. I also wish to thank the Minister because he responded to a letter that I wrote to him. I have to thank him for it. It is a letter that I wrote to him on November 15, 2011, and I wish to read the letter that came back to me dated February 03, 2012:

“Dear Mr. Hypolite,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated November 15, 2011 in which you requested that WASA pay particular attention to leaking water mains that prevent the delivery of a reliable water supply to residents of Prizgar Lands, Laventille.

Please be informed that since the receipt of your letter, consideration is being given to the replacement of the main along Old St. Joseph Road, and to giving the project some priority. It is considered that this project, when completed, should go a long way in providing relief to those affected.”

I wish to thank you, hon. Minister, for your response. I do not only want “consideration;” the people in Laventille do not only want “consideration,” they want to see action. They want water in Laventille.

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And I say so, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Like Oropouche West.

Mr. N. Hypolite: —because the Member for Oropouche West stood in the House and boasted, so had the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, of receiving water. May I also say that prior to May 24, 2010, there was an improvement in the water supply throughout Laventille. [*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: Across the board.

Mr. N. Hypolite: I am speaking about Laventille West at this time, as I represent that constituency. Throughout the constituency there was a great improvement.

Mr. Peters: Only there?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Since after May 2010, I have been getting a number of complaints. For instance, the residents of Mahabir Courts tend to call me almost every week, complaining about water not coming through their taps.

7.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, so are the people in St. Barbs, China Town Extension, Mentor Alley, Trou Macaque. May I say that Prizgar Lands as well as Eastern Quarry are faced with the same kinds of complaints every week.

Mr. Peters: How long ago they started?

Mr. N. Hypolite: On May 25, 2010. [*Laughter*] They started to complain about the problems that they are having with water because, as I said, prior to May 24, water was flowing. [*Crosstalk*]

May I also say to the Minister that there is a particular road called Old St. Joseph Road that runs from Success Laventille Composite School all the way through Laventille West and into Laventille East/Morvant and it ends up by Angostura, Leotaud Street. That road, every Monday morning there is a leak; every Tuesday morning—

Hon. George: You all would not change the old pipe, you see.

Mr. N. Hypolite: That is why you are here to do it. [*Interruption*] I do not want consideration. What I would prefer is for you to say when it would be done because what we are looking for is action. You said you all are a Government of action and that is what we are looking for. That road is a road that needs immediate and urgent attention.

I would like to come into the House here and also thank the Minister just like the Member for Oropouche and the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo for 500 metres of pipe that was changed. I would like to do the same thing, so I am pleading to you, hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, to fix the pipes and the leaks in all of the constituencies where we on this side sit. If you are doing it in Diego Martin West, I would like the same approach in Laventille West also.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to ask the hon. Minister if there is an application before the RIC to increase water rates across the board for domestic individuals. Because, we are here this evening looking at increasing the water improvement rate down at Point Lisas, and it is my understanding that the Point Lisas Industrial Estate—those businesses down there—would normally pay something like \$7.50; from that \$7.50 WASA will probably retain \$3.50 and Desalcott will take \$4. It is my understanding that Desalcott would have increased their rate from \$4 to \$6.50. Remember, WASA is still charging the industry \$7.50, which means at this point in time that WASA would now retain \$1 while Desalcott will get \$6.50. It is my understanding that that \$6.50 will now be increased to \$10, and as such, that is one of the reasons WASA would have to increase their rate to \$12.50 or charge the industry \$12.50, which means now WASA will retain \$2.50 while Desalcott will get \$10.

It means, therefore, that over the last 10 years there has been a 150 per cent increase in the rates down there at Point Lisas. If the Government increases the rate at Point Lisas, I am certain that there will be a rate increase across the board for domestic individuals also. [*Desk thumping*] I am certain that will come and that is why I am asking the question: I am asking the Minister to state whether or not there is an application before the RIC.

Mr. Speaker, it is also my understanding—and my colleague from Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West made mention of it—that some 122,000 persons do not pay WASA bills. There is a reason for that. That reason is a number of persons who do not pay their bills do not get a proper water supply. They do not get a proper water supply. We have a problem, and that problem is WASA, and WASA's problem is two-fold: one is their management structure and the other is their action plan; and those are two things that I would like to probably direct the hon. Minister to look into very, very closely—the management structure and the action plan. We boasted about which constituency is getting water supply and which constituency is not getting water supply, and Members on the other side stood in the House and they beat their chest that they are getting water since May 25; they are getting water on a regular basis, so many pipes were changed and

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stuff like that. I was going through some emails quite recently and I came across this one this morning. Here is someone who indicated on *Facebook*, Tuesday, January 31, 2012:

“No water in Wallerfield again!!! WASA sucks!! George sucks!! Ganga sucks!! Tell me how is the PP better than the PNM with water!!”—this is *Facebook*—“PP sucks!! No plans for water, none, zero, nada, mas...zilch!!!”

Again, there is a problem with WASA. For us to get a proper water supply we need to look at those two issues: the management issue and the action plan.

I would normally call on an officer from WASA—anytime one of my constituents calls me and tells me about leaks in the constituency, there is a particular officer I would call, and that is because somewhere around 2009, WASA indicated that this particular team of persons would assist various constituencies and Members of Parliament in identifying these different leaks and stuff like that. Just before Christmas I called that same officer to identify to her a leak in the St. Barbs area, and she said to me, “Mr. Hypolite, unfortunately, I would not be able to go and look at the leak.” The question I asked her was, “why”? The answer, “my manager indicated to me that I am not allowed to go outside and look at the leaks in Laventille anymore”. I will, Mr. Minister, send you a little note on that, because I am certain WASA is there to service all of the people all of the time and not some of the people on the other side when they want to. [*Desk thumping*]

I also wish to make mention, as we look specifically at the Motion, read from an article written by Andre Bagoos dated Thursday, November 24, 2011. It goes like this:

“Thousands of residents in central and south Trinidad were without a pipe-borne water supply yesterday as the Desalcott desalination plant at Point Lisas, stayed dry, being out of order for an eighth consecutive day.

The plant normally supplies an estimated 30 million gallons of water daily.”

It is very important to have that desal plant operational all of the time. It is that important to have it operational because when it is down it affects the flow of water to other areas in and around, such as Chaguanas and San Fernando, and it puts a strain on the Caroni Water Treatment Plant, which normally at its capacity in terms of operation can probably peak some 80 million gallons of water, but that 80 million gallons of water is what would normally go to areas other than the Point Lisas area. The question is not so much whether we increase the rate or not

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at Point Lisas and the Desalcott plant; the question is the perceived corruption that goes behind that particular plant. That is the problem that we are having on this side—the perceived corruption.

Mr. Speaker, when you read today's newspaper and you read "WASA grants \$5.2M contract to Spanish firm"—then you go deeper into the article and you see:

"Checks by Newsday yesterday showed that Agbar does not appear to be registered in Trinidad and Tobago"—

—number of questions come to mind: what were the criteria used in appointing this particular contractor? Which other companies were interviewed or submitted or would have submitted tenders? Where are the transparency and accountability behind this particular tender or contract or granting of contract? Why is the company not a registered company in Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Member: It is.

Mr. N. Hypolite: It is? [*Inaudible*] Not by that name? I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister would tell us by what name is the company operating. That is the problem that we are having on this side—the perceived corruption—and not only us on this side, but I want to believe by extension, the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Because, following on from the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Diego Martin West—

7.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have a procedural Motion.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 10(2), I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the conclusion of the debate on the Motion to approve the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) (Variation) Order, 2011.

Question put and agreed to.

WATER IMPROVEMENT RATE (VARIATION) ORDER, 2011 (POINT LISAS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE)

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you, kindly, Mr. Speaker. Continuing on some of the comments that the hon. Leader of the Opposition and Member for Diego Martin West would have alluded to, I wish also to identify some of the concerns

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pertaining to the handling of that contract back in 1998–1999. Again, this is an article dealing headlined: “High-ranking officials in my pocket”, and just to identify with some of the statements made.

Mr. Speaker: Is that a newspaper article?

Mr. N. Hypolite: *Express*, dated September 18, 2010:

“Ben-Dak told investigators, in a July 2005 interview, ‘Karamath was trying to control everything’, including sending him drafts of letters to be signed and issued to the Ministry of Public Utilities and other public officials.”

As I said, it is the perceived corruption in the whole thing that we are having a lot of concerns about:

“September 10, 1998—Travel records pulled by law enforcement authorities show Karamath travelled to New York and stayed at the Palace Hotel for one night, returning to Trinidad the following day. Expense account records for Daniel Hoffman show he travelled to New York from Tel Aviv, Israel, and stayed two nights at the Palace Hotel before flying out to Trinidad on September 13, 1998.

September 11, 1998—Gary Sazer, Ben-Dak’s lawyer and former business partner, told investigators on the morning of September 11, he and Ben-Dak went to the Palace Hotel for a breakfast meeting with Mr. Karamath. The meeting lasted one hour, and the discussion focused on the consulting relationship between a Karamath entity, Hafeez Karamath Company Ltd (HKCL) and Group+One, another Ben-Dak/Sazer-owned company.”

Perceived corruption is what we are concerned about, Mr. Speaker.

“Talk centred on Karamath’s keen interest in the desalination project and how Group+One (G+O) could help him win the bid and obtain financing for the project.”

The meeting went on and on and on, but I want to skip and go to another part of the conversation. This part states:

“The four men—two Israelis, an American and a Trinidadian—discuss the mechanics of the bid-rigging scheme.”

I would just repeat that, Mr. Speaker:

“The four men—two Israelis, an American and a Trinidadian—discuss the mechanics of the bid-rigging scheme. Talk centred on how to structure the

bid process to ensure Karamath gets the contract while making it appear fair and open to all bidders.”

We are dealing with the perceived corruption:

“Karamath claimed he had high-ranking Trinidad government officials ‘in his pocket’ and expressed confidence the vote would go his way. None of the individuals named by Karamath at the Palace Hotel meeting has been charged with wrongdoing. Sazer is said to have expressed unease with the bid-rigging talks, according to transcripts of a police-conducted interview, while Ben-Dak and Hoffman spoke of their involvement in similar arrangements in other countries outside of the United States. The two Israelis assured Karamath would get the contract and the collusive tendering scheme held no threat of exposure or risk to the group.

When first interviewed by investigators in Israel, Hoffman denied any meeting at the Palace Hotel. His story changed during a subsequent interview after he was shown expense and travel reports...”

Perceived corruption. Here it is you have Hoffman and Ben-Dak’s names being called steadily. The article continues, and this is the last piece of this particular article I will read:

“Following the New York meeting, Hoffman flew to Trinidad and was on hand when the pre-qualification documents were opened at the Ministry of Public Utilities (MPU). The pre-qualification bid committee, according to official documents obtained by the Sunday Express, comprised of Khansham Kanhai...”

And the Leader of the Opposition made mention of that name in his contribution, and Mr. Kanhai was the chairman. Other members of the committee were:

“Hoffman, Ian De Souza, then corporate manager, Trade Finance at Republic Bank...”

Well, he was the Trade Finance Corporate Manager at Republic Bank:

“Emmanuel George, then permanent secretary...”

Mr. Speaker: Member, just take your seat. I have already made it very clear that if you are making a charge—and that is what you are doing in that article—do not use an article by quoting, and in quoting that article you are bringing Members of Parliament into public ridicule and disrepute. If you want to make a charge against any Member of Parliament as it relates to their conduct, or you

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want to personally reflect on their character, I suggest you do it under 36(10). So could you resist calling names of Members of this honourable House? Whether they are in the next House or they are in this House, you bring a substantive Motion, because the thing is very loaded with implications and imputations. So I urge you, desist, discontinue and go on to some other paragraph.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you, kindly, Mr. Speaker. I will go on to another paragraph.

“The Kanhai-chaired committee opened and reviewed 17 bid documents. Four of the submitted proposals were deemed unresponsive, and six did not meet the minimum score. It was at this point of the bid opening pre-qualification process...”—that two of the individuals—“left the meeting.”

I wish not to say the two, Mr. Speaker, because you are going to guide me again away from calling any names.

“The three remaining members (Kanhai, De Souza and Hoffman), referred to as ‘specialist’ members of the pre-qualification bid committee, evaluated the remaining seven submissions. Karamath’s proposal was given top ranking by all three evaluators, according to the report of state-hired forensic investigator Bob Lindquist.”

The point, really and truly is again that we on this side as well as the people of Trinidad and Tobago, I am certain, will not have much of a problem with an increase in water rates, especially if they are getting a regular supply of water. But I am certain we will all have a problem with the perceived corruption behind the company, the institution, that is supplying this water to WASA, which, at the end of the day, receives much more money than WASA itself—WASA being owned 100 per cent by the people of Trinidad and Tobago; the industry being charged \$12.50; Desalcott getting \$10 and WASA retaining \$2.50.

The people in Laventille want a regular supply of water. We know that it will not be done immediately. We know that one of the things that must get done is the changing of all of those pipes, especially that pipe that runs along the Old St. Joseph Road. All I am asking is for the Minister to pay some attention also to the constituencies which Members on this side represent—and not only Members on your side.

You see, a particular Minister once said that a lot of work would have gotten done in Trinidad and Tobago, and 95 per cent of the work would have been done in Siparia, Barrackpore, Fyzabad and Penal. [*Interruption*] Not you. And that

sends a particular signal. [*Interruption*] I am not speaking about you, Mr. Minister; not you. There are other Ministers in the House.

People in Laventille and the 200,000 persons who will be coming into Trinidad and Tobago for the Carnival season, I am certain they will all want a proper water supply. And, Mr. Speaker, 200,000 persons coming into Trinidad and Tobago for the Carnival season, if one of those aircraft carries 250 persons at any one point in time, it will mean that some 800 flights will have to come into Trinidad and Tobago between now and Carnival—some 800 flights. Most of these people who will be coming into Trinidad and Tobago, I am certain will want a proper supply of water, but most of these persons tend to come into Trinidad and Tobago for Carnival within the last five days of Carnival: Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

I am certain that 800 flights coming into Trinidad over those five days—well, it is CAL who said that, trying to fool the people of Trinidad and Tobago once again. There is no way I can see 800 flights coming into Trinidad, especially, over that five-day period.

8.05 p.m.

As I close, permit me also to quote again, from the United Nations Secretary General. And I quote:

“urbanization brings opportunities for more efficient water management and improved access to drinking water and sanitation. At the same time, problems are often magnified in cities, and are currently outpacing our ability to devise solutions.”

Mr. Speaker, the Government must address these issues of poor management at WASA. They must ensure that profits are demanded from a well-managed WASA. They must also ensure that leaks and other system problems are removed. They must be open with the profits and business relationship of the Government of Trinidad, WASA and the desalination plant.

Mr. Speaker, answers are needed, and that is all we on this side have been asking for. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government (Mrs. Nela Khan): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity of making a contribution on this very important debate on the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate) (Variation) Order, 2011.

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In 1999, the Water and Sewerage Authority engaged the Desalination Company of Trinidad and Tobago, known as Desalcott, to design, build, finance and operate a desalination plant for a period of 20 years, at a cost of \$120 million. In 2002, the said desalination plant was commissioned with the primary purpose of a main objective, and that was to supply the Point Lisas Industrial Estate with an adequate and reliable supply of water in its daily functions and operations. The Point Lisas Industrial Estate initially started consuming 11 million gallons of water and has now increased consumption to 19 million. With that 11 million and now 19 million gallons consumed, this has caused a slow and inadequate supply to consumers in south and central Trinidad.

In saying so, I must say that I have very fond memories of growing up as a child in the southern area among the sugar cane fields, where I was taught by my parents that water is a gift from God. Water is life—and it is life. Pipe-borne water back then, as I speak, was a scarce commodity for people living in south, regardless of the dry season or the wet season. I heard the Member for Arouca quote from an article in the newspaper about a dry tap in Barrackpore. If the PNM had served the people, there would not have been any dry taps in Barrackpore today. [*Desk thumping*] If they had put the infrastructure in place, there would not have been any dry taps anywhere in the country of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

You cannot imagine the extreme difficulty and frustration in accessing water back then. People were constrained when it came to everyday life. The challenges were endless: hardly any water for drinking, much less for cleaning, cooking, bathing and other personal use—and you know what I am speaking about. I remember my brothers would go down to the river with other boys and they would take what is called a “lil duck” in the river in order to clean themselves. And my colleagues would all recognize and treat with what I am saying. [*Interruption*]

Miss McDonald: Point of Order, Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 33(6). [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, what is your point of order? [*Interruption*]

Miss McDonald: Standing Order 33(6). [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Princes Town, we have a ruling here that you debate. You can make reference to your notes, but you cannot have your head bent all the time, because that certainly is reading. So, I want to encourage all

Members, make references to your notes, if you have figures to quote, obviously, you want to make reference, but debate, please.

Mrs. N. Khan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I was saying to you, Mr. Speaker, I remember that my brothers back then would go to the river to take a “lil duck,” that is what it is called, like a bath, to cleanse themselves; and they would come home and what they would do is they would take a rinse with some fresh water, which, of course, was a scarce commodity back then when the PNM had ruled this country. And you would realize how unhealthy having to bathe in the river is, and, of course, it has to do with waterborne diseases— and it is even worse today.

You know, long ago there was hardly any pipe-borne water, more so in the south and in the central areas. I remember back then, in those days, that they would have what is called a “water police”. I do not know if you remember what the water police were. They would go around to see whether you were wasting water, to see whether you were bathing by the tap, to see whether you were washing your car and that kind of thing. And, they did well back in those days because they assisted the communities, of course, in water conservation. I wish such things can come back today, with regard to the water police.

Whatever water we had as a child growing up, my parents would store in a barrel or in some containers, to be used very cautiously. I am saying so because I know what it is to have very little and to use it wisely. And you would agree that water is a vital part of survival for humanity, as well as sustaining life and the ecosystem. The constraints made domestic life very hard, especially for women, children, and girls, in particular, but that is a story by itself, as it affects women and children.

I could stand here and tell you the intricacies and the effects of the lack of water and what it does to a family. It will certainly amaze you. Not having access to water, where people have to go miles away to collect water, or to bring water from a standpipe, or from a well really adds, social problems to one, and of course it affects our women and it affects our children.

This is where the education comes in with regard to water harvesting. And many of us sitting here today know what water harvesting is, because we have done that in the past. I am saying today, again, and I plead, that we must go out in our constituencies and in our areas, with regard to water harvesting, as we train our people how to collect water and how to harvest.

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I once served in another place similar to this, a place that allows us to understand the daily life of people; who suffer from a lack of pipe-borne water; and after having heard from residents, many complaints of not having that supply of water, it causes you to wonder. Imagine, on a very hot, sticky day without water, a mother would not want to send her child to school with a dirty face, or even not having brushed his or her teeth. When you called WASA back then, when the PNM had ruled this country—I could stand up and say it because it happened to me when I was serving in another house—and you said to them that you do not have water, your village and your community do not have water, they would say to you: “You are on a schedule for the next two weeks”, or they would say to you: “You are on a schedule for Saturday”, or “You are on a schedule for Monday. I just turned the stop cock off from your village or from your district.” And that is very, very frustrating.

This has happened to many rural communities, more so, like I say, in the south and in the central areas. It happened, and it happened very often, under the PNM regime. They had denied the southern and central areas of this commodity for years. They had denied the central and southern areas of this for many, many years. People were virtually living in dark and gloomy days, and I still remember those days. It was like a punishment. It was like a crime inflicted on people. And I say south of the Caroni Bridge, because we suffered and we suffered for water in our pipelines for hours, for days. And you are sitting there hoping that water will come, you have a basket of clothes “pile up” to wash, no water in the pipe. Women have their domestic work to do, no water to take you along as you carry on the day. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No, pipeline. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. N. Khan: No pipeline, much less for a water connection. I saw women and girls having to leave their houses all hours of the day, wee hours of the night having to go to fetch water, like I say, miles away from where they live. That of course, in itself, affects us socially, physically and otherwise. It was as if the PNM did not care anything about people living south and central Trinidad; as if they had no responsibility at all in delivering the basic amenities to people; as if they did not care anything about people in the southern and central areas. Women and girls are affected by the lack of water. It affects women, it affects our children, it affects all of us. You will realize that water is critical for household care and nutritional health as well, and it is generally agreed that the minimum of 20 litres to 40 litres of fresh water is required per person to meet minimum drinking and sanitation needs.

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I could go on and on, on the topic of the lack of water supply and how it affects our daily lives, but I choose not to do so before I become a bit too emotional, when I talk about the effects that it has upon us as women and children.

I had the opportunity to serve on the board of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council that is based in Geneva that deals with sanitation, hygiene, and water for all. And it is alarming to read the statistics related to a lack of water supply in a global fashion.

In the areas where there are no water lines, under the Ministry of Local Government, the regional corporations deliver truck-borne water supply to residents not having a water line. It is done under the Ministry of Local Government. In some areas, we have put up communal tanks, but this in itself has its challenges whereby we must ensure that these tanks are intact, these tanks are safe, and these tanks are locked down for the safety of the people who use water from these communal tanks.

8.20 p.m.

I must confess that there are still some communities and villages that really do not have a pipe-borne supply of water. The People's Partnership recognizes the hardship and the burden placed on citizens in these areas and, as a result, has recently installed the new Navet trunk main and I want to quote from a report by my colleague, Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George:

“...not only have we changed it, but that we have put a dual main with a 32-inch pipe on top and a 36-inch below, running in the same trench...”

This has now brought about a dependable and reliable source and supply of water to consumers in the south and central areas. This has now resulted in many of those smaller communities that I spoke about being able to get a proper supply of pipe-borne water.

Under this Government, many broken lines have been repaired and I want to commend my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, for a job well done. [*Desk thumping*] For example, let us look at the Princes Town area, coming up from Ste. Madeleine. For years, I have been looking at a house in Ste. Madeleine with a broken WASA line just off Corinth Junction, which has been leaking and seeping under, until the people's house collapsed. It broke my heart when I passed one day and I saw that the house had fallen flat. Only there and then, Mr. Speaker, WASA came in and really started repairing those lines.

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Mr. Speaker, providing a proper water supply is not a miracle, it is a necessity. It is a necessity to the people, and that is the proper planning the Prime Minister and the Government of the day recognizes. We ask ourselves the question: What is life without water? Today, we have many Members of Parliament from the southern constituencies sitting in this House who can attest to what I am saying. They too have a story to tell, just as I am telling you here today. Today, the constituency of Princes Town and even my colleagues, the Member for Moruga/Tableland and the Member for Naparima, can boast about a reliable supply of pipe-borne water in our constituencies, and again, I commend our hon. Minister.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to explain. The Order was first made in 1998 by a Minister under section 10 and section 11 of the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act. This rate stands at \$4 per cubic metre which is charged, in addition to the authority's commercial rate of \$3.50 per cubic metre, making it a total of \$7.50 per cubic metre paid by industries in Point Lisas. Since 1993, the commercial rate of \$3.50 has not been increased and, as a result, has put the Water and Sewage Authority at a disadvantage with regard to revenues from commercial and domestic consumers, and now, from the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

Over the last 10 years, the rate that WASA pays to purchase water from Desalcott has moved from US \$.55 per cubic metre to US \$.89 per cubic metre. That means the authority earns \$7.50 per cubic metre for sale of desalinated water. That \$7.50 is comprised of \$4 water improvement rate and \$3.50 commercial rate. Over the years, the increase in the cost of desalinated water has eroded, as my colleague, the Member for Arouca/Maloney, said. The authority's commercial rate with the authority's margin has moved from \$3.98 in percentage terms. The authority's margin has declined from 53 per cent in 2001 from its current level of 23 per cent.

The construction and the commissioning of the desalination plant had indeed made a significant contribution to the authority's supply of water in Point Lisas and, of course, the domestic users in the southern areas; and our southern MPs, as I said, could attest to this. This significant, important role that the desalinated water plays in water production in Trinidad and Tobago cannot be taken for

granted, or even be underestimated in the provision of water security for all. Allow me to read this, Mr. Speaker, which is a quote from my hon. Colleague. The People's Partnership Government proposes to start very soon:

“...the Vistabella trunk sewer rehabilitation...the rehabilitation of waste water treatment plants at Mountain View and Bon Air...a project for the drilling of wells at...Cap-de-Ville...replacement...of the Hollis main in Cunupia...Trinity in Moruga...Point Fortin...Penal...Las Lomas...Hollis and Navet Water treatment plants...”.

The People's Partnership Government understands that water is life and that is why soon to come will be the installation of pipelines in Diego Martin, Cumuto, Biche, Guanapo and Tobago.” All these projects have to do with the improvement of the supply of water to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, as the Minister said earlier in his presentation.

Let me give you the rationale for the increase of the water improvement rate and the expansion of the water improvement area that we are debating today.

- Increase in the purchase price of desalinated water from US \$0.55 per cubic metre to US \$0.89 per cubic metre.
- A resultant erosion of the revenue generation capacity of WASA which is being reduced by approximately 50 per cent.
- Decrease in WASA's revenue margin from 53 per cent in 2001 and 24 per cent in 2011.
- The need for the establishment of other water improvement areas which have risen since 1993.
- Increased yearly revenue of \$100 million based on the sale of water to Point Lisas Industrial Estate.
- Price more effectively aligned to cause increases based on operations and inflation for a more effective maintenance schedule, and a recovery of all rates and charges as a result of expansion of the Point Lisas area to include other critical industries' customers.

You can clearly see and treat with the reasons outlined, and that is why it is necessary for the increased rate.

Mr. Speaker, this decision to increase the rate from \$4.50 to \$8.50 can be viewed in the context of the authority's ability to provide and maintain the level

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of service, and more so to bring about a better result of service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This new rate as proposed will increase the rate by \$4.50 making the water improvement rate a total of \$8.50, and with the added \$3.50 from the country's commercial rate, would result in a total of \$12 being paid by the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. This is a small portion of the proportioned cost of the industry's total cost.

Mr. Speaker, if we do not have an increase in the water improvement rate that is before us today, then the Water and Sewerage Authority stands to lose, as my colleague, the Member for Arouca/Maloney said, approximately \$26 million. But the Member did not say that if they supported us today on this Bill, then we would not lose \$26 million. As it currently exists, as the hon. Minister of Public Utilities said, WASA would be losing revenues. Like I said, water is a gift of God. Water is life and I appeal to my colleagues sitting in front of me here to support us, as we move to approve this Motion that is before us, in the interest of our children and in the interest of the nation. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Joanne Thomas (*St. Ann's East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute my "two bits" towards this Motion.

Mr. Warner: One bit.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Mr. Speaker, firstly, I refer to the Minister's presentation where he beat up on the PNM, but I want to ask: who was the senior public servant in charge at that time? [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Hospedales: Who? Tell us please.

Dr. Browne: When you were there?

Hon. George: Which time?

Miss Hospedales: In 1998.

Mrs. J. Thomas: In the PNM time, who was the senior public servant in charge of the Water and Sewerage Authority?

Hon. George: What period, 2002—2010? [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. J. Thomas: You would not distract me. I want to make my contribution. You have finished making yours. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, one of the things he started to ask and I want to refer him—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Public Utilities, I would like you to take notes. I notice that there is a tendency to be asking questions whilst a Member is

on his or her legs. I want to appeal to hon. Members, especially those who are to speak, to take notes, and at the appropriate time, you will have the chance to speak. I think it is almost bordering on disorder for a Member to be interrupting another Member, particularly when that Member is on his or her legs. So, I would ask Members who have not spoken yet to take notes, and those who have spoken, to observe Standing Order 40(a), (b) and (c) respectively.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the first things the hon. Minister mentioned was that he did send a request to all MPs and, of course, he confirmed having received my political leader's list of requests. I am sure he could also confirm that he did receive mine as well. However, I am still waiting with bated breath.

Mr. Speaker, I heard some of my colleagues, for instance, the Member for Princes Town, talking about "in the PNM time, people were on water schedules", and the different issues, you know, that they have with water. Well then, I am living in her time, because I am going through that right now. [*Desk thumping*] The hon. Minister could confirm—when you call WASA and you ask for a truck-borne supply, you go on the list. So if it is your tank is empty now, you are getting that water in about a week's time. So I could confirm that sometimes I spend \$600 for a private contractor to get water in my tank, as of now. So, I want to tell the Member for Princes Town—as of now—not back in the time that she was talking about.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things I want to refer to is what the Minister said about when my political leader mentioned at the meeting in Febeau Village about how he told the people that the hon. Minister is not giving them any water, and he was saying that the leader was speaking untruth. I was there, and I want to tell the Minister that the people whom the political leader was speaking to are not getting any water, so he was very truthful in his statement to the people in Febeau Village. The hon. Minister is very familiar because he could tell you that that whole surrounding area is where he grew up as a little boy, so he knows the area. He is aware of the problems they are having for water in that Febeau Village in San Juan.

8.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, again I say, he asked who was in government at the time, and again I ask him: who was the PS at the time? I do not know if he is not hearing. Right? When he was giving the rates of course, he made comparison to Egypt and

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these far places. I wonder if he would give the comparison to Egypt in other things; such as—“you see the poverty in Egypt?” I personally went to Egypt on a pilgrimage and I saw it. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Not with taxpayers’ dollars “doh.”

Mrs. J. Thomas: And you know, if we do not look—because you know, as my political leader said—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Which one?

Miss McDonald: There is only one!

Mrs. J. Thomas:—this is all—you are starting with the increase to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. But, I am telling the nationals of this country, today in Parliament what was said, you would see an increase coming for everybody else. [*Desk thumping*] “It coming!”

Miss Hospedales: “Like ah tief in de night!”

Mrs. J. Thomas: Just take note of today. Whether it is a couple of months from now, whether it is two years from now, one year from now, “it coming”. It is like Jesus Christ, “he coming”.

Hon. Member: Oh God!

Hon. Members: What! Ah! Ah! Ah! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: “You know dat for sure?”

Mr. Roberts: Poor Jesus!

Hon. Member: Unnecessary.

Mrs. J. Thomas: I just want to remind the Minister “ah little bit” of the Water and Sewerage Authority and what it is about. You look, for example, at their Mission Statement:

“We shall deliver consistent, reliable, quality water and wastewater services.”

Hon Member: When?

Mrs. J. Thomas: The other one:

“We will achieve sustainable financial self-sufficiency.”

That is in the Mission Statement. And,

“We are a Customer Service Business.”

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Mr. Speaker, if we go a little further and we look at their strategic direction they summarized it in four major goals:

Mr. Sharma: “Read dem out!”

Mrs. J. Thomas:

1. Promote water as a key part of sustainable national development;
2. Address critical development challenges;

My areas are some of those critical areas.

3. Reinforce knowledge sharing and communications;
4. Build a more effective network.

Mr. Sharma: You read very well.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Just permit me to highlight a little more on the authority. I refer to an article in the *Trinidad Express* newspaper dated January 14, 2012, a mere two weeks ago. The headline reads:

“WASA lacking accountability.”

Mr. Speaker, if you would allow me to read from this article. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: What are you reading from, please?

Mrs. J. Thomas: I said it before—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Say it again, please.

Mrs. J. Thomas:—the *Trinidad Express* newspaper dated January 14, 2012.

Mr. Sharma: I heard you. Thank you.

Hon. Member: What page?

Mrs. J. Thomas: Mr. Speaker, maybe de acoustics here need to be fix, many persons not hearing.” [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Miss Hospedales: “Stick break in dey ears, dat is wat happening!”.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “Yes Jo.”

Miss Hospedales: “Stick break in dey ears.”

Hon. Member: Really?

Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to ignore as I am ignoring at times, the crosstalk, and if you concentrate on the Chair, you will never be disturbed. And if you are being disturbed, I will come to your protection. Continue.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It feels good to know that I have you as the one to protect me.

Hon. Members: What? [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: “Yuh is Jesus Christ! Wayyyy! Oh, Lard.”

Mrs. J. Thomas: I just want to read from that article:

“Citizens must look at this situation in the Todd’s Road debacle. There was land slippage as a result of Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) mains leaking for years. Works Minister Jack Warner steps in and scolds WASA. No one is suspended or fired, but this irresponsibility is expected to be corrected. The final insult was WASA’s response that ‘the repairs will be effected in 2012’.

The fact that the road is almost impassable and houses are slipping downhill does not motivate them. Does WASA not have emergency response teams? I guess their focus is currently directed towards wage negotiations.

As long as no one is held responsible for their actions, this country will go nowhere.”

And that is how the article ends.

“We gone back again to an article in the same *Trinidad Express* of July 2010. The headline is:

“WASA woes.” The article starts with:

“The Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) is cash-strapped, Public Utilities Minister Emmanuel George said yesterday.”

Then he said:

““The accounts at the authority for those years reveal that the authority is in a pretty bad financial state. In fact, the balance sheets for those years reveal that the authority continues to be heavily in debt and suffers from poor liquidity.””

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Mr. Speaker, “Yuh kinda see now” and understand where eventually this increase is going to come? It is outlined here very clearly and from the words of the Minister:

“George said”—from the same article—“to make the Government’s promise of delivering water at least twice a week to citizens a reality, money will have to be borrowed to fund this initiative.”

At the end of that article it said:

“‘In the case of all of this, WASA’s supply of water service to people continues to deteriorate...’ ”

I can tell of areas that fall into this category—the same Febeau Village, Sou Sou Lands, St. Ann’s areas, and unlike areas that would have been highlighted here by Members who boast of the good water supply they are getting, like Ramdhanie Trace and, of course, the Member for Couva North spoke highly of how her area is well taken care of. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Hospedales: “Huh, she know her area?”

Hon. Member: She is a very lucky girl.

Miss Ramdial: I know how to lobby.

Mrs. J. Thomas: I want to ask the Minister to give us an update of the situation as of today. The Minister is also aware of some of the serious concerns in my area and he is very familiar with the area, and I am asking him to just give me a little response to some of the issues I would have highlighted to him, as regards water in my constituency.

You look at this increase and I speak of the increase that would rebound on this increase in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and you tell yourself “people in dis place suffering, and people doh know. People suffering. It have people who have no jobs. It have many single-parent homes. Just today, a constituent called, she said: “Miss Thomas, all ah want is, yuh could just geh meh something to cook please? Ah doh bound for no money; just geh me something to cook.” The Member for Princes Town highlighted some of the same issues that I am experiencing even today. And you look at people’s salaries not increasing. Today, I called and I got the inflation rate, it is 10.1 per cent.

Hon. Member: Oh! Oh! Oh!

Hon. Member: Double digit!

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh made dat up!” “Where yuh geh dat from?”
[*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. J. Thomas: I got it from the Central Statistical Office. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Hospedales: Reliable, very reliable source. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. J. Thomas: Do you know what is amazing? [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Yuh talking ’bout 2005.”

Mrs. J. Thomas: The President of PSA signed for the 5 per cent, and what he did not realize he did, he set the limit for other corporate negotiations. So, what you are looking at is a limit has been set by most companies because they are following the Government for the 5 per cent, and we are looking at inflation rate at 10 per cent. Then you are looking at down the road, an increase in water rates. What is really going on? What is happening? Are they seeing what is happening to our people?

Miss Hospedales: “No, dey not seeing. Dey do not care.”

Mrs. J. Thomas: If you look right now, there are two levels of citizens, you know. Previously, you had the upper class, the middle class and the lower class—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “Wat yuh have now?”

Mrs. J. Thomas: Right now is the lower class and the upper class.

Mrs. McIntosh: “Break up de middle class!”

Mrs. J. Thomas: People do not realize—and you come with all these things and then you wonder, okay, you want more money to do certain things but it is not reaching the people. Where is it going?

Miss Hospedales: Good question.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Because, when you think about these things, you really get worked up, you know. Because—[*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Yuh passionate!”

Mrs. J. Thomas: “Yeah, boy.” Could you imagine? [*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Take it easy. Take it easy.

Mrs. J. Thomas: One of the reasons for the state that WASA is in, is because of improper management. We would not talk, because I would not go back to that person who was hired just for the CEO, the ex-CEO. I wonder why he really left? I wonder why the Englishman, Andrew Smith, “yuh could tell us why he really leave? Why he only stay so short ah time? Because nobody doh leave no good job, especially when dey want to make ah contribution.” So why did he leave? That is a question I want answered: why did Mr. Smith leave? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: “We doh have de answer for dat!”

Mrs. J. Thomas: All I want to tell the Minister is fix the management and you will see everything else will fall in place. I want to urge him and, I want him to confirm to me, when I hear him say tonight in answer to our questions, that no increase is coming to the consumers. I want to take note of it tonight, February 03—[*Desk thumping*—so that I could quote for him that he said no increase, and if he confirms that, I thank him and I look forward and I will keep monitoring that.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

8.50 p.m.

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The journey, where we are at this point in time, I just want to tell you, commenced 159 years ago. As a matter of fact, it was in 1853 with the Maraval Waterworks. It was the first organized water system in Trinidad. Fifty years later, in 1903, we had the famous water riots in Port of Spain when they tried to raise the water rates. Mr. Speaker, in 1903, the PNM was not yet conceived. As a matter of fact, our founding father was born some eight years later. [*Laughter*]

In 1962, Trinidad and Tobago became an independent nation and, by September 01, 1965, we had the merger of seven inefficient agencies to form the legal entity called the Water and Sewerage Authority. In the interim, successive PNM governments continued with the whole question of laying water mains.

In 1985, under George Michael Chambers, we established the Caroni Water Treatment Plant at a cost of \$105 million, producing 60 million gallons of water per day, 272,400 cubic metres. That was 1985. By 1998 we had the Water Improvement Rates being laid. In 2000: we had WASA; we had the desalination plant at the cost of \$120 million, with a capacity of 22 million gallons of water or 100,014 cubic metres. That was in 2000.

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Under the PNM, in that interim, the hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid laid the foundation for the desalination plant for Point Fortin that would have improved the quality and quantity of water, not only for La Brea and Point Fortin, but also Siparia and Fyzabad. It was also during that period that the island survey was done that made it possible for this dualling of the South Trunk Water Main. Tonight, in 2012, we have the Water Improvement (2011) Order.

When I heard for the first time about water improvement rates, I thought about three scenarios: [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I beg for your protection. I am being disturbed.

Mr. Speaker: You have my full protection. Members, could you just lower your tone. Members on the Government Bench, will you just lower your tone and allow the Member to speak.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: It is one of three scenarios:

- (1) an improvement in the supply of water;
- (2) an improvement in the quality of water supplied;
- (3) a combination of both.

I surmise that in any one of those three scenarios, those areas hardest hit in my constituency would stand to benefit. I could think about Lot Ten Village. I can think about Bassa Hill in La Brea. I could think about Maximie Street in Cochrane. I could speak about John Charles Trace, Guapo Pool, Parrylands 1 and 2, La Union, Carapal. I can think about all those areas which suffer tremendously for water.

In those areas like Lot Ten, it takes two and three weeks to get a supply of water. God alone knows how these people have been surviving all these years. It is not only a question of that water situation. It has to do also with the quality of the water supply.

Not too long ago, we had the experience of brown water in the Parliament. I want to tell this House that in my constituency that is not the exception, but more or less the rule. I will tell you why. They have to repair broken mains ever so often because of the inferior fittings being used. On my way to Parliament today, they were working on the dual road in La Brea repairing a leak that seems to be repetitive over time. You go across to Santa Flora, opposite the Petrotrin office, there is a leak there and God knows when it will be completed.

More than that, the Member for Chaguanas West will attest to the shoddy work being done by WASA after they do their repairs, and that is often. To

compound the situation, one needs to look at La Brea in terms of when we get the water. When the water does come, it is in the dead of night when most people are asleep. You can imagine, water comes one or two o'clock in the morning, people are asleep. Remember, they would have repaired the mains some time during the day and that muddy water gets into the tank of residents. I challenge anyone to go to the average household in my constituency and check the water tanks and you will see the black muck that you find in those water tanks. That is heart-rending.

More than that, most of the poor children drink water from the tap and God alone knows what goes into their stomachs beside water. This is why we need to take this thing very seriously in terms of what we are going to do about this water situation.

We are not here to apportion blame to anyone because between 1853 and now it was not only the PNM that was around. The UNC had a stint; the NAR had a stint. As a matter of fact, from 1995 to 2001, we heard about "water for all". Did it happen? Did it come close? No, it did not. That is the situation we need to understand.

The repairing of the leaks is a real cause for concern when we look at La Brea. Not too long ago, the Member for Chaguanas West paved the stretch and, if you go back to the stretch now, just a few months later, you will see the number of places where WASA did repairs.

I want to place on record and pay tribute to the many WASA employees who respond positively whenever there is a leak. They work hard, but if they do not get the requisite tools "we in problems".

Mr. Speaker: May I advise hon. Members that dinner has arrived and is available. Members who are desirous of consuming something, you can stream out and come back in. We are not suspending for dinner. I am advising Members who would like to have a bite to do so. Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, the average person in my constituency cannot afford to buy the dispenser and the Blue Waters five gallons that I am able to do. They have to consume the WASA water and it is high time that they get that act cleaned up.

Attempts were being made along that line with the establishment of a desalination plant for Point Fortin, and under the Minister of Public Utilities then, Minister Mustapha Abdul-Hamid, they laid down the mains from Vessigny to Point Fortin. Mains were laid in Sobó. The site was cleared and ready for the

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installation of the desalination plant. As a matter of fact, by November 2010, La Brea, Point Fortin, Fyzabad, Siparia and Oropouche would have had a 24/7 water supply. It meant that people would not have had the problem they are experiencing with this water tank and the black muck they get. This is how the cookie crumbles.

I recognized when I read the Motion that this Motion is about industrial consumers at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and that it will not improve the water supply to my hardest hit areas. I came to that conclusion.

The whole question of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, every time I hear that, I feel so proud of being a Member of the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] They maligned the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and now every time a foreign trade mission comes to Trinidad and Tobago, or they are making an address on any international forum, they talk about the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. [*Desk thumping*] But that is the People's National Movement.

More than that, that Point Lisas Industrial Estate was not located in a PNM stronghold. It could have been done in Point Fortin or La Brea. It went to Point Lisas, in the stronghold of the United National Congress. We did it. Do you know why? That area had the greatest comparative advantage so we put it there. We placed country before party. [*Desk thumping*]

I often ask the question: what is happening now? The Member for Chaguanas West, in talking about PURE—he is a Cabinet Minister and 95 per cent of the work done by PURE was concentrated in Barrackpore, in Penal, in Oropouche and in Siparia. Those are the four areas. All four areas are UNC-led territory.

They are building a UWI campus in Debe, the COSTAATT campus in Carapichaima, the international airport in Couva, the highway from Golconda to Debe—I tell the people in Point do not hold their breath. The highway might not reach Point.

9.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, all those areas are in UNC-controlled territory. Tell me, Mr. Speaker, which party put party before country? Is it not the United National Congress? When we wear our tie with our balisier, they use that to say, "All right, we are about party before country." No! The record shows that we put country before party! [*Desk thumping*] On the other hand, they place constituency or their stronghold before the party. Their record shows that.

Again, when I look at the Motion, I see the title, and that title is indeed very misleading. It is talking about water improvement rates but, Mr. Speaker, it is not

any water improvement rate, it is a hike in the water rate for industrial consumers, but in their usual “PR stunt”, they colour it, and they are saying “water improvement rate”. What has, in fact, happened is that they are raising the rate from \$7.50 per cubic metre to \$12. That is the long and short of it. They have to cover it, do you know why? The big announcement: read my lips, no new taxes. It came to haunt them, Mr. Speaker, and we heard it earlier tonight, a 35 per cent increase in water rate in some areas; that is the stunt of the United National Congress-led party.

Even with that desalination plant, the water rate went up from \$7.50 to \$12, but do you know that many of the industries at Point Lisas have to treat the water they are getting from the desalination plant, because it has deteriorated over the years?

Mr. Speaker, not too long ago, we heard the big announcement at Rienzi Complex. I would like to read it. It is on page 5 of the *Daily Express* dated Thursday, January 26, 2012 by Sue-Ann Wayow:

“The sick, elderly, disabled and poor would no longer have to pay for lights, water and the ferry service to and from Tobago.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, take your chalk, “free electricity, free water”. Take that! Take your chalk, but do not talk about the free ferry. Under the People’s National Movement that was already in place—free bus pass, free water taxi and travel on the inter-island ferry. [*Desk thumping*] So, what is that? Mr. Speaker, that is what makes it problematic with this UNC-led coalition. “Talk the truth and the truth shall set you free.” [*Crosstalk*] I hope you get freed.

Mr. Speaker, in the Waterworks and Water Conservation Act, Chap. 54:41, section 11(1)(c) it says that the Minister has the authority to raise or lower the water improvement rates. Mr. Speaker, yes, they have the authority, but it is not because you have the authority that you should use it anyhow. Why would you want to raise the rate at this point in time when unemployment is rising in this country? Why are you trying to increase the cost of operations of the firms on the industrial estate when, in fact, we have an unemployment situation and increased poverty in this country? Everything should be done to stimulate employment, so maybe lower the rate as a consequence.

Mr. Speaker, we know for a fact that the cost may not be all that much for many of them. For example, in methanol and ammonia, the cost of water as a percentage of the operating cost is about 2 per cent, but in iron and steel, it is the order of 6 per cent, and that is plenty. When you raise the rate from \$7.50 to \$12,

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it goes up further. At this point in time, that could not be right and appropriate. I have seen prices falling on the world market, so what happens if the price falls further? Would it not lead to retrenchment? That timing is very much inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, it seems as though industries on the estate are being punished for being located on the estate. Do you know that Yara consumes about 3 million gallons of water per day? PCS Nitrogen consumes about 5 million gallons of water per day, and they have to pay \$7.50 now and it would go up to \$12, but Petrotrin which is located outside of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and benefits from the desalinated water and consumes 10 million gallons of water per day, they are paying \$3.50. Mr. Speaker, where is the equity? It seems as though they are trying to drive away industries from the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. I want to say tonight—I want to tell those firms on the industrial estate, better days are coming. This UNC-led coalition is a one-term Government, and we shall be back to address that situation. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to say tonight to my people in the La Brea constituency, which runs from Aripéro—where the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre resides to Salazar Trace, and from Quarry to Erin, let us see the promise of a 24/7 water supply with the construction of the desalination plant. We cannot wait for all those leaks to be repaired before we get a 24/7 supply of water. We deserve to get a good water supply.

And so, I pray that the Ben-Dak, Hafeez Karamath and Hoffman scenario does not play itself out with the Point Fortin desalination plant. I cannot understand for what reason, after two years under this UNC-led coalition, we cannot see the completion of the desalination plant in Point Fortin. I cannot see why. That is cause for great concern and great anxiety. We hope that the savings or the reduction in the subsidy that the Government was giving to WASA—the increased water rate for industrial consumers—we trust that benefit will be used to create some more opportunities for CEPEP contractors.

In my constituency, from Santa Flora to Erin, there is no CEPEP contract. I want to tell the Minister of Education, the Member for Caroni East, recently they opened the Palo Seco Government Primary School, and there is no pavement. The sidewalk has very tall grass, and the children have to walk in the road. Over the past week, three children almost got knocked down by vehicles while walking on that road. The blood of these children will stain the hearts forever of this UNC-led coalition, if they refuse to create CEPEP contracts so that they can cut that grass and make it easier and safe for the children to walk.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand, if this is a Government that cares, how it could deny work from a depressed community like La Brea. No CEPEP contract from La Brea to Salazar Trace! Not one, Mr. Speaker! Right now, in many areas, people have to walk in the road. I am saying here now, the day somebody loses his or her life walking on the road as a consequence of that, you would not hear the end of that in this Parliament. We cannot afford to be so vindictive.

I trust as well that the savings derived from what is happening on the industrial estate would not be used for the usual safaris; the usual large excursions with large contingents—spending huge sums of money to Brazil, India, and I hear China “just now”—but use that money to help depressed communities. Aripero does not have a proper recreation ground; they do not have a community centre, so use that money in those areas. It is high time that you stop talking and really and truly start “putting your money where your mouth is”.

I know that the water situation cannot be solved overnight, and it will take a long while. As a matter of fact, at the end of your five-year period, we would see how much you would have accomplished. Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap. The impression is being created that under the People’s National Movement nothing was done in terms of laying down water mains. Nothing could be further from the truth. In every single PNM administration water mains were being laid, maybe not as fast as we would like it to be, but do not give the impression that under the People’s National Movement nothing was being done.

Mr. Speaker, you know, it is not only the Point Lisas Industrial Estate that you could laugh at. I watched them at NAPA; I watched them in the Hyatt; and I watched them in this very building and you could see it, “their conscience chooking dem”! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I hope they would learn from the errors of their ways. You know, “all men have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God”. I hope you all will have time to repent a little for spreading this bad rumour about the PNM not doing anything for this country. Nothing could be further from the truth, nothing!

The money that we used: look at our education programme; look at the results! It could be better yes, but look at what has been happening. Look at what has been happening in terms of GATE and HELP! Look at the number of people now who are accessing tertiary education! This is where the money went.

Mr. Speaker, they tried to create the impression that everything is well and nice, but the people who are members of the COP, I hope they take note tonight,

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because I called out where this UNC-led coalition projects are going. None in the COP areas! Not one in the COP areas! Sometimes I believe that the Member for Chaguanas West is suffering now, because he is a good man. He recognizes today, “You see this thing, this 95 per cent thing going in UNC areas must stop. Let us try to share things even” and, because of that they try to jam Chaguanas West—[*Crosstalk*] Member for Chaguanas West, I want you to know that we have room for you on this side. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

9.20 p.m.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Mr. Speaker, thank you for affording me the opportunity to lend a few statements related to this Motion, the Water Improvement Rate (Variation) Order, 2011 (Point Lisas Industrial Estate). I first want to start by responding to a common theme that they tried to bring across from the Opposition by three of their speakers earlier this evening: They tried to paint a picture and they want to repeat it, time and time again, as though they believe by repeating it all the time—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. McIntosh: Like you all.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—repeating untruths, falsehoods, that the population will buy into it on the issue of corruption. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. McIntosh: “We following example” from you all.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Three of their speakers this evening tried to paint a picture of the People’s Partnership Government into a corner. But, there is no question about it; the People’s Partnership is a government of transparency, accountability and of probity, and no amount of words that you can speak, on the other side, would ever cause this population to feel otherwise about our government. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. McIntosh: “Eh heh?” [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: “Nah.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I will tell you that. You tried to repeat your accusations, and the hypocrisy of it is that the PNM Government, now in Opposition, tries to continue to speak about corruption now. They have no moral authority to speak about corruption. [*Desk thumping*] That is how the people of Trinidad and Tobago removed them. This is one of the main reasons why they

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were removed. And everyone knows, it is not for us to repeat, but when they are trying to paint us into a picture, we have to ensure that we tell the country what they have been through—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Remind them.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And we must remind them of what we had been through. The sins of the People’s National Movement perpetrated against the national community and all the people of Trinidad and Tobago—and you were removed because of your corruption. It goes way back, and I always say that you invented corruption, you perfected corruption, you master-minded corruption. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: It is in their DNA!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, it is in your DNA.

Miss McDonald: Point of Order, Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), imputing improper motives. We “invented,” “perfected,” what? And it is in our DNA?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Miss McDonald: Please!

Mr. Speaker: Member for Caroni East, I just want to indicate that when we attribute to the Members of the Opposition that kind of, let us say, overall cover, it could imply that all Members on that side are part of that exercise. So, I would like you to be very careful in what you are saying. Okay? Thank you.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I speak about successive administrations—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No, do not say that.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: —or successive regimes and their predecessors. It started with Lock Joint and then in the 1970s, the O’Halloran and Bury Ou Wai, and then the 1980s with the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, the Twin Towers, the Hall of Justice, and so on,—[*Interruption*—but I would talk about the previous administration, your previous regime. What about UDeCott, when your own Member of Parliament, the Member for Diego Martin West, was thrown out unceremoniously from being a Minister of Government because of the fact that he was speaking about the corruption in UDeCott? And he lost his ministerial portfolio. So you do not have any authority to come and speak about anything

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about that issue, whatsoever. You know UDeCott with Calder Hart, billions of dollars were spent by UDeCott and where is Calder Hart? He had to flee this country.

University of Trinidad and Tobago, which was a private company, spent billions of dollars as a private company, not answering to the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago, including eTeck. What about T&TEC? Ramlal had to leave the country because of massive corruption with T&TEC which has been unfolded by our Government at this moment. EMBD, over \$1.2 billion in corruption and Rao had to leave this country. We understand that a private jet had been bought for him to go out of the country.

Then the Scarborough Hospital which was supposed to have cost \$200 million now costs \$1.3 billion. NAPA, which was supposed to cost \$600 million now costs \$1.2 billion. The Waterfront project, which was supposed to have cost \$1.2 billion now costs \$4 billion. The Chancery Lane project which was supposed to have cost \$200 million cost nearly \$800 million. Then Nidco; there was no board at Nidco and Nidco bought the MVSu. The Oncology Centre, \$100 million spent and nothing is there only grass growing. The Brian Lara Stadium was supposed to have cost \$250 million. It cost \$1.2 billion and still counting. And they want to come now and speak about issues related to Desalcott.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Many of the people in Trinidad and Tobago would remember that PNM never wanted, and they spoke adversely all the time about Desalcott and we should not have a desalination plant—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members and Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West—

Mrs. McIntosh: “heh!”

Hon. Member: What is this!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is this the way we speak to the Chair, Madam?

Hon. Member: Apologize.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Listen! Listen! When you are speaking, you have the full protection of the Chair. Allow the Member for Caroni East to speak in silence, please. Standing Order 40(a)(b)(c).

Hon. Member: She must apologize.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Continue, Member.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a former principal, saying “eh” when the Deputy Speaker speaks to her, that is insulting.

Hon. Member: Insulting!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Insulting to the Chair. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that previous regime, in the early 2000s, spoke adversely against bringing a desalination plant in Trinidad and Tobago. There were huge cries: they did not want a desalination plant, there is corruption in the desalination plant, and so on, today, just about a year ago before they lost the election, the former Prime Minister said that he was going to bring five desalination plants. The same person and the same regime which was speaking but not wanting the desalination plant, they wanted to bring five at the end of it, almost—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: We brought it.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Well, before they demitted office. Five! And here it is today, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, also recommending more desalination plants. She said: “Bring out more desalination plants, but bring them on from using Chinese technology.” So, they are speaking in one voice there and they are speaking with another tongue here, confused. They do not know what they want.

Dr. Griffith: Bring water but no chlorine.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And they speak about bid-rigging—that is their watchword—between Ganga Singh, Karamath and the desalination thing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are speaking about Karamath. [*Crosstalk*] Let us go back to the Uff Commission of Enquiry. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “I ent business then.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You still continue to disturb me, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West. Please.

Dr. Moonilal: A former principal?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: A former principal?

Dr. Ramadharsingh: You should conduct yourself.

Hon. Member: Having little problems.

Mrs. McIntosh: I can do your job.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, if you need to have dinner, it is being served in the Members' Dining Room. If you are desirous of partaking, please do, but allow the Member for Caroni East to speak in silence, please. Continue, Member.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, they speak about bid-rigging. They said Powergen did not have an opportunity to bid. Now, we must cast our minds back, some of us who have some memory. You all were not here then. Powergen was taken from nowhere, under the PNM administration by the then Minister of Public Utilities, Kenneth Valley. T&TEC was generating a profit, they were generating electricity and they were distributing the electricity. Suddenly, Powergen came on the scene. They gave 51 per cent of T&TEC to Powergen. Powergen began to generate the electricity and in the first year of Powergen coming on stream, they made \$200 million profit and T&TEC lost \$100 million.

That is the same Powergen that the Member for Diego Martin West was speaking about today; that Powergen was not allowed to participate in the bidding, the same Powergen that they brought in. Do you know why he is speaking about Powergen? Because they have links with the Powergen company. You have to ask why it is that Powergen suddenly came on stream in the 1990s, when T&TEC only needed a few generators to come on board and do a bit of infrastructure work, but it divested 51 per cent to Powergen for little or nothing, and they want to talk about bid-rigging.

They were the same PNM who sold off 25 per cent of BWIA for US \$10 million to Ed Acker. So, in other words, they believed that BWIA, at that time, was only worth US \$40 million. They sold it off for US \$25 million to Ed Acker.

Mr. Sharma: Ten million.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They sold it for US \$10 million to Ed Acker. Where was that procurement? Where was that bidding? And they want to speak about bid-rigging today?

Mr. Indarsingh: Tell them about the Severn Trent deal.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And when the UNC administration came on board in 1995, they had to negotiate with Severn Trent because PNM had signed a contract between 1991 and 1995 with Severn Trent. Let us just educate you all across there and remind you all that there was a \$500 million contract with Severn Trent in 1995. Do you know what \$500 million was then in 1995? Seventeen years ago PNM had a contract with Severn Trent. Do you know how much

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negotiation had to take place with the UNC Government and Severn Trent to get out of that crooked deal? They talk about bid-rigging, and they talk about Powergen? Shame on them! Hypocrisy!

Today, they are the same PNM Government that spent \$1.5 billion in restructuring BWIA, to change it from BWIA to Caribbean Airlines or whatever, and just paint a picture of a bird at the back of the airplane.

Dr. Khan: They gave away the London route.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And they gave away the London route for \$500 million. They are selling a landing right in Heathrow for over £100 million. You cannot get a landing right at Heathrow for less than £100 million. And they gave away two berths, two landing sites at Heathrow. The same PNM, and they had common people inside there.

Hon. Member: Thieves!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It is not for me to call their names, related to that now. But, in another issue, I will call their names and many of my colleagues would know. The hypocrisy of that government restructuring \$1.5 billion and want to come and accuse this Government about a \$900,000 aircraft.

This Government had nothing to do with it. The police service is an independent body that is supposed to deal with their own finances. The Government has no authority over the police in that manner. The police operates their financial transactions in their own way. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$1.5 billion they did for restructuring at BWIA and have hypocrisy to talk about a \$900,000 aircraft. What a shame and disgrace.

Hon. Member: Shame on them!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Shame! And a \$400,000 car. So, here it is they want to be talking about \$900,000 and a \$400,000 car, and the country told them that they misspent, and corruptly misspent—more than \$30 billion over a 10-year period. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thirty billion dollars.

Hon. Member: More than that.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And they talk about Ben-Dak, Hoffman, Ganga Singh and Karamath.

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They had nine years to do the prosecution, 2001—2010? Who did they prosecute? Because there was nothing there, so all this “ol’ talk” here this evening is a whole heap of fluff, and trying to paint a picture of the UNC Government—the People’s Partnership Government—in something. A whole heap of fluff. [Crosstalk] Nine years they had to do something and as the Minister of Housing—[Interruption]

9.35 p.m.

Miss McDonald: Point of order, please.

Mr. Sharma: What point of order?

Miss McDonald: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 36(1): relevance. [Interruption] He and his long list of corruption—[Interruption]—relate it to the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Deputy Speaker is on his legs. Hon. Member, just bridge your debate and try and keep within the purview of the Motion before us.

Before you continue, especially the Member for Arouca/Maloney, the Hansard is having a serious difficulty in recording what is being said by the Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Roberts: A round of applause for the Hansard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So please, let us adhere to Sanding Order 40(a), (b) and (c). Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, during this evening’s proceedings and contributions by the other side, you must have heard “Ben-Dak” and “Hoffman” at least 50 times [Interruption] I do not know whether it is Ben Hacker, Ben-Dak, Ben Whom, Ben Hur, Ben Johnson or whatever, I was hearing “Ben-Dak” all the time, so I am responding to that; Ben-Dak and Hoffman. [Interruption]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: If Wade Mark was in the Chair—

Mr. Roberts: Prophet Benjamin.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: For nine years you could not do anything about it, but now you are coming today to talk about what was done then. As the Member for Oropouche East indicated earlier on, the United States government found

absolutely nothing to cause an extradition of Hoffman back to Trinidad to be tried. There was nothing. So where are they going, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Let us go back to WASA. You asked me to come back to WASA.

WASA was the organization or the company which the previous Prime Minister spoke about as the biggest headache that he ever had, a \$28-billion headache, with total mismanagement inside there. And you know what? The day he decided to bring a team to help WASA, and they brought a distinguished gentleman, in Mr. Sultan Khan. When he went into WASA, within two weeks he said that it was the biggest mismanaged area that he had ever seen, and one of the most corrupt areas. Their own people went into WASA and said so, and their own Prime Minister said that WASA was a big \$28-billion headache.

Hon. Member: And Errol Grimes was there?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And you know who was there then?

Mr. Indarsingh: Tell us.

Dr. Griffith: Dr. Lenny Saith was there before Errol Grimes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes. Their Minister then, Dr. Lenny Saith, agreed at that time with what was being said.

Here it is an organization in widespread mismanagement, massive corruption, and they had nine years. [*Crosstalk*] Let me say what we found when we came into Government, the financial situation of WASA. Mr. Manning said it was a \$28-billion headache. Do you know how much this Government met owing by WASA, in terms of guarantees by WASA? A whole heap of banks lend money to WASA over a period of time: First Citizens, \$55 million; Republic Bank, \$50 million; Republic Finance and Merchant \$99 million; RBTT Merchant Bank \$354 million; Republic Finance and Merchant Bank, \$403 million; Citicorp, \$471 million; Republic Finance and Merchant Bank \$500 million; Central Bank, \$432 million. \$3.938 billion this Government met when we took over WASA. Mr. Speaker, \$3.9 billion in guarantees and letters of comfort, \$1.437 billion to Republic Bank and RBTT.

Mr. Speaker, that was the scenario that the People's Partnership Government [*Crosstalk*] and the Minister of Public Utilities met when he became the Minister responsible for WASA; more than nearly \$5 billion in debt, and a workforce of almost 4,800 people, with 48 per cent of the expenditure going into salaries and wages. How can he continue to run WASA with that type of predicament, nearly

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\$5 billion in debt, and an organization that was losing before we came on—\$1.4 billion? It is a nightmare. WASA was a nightmare for nine years they allowed it to just go downhill.

Mr. Indarsingh: Deteriorate.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Deteriorate. This is an Opposition now wanting to speak about Mr. Ganga Singh appointed without a board as CEO. [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Let us go back to Errol Grimes. When Errol Grimes was appointed he was number nine on the list of people who were interviewed, and they pushed him up to number one.

Mr. Indarsingh: From 15 to 1.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And they gave him a salary of about \$110,000 per month.

Hon. Member: Wow!

Mr. Indarsingh: Scandalous!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: When “de mark buss” that he was receiving about \$110,000 a month, [*Crosstalk*] they began to look to see what part of the Act they flouted, and then they reduced it to \$80,000 per month. That did not even include the type of car he was driving.

Mr. Indarsingh: What was he driving?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I think it was either an Audi or BMW. Then that regime went on a spree in paying all their CEOs over \$100,000 per month in salaries. Malcolm Jones from Petrotrin was working for over \$120,000 per month.

Mr. Indarsingh: How much did he spend to spruce up the camp in Palo Seco?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That was what was going on, and they have the temerity to talk about Ganga Singh was appointed when there was not a board.

Mr. Speaker, when *MV Su* was bought by Nidco [*Interruption*]—

Hon. Member: We reach.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: [*Interruption*] [*Inaudible*] Ask the Minister of Works at that time—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: How did they get the name of the boat?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The name of the boat *Su*.

Mr. Sharma: How did they get that? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: Not sure.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That *MV Su* was bought for \$60 million. The Member for Chaguanas West speaks about it all the time. A shame and disgrace, and they want to speak about things being done without a board being appointed.

I want to go on to the next point about procurement. That seems to be another theme across there this evening, as started by the Member for Diego Martin West, and then it was spread as he spoke about the rapid rail and the light rail. I want to refer to an article today from the *Guardian*:

“Rowley: ball now in government court on procurement bill”

Our Prime Minister, the distinguished hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, promised on the platform in the run up to the elections when about 440,000 people voted for us, she promised that in the first 30 days of Government she would lay a draft legislative proposal on procurement, and that she did, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Well done.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Shortly after the discussions about legislative proposals and the Tenders Board Act, a joint select committee was formed— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “All yuh take 10 years. In 10 years you didn’t do it.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: —of Members from the other side, Members from our side and Independent Members. They were talking about procurement since 2001. They had a Green Paper, and in 2006 they came with a white paper [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*] it looked as though that White Paper turned black or it disappeared.

Mr. Roberts: They gave it to Calder Hart.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They showed it to Calder Hart, and he said, “We must not go with that”, and then they began to make excuses that they would re-look at the whole procurement. They had nine years to bring a Procurement Bill. Our Prime Minister said we would bring it on in 30 days, and we brought it in 30 days. Then the joint select committee met. The former Minister, the Member for

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Diego Martin North/East, the Member for Diego Martin West, Sen. Al-Rawi and Independent Members were on that committee, and we met at least about 15 times.

That whole Procurement Bill is so wide: You have close to 100 state enterprises, you have 15 special purpose companies, and you have to decide whether you want a centralized, decentralized or a hybrid model of the Procurement Bill. We worked non-stop in the last few months before we closed off Parliament. We had almost seven meetings in about a three-month period to conclude this Bill. We had reached a stage that we were close to a legislative proposal and a draft bill that was done by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. It is there for everyone to see.

To our surprise now, the Member for Diego Martin West says,

“‘The Government is moving with indecent haste to award a number of huge multi-million contracts ahead of the enactment of new procurement legislation.’ He said he was referring ‘specifically to the Invaders Bay Land Development Project and the more recently announced Rapid Rail Project.’”

We did not announce a Rapid Rail Project. We announced an intention to request for proposals on a light rail.

Hon. Member: So what is that?

Miss Hospedales: What is that?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: There is a big difference. Request for proposals means an invitation to propose what you think you might be able to do. [*Crosstalk*] It is an invitation. It is not going with a firm and saying that you are doing a pre-feasibility study, and spending \$545 million of taxpayers’ money in a pre-feasibility study—what you call phase 1 of the Rapid Rail.

Miss Hospedales: They were going to implement that?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That was \$545 million. [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*] It was a proposal, an invitation to make a proposal. They were going through people’s agricultural lands all over central Trinidad and they were going to destroy families, temples, mandirs [*Crosstalk*] a pre-feasibility \$545 million study [*Interruption*] and total destruction. If this proposal goes through, there is no question of disturbing anybody’s agricultural land from Port of Spain, along the East-West Corridor to the east. When they talk about light rail and they want to equate it with rapid rail, there is no equation in that. Absolutely not! [*Crosstalk*]

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I just want to read;

“Rowley said: That the Opposition’s protest was ‘aimed at highlighting the deceit of the Government in this matter of procurement and calls on citizens to be vigilant and vocal with respect to these and similar developments.’”

He was a Member of the procurement committee. Suddenly he wants to jump out, as Minister Dr. Moonilal said, and finds himself flipping, and he goes into—what is it at the side of the boat?

Dr. Griffith: A life boat.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: A life boat. So he just wants to flip out, but the fourth estate is on him now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The media is on him.

I want to read from today’s *Express* in the opinion column:

“PNM procurement pull-out unwise”.

Miss Hospedales: That is an opinion.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It says:

“During its own multi-billion-dollar procurement period in government, the PNM had failed to advance legislation toward adequate oversight of public funds. Now in Opposition, the party may be perceived as undermining, if not sabotaging multi-party efforts to fix what is widely recognized as a problem that has festered for far too long.”

Nine years under PNM that problem festered.

“The PNM’s position is particularly invidious since the Opposition, through representation on the JSC, is in a position at least to contribute toward the shaping of improved and enlightened procurement arrangements.”

And they dropped out of it.

9.50 p.m.

I understand that there is conflict between the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Diego Martin West on this issue, so there it is they have divisions already on this issue. [*Interruption*] Hear what the editorial said as well:

“The strategy is also poor politics”—that strategy of them to jump out—“in the non-Machiavellian sense of that term, since politics is about negotiation, compromise, and influence.”

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This is why the joint committee was set up for negotiation, compromise and influence of their side towards the Government, so they have abdicated the responsibility, and therefore, they have no moral authority to speak about anything on procurement whatsoever. [*Interruption*]

They probably do not want any Bill to come because they feel that they could win an election, which they would never see for another 20 years. So, they feel if they win an election they would have no legislation to govern their whole aspect about procurement whatsoever, so that is why they jump out of it. They have the intention because they want to continue to make another \$30 billion in corruption for procurement.

Hear what it says:

“Moreover, coming from Dr. Rowley, who fell out with former prime minister Patrick Manning specifically because he questioned the procurement powers of one Calder Hart, the decision seems to reflect the standard double standard of politicians who act one way in Government and the opposite when in Opposition.

The PNM caucus has now invited justified criticism, which may reflect badly on its past, its present, and damage its future. As Political Leader, Dr Rowley needs to consider this possibility.”

So let them go ahead, let them jump out of it, they are damaging themselves.

Hon. Member: Same way he jumped out of the Balisier tie.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The same way he jumped out of the Balisier ties, the same way he is jumping out of this procurement. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to touch on one or two other points: this whole question of taxes. They are equating this increase in the water improvement rate as a tax. The People’s Partnership Government promised no tax, no increase in taxes. We did not increase income tax; we did not increase any land and property tax. We have not increased any taxes whatsoever. So let us repeat it: the People’s Partnership Government has not increased any taxes since we have come into office for the last 20 months. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] She is equating this water improvement rate to tax.

I want to just deal with the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West a bit—

Mr. Sharma: “Doh waste time nah.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—creating national hysteria, asking for a commission of enquiry into the iodine, chlorine, aluminium and so on in the water. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems as though for the last 44 years of the PNM regime they were poisoning the population, because we had the same iodine, chlorine and aluminium in the water all the time.

Mr. Roberts: And they want smelter.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So on the one hand, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West does not want aluminium sulphate in the water, and the Member for La Brea wants the smelter, same aluminium. So, you see the confusion that exists in the minds on that side? That is why they have a leader down there and they have another leader on this side. [*Interruption*]

One Member said we were trying to poison the population and creating national hysteria. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Health will tell you, iodine is necessary for growth and development because it is absorbed in the thyroid gland and allows the thyroid to function. Iodine in water allows proper functioning for the thyroid gland—chlorine now, sodium hydrochloride is a bleaching agent, it gets rid of germs and bacteria and sterilizes. [*Interruption*] Mothers who have their little babies, they use chloride tablets for sterilizing the bottles for bottle-feeding.

What madness has gripped the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West? You know a little learning is a dangerous thing. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] The Member goes and finds some Google article and comes to expound on it in the Parliament—

Hon. Member: And explicate. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—and expatiate, and say that chlorine, iodine, aluminium sulphate and so on are poisoning the population and causing teratogenic effects and causing cancer. My God!

Mr. Sharma: What dangerous and foolish talk.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I would not echo what my colleague said, but let me say it is dangerous and foolish. [*Laughter*] Then she goes into this hypothetical and highfalutin thing about ozone desalination. Ozone is a gas you could scarcely find and you could scarcely get it out of the atmosphere. There is ozone depletion around the world now, this is why we—[*Interruption*]

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I do not know, something is wrong—[*Interruption*—we do not know whether she has any shares in the bottled water company now, so we would have to look at that, whether she is making a plug for bottled water. [*Laughter*] So, I had to clear that up. There is no question about it. It all depends on the concentrations of these things in the water and WASA obviously has their quality control mechanisms where they check the concentration of these in the water, so this is no question of any type of poisoning whatsoever.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to sincerely congratulate the hon. Minister of Public Utilities. [*Desk thumping*] This documentation, which other members have spoken about and said that everything is concentrated in south, in Penal and Siparia, you see the type of mass hysteria and wrong information they want to portray; misinformation and divisiveness that they want to perpetuate in the population amongst the people. [*Interruption*] The Minister has completed WASA projects 2010/2011 and all over the country he has projects. Eighty-six projects were done. He laid almost 43,000 metres of four-inch water lines and almost 8,000 households received the benefit throughout the country, and you know what, just at the meagre cost of \$30 million. That is transparency, that is accountability; more than 43,000 metres of water lines. Do you know where: Chaguanas East, Tobago West, Tobago East, Diego Martin Central, Arima, Princes Town North, Couva North, Naparima, Chaguanas East, Couva South, Tobago West—

Mr. Sharma: “Tim” take it down; you said that already.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Right, good. [*Laughter*] Now, we want to reemphasize it. We want to reemphasize it. [*Interruption*] Because they are saying that it is only in Siparia and Penal that he laid water lines. Total myth and fallacy!

One other point, a point that probably was mentioned by Minister Dr. Moonilal—this Minister in less than nine months ran a Navet Trunk Main from the Navet Dam for \$119 million which was estimated to cost \$305 million, and which the estimated time was supposed to be three years, he ran it in nine months with in-house labour. He saved \$186 million and over 300,000 people benefited from this. That is the work of the Minister of Public Utilities and the People’s Partnership Government. Repairs were done to the Caroni Arena Water Treatment Facility. No repairs had been done to that for 10 years. [*Interruption*] He did repairs, he is now able to ensure that it can produce at least 80 million gallons of water per day because of the work that they did on the treatment plant.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Member for Diego Martin West says that for 21 years he has been a Member of this Parliament and he had some situation

in Tobago and he was not able to get water and suddenly he got water, it is because the Minister of Public Utilities was able to make sure that area was provided with water as so many other areas that we have seen. He also admitted that for 10 years he was waiting for water to go up the hill to his home and eventually he began to get the water. He admitted that he was now getting water and who was providing the water, under the People's Partnership Government. You know what he ended up by saying, that we should do everything to try and extract more fresh water rather than going in desalination plants.

So, on one hand they are saying we want five desalination plants, another one is saying, we want desalination plant with technology from China, the other one is saying that, for certain they want more desalination plants, and now the Member for Diego Martin West is talking about extracting more fresh water. So, for nine years they did not do anything to the Navet Dam which provides 15 million gallons of water per day, they did not do anything to the Caroni Arena Treatment Project which produces about 80 million gallons per day and the desalination plant, which now produces close to 30 million gallons per day—who was responsible for that? For bringing everything back on stream and making sure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago get the water, it is our Minister of Public Utilities.

Mr. Sharma: Call that George. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to end by congratulating the hon. Minister and congratulating our People's Partnership Government for taking care of all of our citizens and trying to ensure that we improve the quality of life and well-being of all our citizens.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is late at night and I probably would like to respond just by recapping what my colleagues have said but in point form. [*Interruption*] But in point form; you could call it what you want.

Before that I just want to refer to the introduction by the Member for Caroni East, when he sought to refer to his Government as a Government of transparency and accountability, and he kept using the words “moral authority”. I would just, Mr. Deputy Speaker—if you would allow me to ask the Member if there is any moral authority concerning the bid-rigging and the Desalcott plant? [*Desk thumping*] Ben- Dak and Hoffman, any moral authority there?

Miss Hospedales: Tell us.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: The TDC paving around dead dogs, any moral authority there? The dog rice issue, any moral authority there? The airport scandal, the NP scandal, the national security model plane scandal, the Reshmi affair, the OPVs contract, the extradition issues, any moral authority there, Member for Caroni East? You should be ashamed of yourself. [*Desk thumping*] That is a short list of corruption issues surrounding your UNC Government.

But I would go directly into the Water Improvement Rate Order. This is why we are here. On the face of it, it appears to be a straightforward and simple Order, but nothing concerning WASA could be quite straightforward and simple because we are all aware of the horrors of WASA. You were in Government earlier, the NAR was there, the PNM was there, and we have all had our difficulties with WASA. Quite simply, this is just about increasing the water improvement rate from \$4 to \$8.50 which amounts to—we said it—a rate of more than 100 per cent and it is that the current rate which applies to the business community is \$7.50 and that is split between the \$3.50 commercial rate and the \$4 water improvement rate. So, what we have when you put it all together is an increase from \$7.50 for the full rate for the business community to \$12, and that amounts to more than 60 per cent, and my colleagues spoke to that.

10.05 p.m.

But I just need to have one thing cleared up. Everyone seems to be talking about the Point Lisas Estate getting its water supply from the desal plant. I want to clear up that that is not so. The Point Lisas Estate gets its water supplies from WASA. It is not the desal plant at all; it is WASA. In other words, the desal plant water goes towards WASA and then water is distributed there from WASA, but we know that it is not to Point Lisas at all, and the Minister will clarify that when he is winding up.

In fact, it goes to a number of commercial houses as well. As a matter of fact, it goes to Petrotrin. It goes to, I believe, the shortfall with regard to private users as well. So the Minister will speak about that, but I will still have to address it again under the whole question of justification. But it is definitely not Point Lisas alone, and, Minister, I really need some clarification, because then the big question will be, why is this rate being passed on to Point Lisas alone?

That is something that you would need to address. This, as it is, would amount to a terrible injustice to the business community in the Point Lisas Estate. In fact, it amounts to inequitable treatment, I would say, and as you would know, when

you are speaking of inequitable treatment, our Constitution deals with that issue, and this whole question of inequity runs afoul of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Minister, I want your clarification on that. It is definitely not to the Point Lisas Estate alone. And I am asking, as well, hon. Minister, what about the FCB Bank that is housed on the estate? You gave the parameters as well; and, of course, the KFCs, and all those kinds of things. You are shaking your head, but you could answer to me whether or not this rate is also going to apply to Petrotrin, because as far as I know, this is also a source of water for Petrotrin and Petrotrin does, in fact, use quite an amount of water.

The whole question of justification was raised by several people. Indeed, when the Order was first granted sometime in 1998—in fact, the rate was first granted in 1998—yes, there were justifications given, and if I go back to the *Hansard* of that time, it speaks to urgent development works being required, pinpointing priority works; the development of new wells in Las Lomas area supplied to farmlands and the reinforcement of the local infrastructure at the Point Lisas Estate. It also spoke of the expansion of the Caroni Water Treatment Plant and also other associated works.

But the whole problem here is, we do not see the justification on this occasion. All that we are being faced with is a rate and I do not know from which hat or from whence that rate came. [*Desk thumping*] But the fact about it is, there appears to be no real justification. As a matter of fact, the Minister will be required to detail for us what new projects are being considered to improve or to secure the water supply for the Point Lisas area. He is going to have to detail those for us. He says I was not listening, but I do not think the public has heard it either. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West raised it and you are going to have to give us the justification for that rate.

I know you are going to talk about the fact that WASA has experienced a \$26 million loss for the year 2011 over the price increase, and I will deal with that under the whole question of subsidies because that amounts to a subsidy, and I agree with you that, in fact, business houses cannot be made to enjoy a subsidy from WASA. But I will come to that.

But the whole point I am making here, hon. Minister, through the Deputy Speaker, is that there is absolutely no justification, and you do not appear to have listed these. But on that matter you did, in fact, mention something about the dualling of the Caroni South Trunk Main, or something like that. Yes, you spoke

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about the dualling of the Caroni South Trunk Main, but you said that you were considering it, and you had not mentioned anything like that in the budget. The Minister of Finance had not mentioned any allocation of funds for any dualling of any Caroni South Trunk Main, so I do not see that that is any supporting evidence of justification of work to be done for the benefit of the businesses in the Point Lisas Estate.

You said, “considering” and, as I said, there is no money approved for it, and you all are in the habit of listing projects, turning the sod and so on and then no money has been allocated. We know that only too well with the highway to Point Fortin and a number of other projects. That is just the way you all seem to operate. You said, “consideration”; you did not say that you were actually doing it.

But I still have an issue, as well—and some people did raise it—with how you arrived at the rate in terms of the cost and revenue situation. I do recognize the need to match revenue with cost, but the only way I can see you being able to do that is when WASA is, in fact, able to deliver at a particular standard, Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thus far, WASA is not able to do that.

You also then—when the rate was formed, there was a proper rate-setting methodology and a firm, the London Economics Firm, a UK-based firm, was employed to look at the whole question of rates and the fixing of the rate. So there is a method in coming up with this, and it was based on the Long-Run Average Incremental Cost Methodology. But as it is, again, I do not understand and I do not think any Members on this side understand. I do not even think your people do, certainly the public. I do not think we have an understanding of the rate-setting methodology which you utilized in coming up with this increase of \$4. I think it is \$4?

Miss Hospedales: Eight dollars and fifty cents.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, it is a particular increase for the—it is not \$8.50; \$4.50, I think it is.

Again, I have a question about the methodology utilized. I do not believe that the Minister had also addressed the question of the impact of the proposed rates. He seemed to talk about consultation; that there was some consultation with the business people in the Point Lisas Estate, and I know that there are several large business houses there, and I know that there are several profit centres there as

well, and I am certain that the Chief executive Officers and Presidents do see the need, after not having a rate increase for so many years; I am certain that they do see the need for an increase.

But the difficulty with that is that it is a rather big jump, and you keep speaking at the point of a .1 per cent or a 1 per cent increase and the fact that it is trivialized—it does not amount to anything, but in terms of billions of dollars and so on, 1 per cent or any fraction thereof, amounts to a considerable amount of funds, and you are talking about loss of profitability here.

So I do not wish that you should be trivializing something like that, especially, as well, we know for a fact that the Regulated Industries Commission is, in fact, looking at rates right across the board right now, and you could correct me if I am wrong. So, therefore, they too are looking at the commercial rate at well. So it means that these business people, in addition to this new water improvement rate, they too can expect to be faced with another rate when the RIC, in fact, comes up with their new rates across the board. The point is there; they are looking at rates.

So that is another measure of concern. Also, you probably did not take into account that the water quality that is coming from the desal plant is very, very poor and it is not even fit for industrial processes. So that I am aware that all these businesses also have to spend some considerable sums when they receive the money to, in fact, get it ready for the standard that they wish for industrial processing.

So all those considerations—and I know that you have said that there was some level of consultation, but it has come to my attention that it was never finalized. There was discussion; there was some level of understanding by the CEOs, but I do not think that they were happy with the significant increase which you were placing at that particular time—that you were proposing and, in fact, it would have been better if some sort of incremental approach was used. But there seemed to be some rush and need for this large amount.

I understand, in some measure, but you know—based on the contribution by the Leader of the Opposition—I wonder in fact, really, what is this about and who is really benefiting from this rate and where did this rate come from and what was the justification and the methodology behind it. All of those questions are passing through our minds.

But I am saying that there was no real consultation, I would say, where all parties had reached an amicable position or had reached a position where there was some measure of understanding that, “Okay, we are going with that.” As a

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matter of fact, I know that they are so displeased with the questions that arise over the water supply for the businesses, that the business community there is also looking at a desalination plant of their own, and you could correct me on that as well.

But you seemed not to have taken any consideration in terms of the implications of the financial crisis that we are in. You just seem to think that all these companies are profitable. Methanol prices may be high now, but there is absolutely no guarantee that methanol prices would be sustained, and we know of the history when these prices have dropped significantly, and at that time these expenses are going to be there; they are going to have to be dealt with and you do not seem to have addressed the reality of doing business, and, of course, all of the price modifications that are expected with commodities and so on.

This whole question of competitiveness, you have not addressed. I do not understand the approach of your Government because, on the one hand, you seem to be so pro-business. It is always about jetting around and encouraging business in Australia and India and so on—pro-business on one hand, but on the other hand, you really are not listening and you have just slapped a considerable increase on the business community there, and that is very, very shameful. You really have not been concerned about the competitiveness and these businesses being market-ready.

I am agreeing with you that there was, in fact, some form of a subsidy for 2011 and, indeed, WASA really should not be made to cushion the expenses for large businesses, which by and large are profitable. So I do understand that in some sense, but it is a subsidy and, generally, I notice that—and my colleagues had raised it—that you have been looking at your subsidies now. I believe, generally, there is a bold move to start reducing subsidies. The Leader of the Opposition did, himself, speak about a 35 per cent increase in his rate which he had borne, supposedly on the basis of improvements being done to the service.

So that is where you start. And I am all for the reduction of subsidies. I had spoken about it in my contribution on the budget, on the Appropriation Bill. I am all for it, but somehow this approach in the dark that you all are taking is not an acceptable one. I believe that if you are going to do it at all, you must come to the public; you must be transparent. It requires a whole government approach, not this kind of sneakiness and so on. What I expect is that there will be consultation with academics, businesses, and that kind of thing, and that is not what this Government is seeking to do.

As a matter of fact, there is another thing that you are doing, and it is that you are claiming rates for the last 20 years, and nothing is wrong with that. If sums are owed and so on, businesses must be required to clear those sums, but you are talking about the period of 20 years, and I do not know if you all are aware but there is a statutory limitation for a period of six years and the RIC is, in fact, talking about one year.

So the population needs to be warned that they need to get legal advice on the collection of these outstanding amounts because there is no way that you can defy the statutory limit of six years, and that really would amount to an illegal recovery by WASA of rates beyond the statutory period. Again, this is information that has come to us and, again, this is the way you choose to operate by hiding in the dark and then approaching the public without them even knowing it, in a sort of a stealthy approach to doing things. But, I recognize this is what is coming out from this Government now. The population can expect all these increases in taxation, and so on. I have no problem with that.

10.20 p.m.

Again, I prefer an approach where there is consultation. Now, the Minister of Finance is really speaking in his native tongue, which is economic pressure. That is, what we expect from him, and that is how he has performed all through the years. This is what we know him to be. So, this is what the population is getting now. I have no problem at all but, as I said, we need to have some communication on it. There must be transparency and there must not be the continual hoodwinking that you all are used to, the deceit, and the double-crossing. [*Desk thumping*] Because, on one hand, you are putting this additional burden on businesses—and I said I have no problem with it, but on one hand that is the approach you are taking. On the other hand, the Prime Minister is announcing free water and free electricity to other people. So, in some measure, I would say that these business people are in fact financing your election campaign. You are taking from one and giving to the other.—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: That is Robin Hood.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: That is the Robin Hood approach, I understand. But, it is your usual electioneering approach to doing things. What these businesses are doing is financing your UNC campaign, but this is how you are; it is always a campaign of KUIP, keep us in power. That is how you do your business.

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So, as I said, these are the kinds of questions that we want answered by the Minister. Let us just admit that we are not happy. The public is not happy. The water supply under this UNC Government has in fact gotten worse. [*Desk thumping*] The water supply has gotten worse and I do not wish to talk about what happened under the PNM. You are accountable, you are in office. You have been in office almost two years now, and the supply of water has gotten worse under you. And, on top of that, you are increasing rates and also you are on your disconnection drive. This is what you are about, that is a fact.

There is another question that I want answered by you, Mr. Minister. It is the question of your authority to increase the water improvement rate. Yes, that was given to you in—I think it was 1998, I believe. Yes, you have the authority to do it, but at the time that was done, there was no Regulated Industries Commission in place and the Public Utilities Commission had been done away with and I question whether or not; this is the right way to do things; whether you should be setting the rate, especially when there are all of these allegations of corruption surrounding WASA and the Desalcott issue, and that kind of thing.

I do not think that you are the one who should be doing it and I really would like you to bring to the Parliament some kind of legislation where we can vest that authority in the RIC instead. They are already vested with the authority to look at the commercial rate. Why then do we not allow them to look at the entire rate as it is? As a matter of fact, there should only be one rate because you have not come up with a proper justification to continue that water improvement rate. You are not giving them any value for money; you have just pulled this rate out of the hat. So, I really do believe that we need to look at some legislation, where the Minister will not have the authority to raise the rate and it will vest in the RIC and that, I believe, is going to be above board, and that I consider to be accountability and transparency—not just the Minister coming up with a rate after his consultations with members of Desalcott. We do not even know who these people are. So, I really would like you all to consider that. Minister, may I have your views on that?

There has been some talk about—and certainly the Member for La Brea spoke about the south-west peninsula and how terrible the situation is there. Minister, you have the statistics. The statistics are available in your office, as well as the Central Statistical Office. Some of the areas hardest hit, in terms of water and poverty, definitely in terms of water, is the south-western peninsula. Yet, you have come here and you have listed a whole lot of places, a whole lot of improvement, when 70 per cent or 80 per cent of them are in UNC areas alone.

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The statistics are there. The attention needs to be given to the areas that need the attention the most, and I saying that the south-western peninsula is one of them. Your statistics will tell you that. I am not begging, but the point is you have not paid any attention to it, and I will tell you what I am talking about.

It is going to get even worse when any further businesses come to the Union Estate. I am wondering then what the supply for the residents is going to be. I am all pro-business, but at the same time, it is not going to be at the expense of the residents of my constituency, absolutely not. I am very disappointed in the lack of attention to the water situation in Point Fortin— very, very disappointed.

You and I, we have both talked, about the desalination plant in Point Fortin. Five plants were commissioned, they were paid for under the last PNM administration, and when you came into office you met them there. In the last budget, you clearly stated that these plants were ready. So, I am awaiting these plants to be commissioned, but it is now two years, almost two years, for equipment that had already arrived in Trinidad and Tobago that you cannot yet commission the plant for Point Fortin, and that is unsatisfactory.

We have talked as well about the La Fortune Water Treatment Plant and you said—I believe there is some question of sedimentation. And, you and I again, we both spoke about this, but again two years have elapsed and you need to actually tell us what is happening with that La Fortune Water Treatment Plant.

Jattan Trace—you are comparing us with Egypt, well I am talking about a place in Egypt. Lines were laid, we laid those lines. You finished them up when you came in, leading up to Jattan Trace, which is on a hill. To this day we are not getting a water supply, not a drop of water is going up to the top of Jattan Trace, and that is not acceptable.

I was down in Icacos on Sunday with the Member for Caroni Central. I was accosted by someone down there. Icacos has not had water for three weeks. Christmas was a disaster. I have given people my telephone number and I try my best. There are very good people in WASA, very good technocrats and very good management people there. Not everyone is unfit to be working in WASA, and they do try to help, but it is disastrous. Christmas was just unacceptable. I understand that, while things are put on the right foot, you are going to have to live with a schedule. And, I have asked WASA—I myself have called their communications department—they have given me the schedules, but you are not keeping to the schedules, and what you are finding is that people are paying \$250, \$200 for a

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load of water. Some of them are very helpful if I call them directly, but I cannot be fielding calls between constituents and WASA on a daily basis, given the enormity of the problem that is there.

So, I am saying that it is not good enough. If you know that we are not up to par or up to a decent level, at least in the meantime work with a fixed schedule. Mike it. Let the people know what the fixed schedule is and what days they would be coming. But it is not happening; I can tell you. Do not shake your head, because I have called and I have gotten—[*Interruption*]

Hon. George: “Is my head, I could shake it.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, the point about it is they are not keeping up with the schedule and it is very difficult sometimes to get water all the time. Really, we need to find some solutions for this.

I do not want to stay much longer, but I do want to examine what you really have done since you came into office. I have looked at the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) document for 2012 and what you have in fact done. And you spoke about resources of \$169 million being spent from an IDF facility of \$176 million for facilities, for projects in 2011. And you said that these activities focused on new installations and upgrading of pipelines and pumps, and so on. But again, I am not seeing the difference and the Member for La Brea has not seen the difference, and we in the south-west peninsula have not seen the difference. We have not benefited from this \$169 million.

Even the Water Sector Modernization Programme that you embarked upon, we have not gotten that. And again, you talked about the money spent on the desalination plant, the potable-water treatment plants. We have not benefited from that at all, at all, at all. I said, you people are just not serious. You just do not have any vision for WASA at all—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: You people?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Sorry about “you people”, but your Government just seems not to be serious. I go to your glossy. This is your document the “Innovation for Lasting Prosperity”, which is supposed to measure up to our Vision 2020 document and which has failed miserably, and this is what you have spent on it. This is what you have spent on it. Actually, there is one paragraph in this on WASA and it is very general, and it talks about wanting to supply water 24/7 and construction of new reservoirs and that kind of thing and achieving

financial sustainability. But, there is actually no plan in this document that was done by Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie; very disappointing of him, I expected better from him.

If anyone goes to it—I would like the Minister to have a look at what we have done in terms of our Vision 2020—and you go to Goal 3, you can see the list that we have put there. You can see the objectives that we have listed. You will also read of the reality of the situation which we have acknowledged. So, it is not about any pie in the sky objectives, at all. It talks about the upgrading and replacement of the water distribution network, and we were doing it. It talks about extending the water distribution network to rural communities, and we were doing it as well. But, we also noted where we were, in terms of water availability. We were very realistic. We were not hoodwinking at all. We were dealing with the truth and all developing countries have their problems. The point about it is that we were attending to it and you are not doing it now. You are not attending to the rural areas that are serviced by the PNM, that is a fact, and you cannot tell me any differently.

I was looking at the Trinidad and Tobago Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3 and some of the reports by UNICEF, and they speak to the fact that 96.4 per cent of the population had some improved source of water. But, do you know what they also spoke about here? There are a number of people that are still taking water from standpipes, still looking for rain water and still collecting rain water. And, I am saying that you are there, you have been there for almost two years and you are doing nothing about it, absolutely nothing about it. [*Desk thumping*] That is a fact.

The unaccounted water—you have not touched on the whole question of unaccounted water. Trinidad and Tobago has all the water that it needs but most of it is unaccounted. You have not touched on the question of leaks and how you are dealing with it. I want to point out to you—Amery! [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, between the period 2006—2010, the percentage of unaccounted water did decrease from 71 per cent to 55 per cent and this is under the PNM. And these are the things that I would want you to recognize. The percentage of population with access to 24/7 water supply increased from 16 per cent in 2006, to 36 per cent in 2010. The percentage of the population with access to potable water, as well, increased from 92 per cent to 95 per cent between the period 2006—2010. That is in the Vision 2020 document. So, you must have a look at our achievements and what we are doing, and see if you can mirror that. What you should be doing is coming up with some proposals. [*Interruption*] May I have your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members from both sides of the House, and especially those Members sitting next to you, Member for Point Fortin, the *Hansard* reporters are having, really, a difficult time in recording. So, let us pay attention to Standing Order 40(a), (b) and (c) and allow the Member for Point Fortin to speak in silence, please.

10.35 p.m.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you. As I said, the Government has not come up with any proposals, they have not offered anything on the table today. They have said nothing about the water that is unaccounted for, the water that is in the ground; nothing about that. They have said nothing about the whole question of replacing the pipe sizes and all the pipes that have aged and are corroded. The Member has said nothing about that and this is how this Government intends to operate, just by muddling and pottering about. So he has come here with an Order, muddling and pottering about, and that is just the way that they are and this is how they do their business.

There is no strategic overview for WASA. We have not gotten that from you. We did not get it now and we did not get it in the budget. [*Interruption and crosstalk*] You are in office, you are accountable, you are the Government. We gave you stability, you know. When we came in here, we gave you stability. You knew where we were and we knew where we were. We gave you stability, and what did you give us in return? Experimentation. That is all that you have been doing here in the last two years almost. You have just been experimenting. [*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: That is right.

Dr. Browne: They are an experiment.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: —with the financial circumstances with the country, with the business community, with the public utilities service and with national security. That is what you have been being doing since you have been in office, just simply experimenting. [*Desk thumping*] There has just been no strategic management—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: None. No leadership.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: No objectives, no policies, no leadership as you are saying as well. [*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: No leader.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am very, very disappointed in the performance, in terms of the Government as a whole. But also, hon. Minister, you should have contextualized your approach to us this evening because you know the situation that you have to deal with. You have to justify and you have to come better than that. You just cannot come and slap it on the business community and on the population like that, and we are expecting more from you in terms of increases and taxation as well.

Dr. Browne: This should be “Jack Warner and his Government”.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I will tell you something, this does not end. You may come here, yes, you are getting the money, we are agreeing with you from the point of view that we cannot see that the Government should subsidize businesses to the tune of \$26 million. Generally, we are not going to agree with that fit. But, the point about it is: that does not solve WASA’s problems; it does not deal with it. And, therefore, when you came to us today, I expected you to contextualize it and address some kind of strategy as to your management of this whole WASA exercise.

As I end, I am really cutting short my contribution. I did intend to go to my full time, but, as I end, I want to re-emphasize the attention needed for Point Fortin in particular, and also WASA. I expect that desalination plant to be commissioned. I want to hear something about Jattan Trace, and the pipes that have been laid, and the fact that there is still no water. I want to hear about the La Fortune Water Treatment Plant as well. There are many outstanding matters that need attention.

There was one matter that annoyed me quite much this afternoon. I think it came from the Member for Oropouche East, and somebody else had echoed it. I mean, you all thought that this was a big joke, this question of corralling cattle and killing cattle and so on, and that is very, disappointing coming from you all. You came here and you laughed over that matter when, in fact, these people are so dependent on the whole issue of cattle rearing. It is a poor area. I do not know if you all have become, all of a sudden, so presumptuous and your positions are now—there is some level of arrogance. But, the point about it is, I could hardly believe myself when you laughed about this cattle situation in Icacos. The matter is an outrageous one, it needs attention, and the hon. Minister has finally conceded and all that you have come here to do. You have forgotten your past. Many of you have your families who have come from a past like that, where you owned heifers and so on. *[Interruption]*

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Yes, I think it is a proud thing to own animals. [*Crosstalk*] I myself—it is rooted in my past—I remember my family pulling in cattle at six o'clock in the evening, milking goats and that kind of thing. I remember that—milking goats, collecting eggs—[*Laughter*] but you have come here today with your arrogance and you are laughing at the way that the people of Cedros are earning a living. Instead of coming with solutions, that is what you have done. It is shameful, it is disgusting, it shows that you have forgotten your past, but it may very well be what you have to go back to in the very short term.

I am very, very disappointed in you all. Shame on you for laughing at the Cedros and Icacos people over this cattle issue.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there anyone else who would like to join the debate? [*Interruption and crosstalk*] Hon. Members, when the Speaker is on his legs, there must be complete silence of the House, please. Read the Standing Orders if you are not familiar with them. Is there anyone else who would like to participate in this debate?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In making my jottings, I had decided that I would start with the last set of jottings first, meaning that I would have liked to start by commenting on the contribution of the Member for Point Fortin, but what a very disappointing contribution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here is the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, all of sudden, lecturing. She knows all of the ills of WASA and what we should be doing. She said that I said nothing in my discourse this afternoon about unaccounted-for water, I said nothing about how we are going to deal with leaks, the water improvement rate does not solve WASA's problems, I need to contextualize the argument, and a whole set of preaching and preaching, suggesting to me that she seems to have all the answers. Well, if the Member had all the answers, why did she not tell the two former Ministers of Public Utilities that were under her government? But, the Member suddenly comes here and knows all of the answers. I am very disappointed.

Here we are debating a Motion having to do with the water improvement rate on the Point Lisas Estate for industries located in Point Lisas. It really has nothing to do with how we deal with leaks and how we deal with unaccounted-for water. Whenever I speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I try to focus on the point, and I try to say what I have to say as concisely as I can. You will seldom find me beating

around the bush and trying to make up time in a contribution because I have to speak for an hour. If what I have to say would take half an hour, I would say what I have to say in half an hour. If the arguments that I have to present are contained in five or six points, you would not hear me making 10 points and 12 points. That is how I am. So, the Member is completely irrelevant to speak about me not having focused on unaccounted-for water, and dealing with the leaks, and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say that these matters—if the Member for Point Fortin were attentive—she would have heard me speak about these on many occasions. So, I wanted to say something, hoping that she would say something substantial that you could comment on, and there was nothing.

The Member for Point Fortin said that it is a rather big jump to increase the water improvement rate from \$4.00 to \$8.50, but the Member should be ashamed because the reason we have to make such a big jump—and I do not think it is a big jump, that is my feeling—is that for 13 years, this rate has not been increased, and for eight of those years they were in power and did nothing about it. If they had done something then you could have increased “chirrip-chirrip”, as we say in local palance, so that over time, the increase would not have been so large and maybe it should have been easier. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Point Fortin, you had your chance. You had 75 minutes of which you could have spoken. You chose to take 35 minutes—[*Interruption*] Hon. Member, I am on my legs—allow the Minister of Public Utilities to speak in silence, please. Read Standing Order 40(b) and (c). Familiarize yourself with it, so that you would know that the Member has a right to speak in silence.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you very much for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, I was saying if, in the normal course of things, this water improvement rate had been attended to over time by those who were in power at the time, then it would not have required this large increase that we are seeking to institute at this time. So, I would think that the MP is being a bit disingenuous to refer to the issue of the water improvement rate as being too large.

Another matter that the Member for Point Fortin referred to was whether the Point Lisas companies were being made to pay for all of the water produced by

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Desalcott, even though many companies external to the estate were consuming water. Mr. Speaker, the companies that consume water from the desalination plant, and which are located on the Point Lisas compound, and which fall under this water improvement rate, pay for water that they have consumed and they are all metred, and they pay for the water that passes through that meter; the water that they use. So firms that are external to the estate do not come into the picture at all. It is so obvious, it is common sense. So, I could not understand why the Member would want to say that the companies external to the Point Lisas Industrial estate receive a benefit that is funded by the companies within the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

Again, Mr. Speaker, apparently the Member for Point Fortin was not listening when I introduced the Motion, because I did point to several projects that were being undertaken by WASA that would improve and secure the water supply to the companies on the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. I referred to—and I would not repeat myself, but I will go back to one of them that I referred to—the dualling of the Caroni South Trunk Main for which there is an allocation of, I think, a little over \$200 million in this year’s budget to undertake, and which WASA is taking steps to implement. I think, at this time, tenders had been put out for the purchase of the pipes to undertake that project. There are other projects that were identified under this heading, but I would not go into it. I think that the Member needs to listen when other people are speaking.

I want to go to the Member of Parliament for La Brea where—[*Interruption*]

10.50 p.m.

Hon. Member: Move right along.

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—he spoke about—one other thing before I go to the MP for La Brea. I want to refer to the MP for Point Fortin. The desalination plant for which the former government signed a contract, which is to be established just outside of Point Fortin and it is supposed to supply the water needs of those areas that are water starved between La Brea and Cedros, I want to say why that is not in operation as yet. And it falls to this reason: the site which was earmarked for establishing that plant is an old former oil well. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “What ah shame!”

Sen. The Hon. E. George: So, when this Government came in and decided to continue with that particular desal project, we discovered that this was a shortcoming, and the EMA will not give you a certificate of environmental

clearance on that. We had to cap the well, because a well, it is said, could always explode if you do not cap it properly. So, I think they had to put concrete and so on to cap the well. It took some several months before that could be completed, and that was one of the reasons that plant is still under operation. There were other reasons having to do with obtaining other permits. We are at the point now where the matter is before the Cabinet and we expect that those—I think there are two permits that have to be obtained under the aegis of the Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs, that is now before Cabinet and once those two permits are granted, then the construction work can begin at that plant. So, it is unfair and peddling in misinformation to simply say that we are responsible for that plant not being in operation. The capping of that well was a very critical issue in getting that project off the ground.

I turn now to my good friend, the Member for La Brea. I would spend very little time on his thing because he focused on muddy water coming to his constituents' pipes late at night. I simply want to ask him—the Member understands that La Brea is at the extremity of the WASA system. Most of the water that is produced by WASA is produced in the north and has to be piped to the south. As it is piped to the south, there are off takes going to all of the areas in between. So, by the time it gets to La Brea, there is very little left in the line and the constituents do not get. That is why you would get at night, because at night, many of the consumers along the route would be sleeping and would have turned off their taps; that is why you get in the night. That is a fact of the infrastructure and the production facilities that WASA has, and we all know that. So, to make an issue of that is again being a little disingenuous, to use a clichéd term.

He referred flippantly to the fact that this Government was in power 1995—2001, and we had a thing about “Water For All,” and so on, and it was never achieved. And I am saying to him, the reason that was never achieved and was not achieved “up to now” is because the PNM government came in that intervening period for eight years and did virtually nothing [*Desk thumping*] to pursue the target of water for all.

He referred to the issue of free water and the Prime Minister was referring to free water and free electricity to older persons and said that the bus pass and the free travel to Tobago on the boat was something that the PNM first instituted. Okay, but this is par for the course because I recall, Mr. Speaker, that the government for the period 1995—2002 introduced the Dollar for Dollar Programme where they funded 50 per cent of the tuition fees of students going to UWI taking tertiary education. And the PNM government came in, changed the

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name to GATE, funded it 100 per cent and claimed all of the praise. So, to say that this Government has brought down the age for free travel to Tobago to 60 years and 65 years, and so on, and that the PNM government was the first to introduce—that is a moot point. I mean, come on, we could focus on more serious things than that.

The other issue that he spoke to was the fact that 95 per cent of the projects—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Minister, Minister, I believe there is a—I do not know if it is a love affair, I do not know how to describe it, but I want to ask both the Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, if they have an affair that they want to start, go behind the Chair of the Speaker—[*Laughter*]—but do not disturb this House, please. This stream of discussion that is taking place across the floor is unacceptable. So, please! Please! Hon. Member, could you continue?

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did not know that all of that was taking place right under my nose. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: “I believe is “de” water. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Yes. The Member for La Brea said that 95 per cent of the projects are being done in People’s Partnership Government constituencies. Mr. Speaker, you would recall that I produced a document in which I said that 87 projects were completed over the financial year 2010—2011, and they were spread throughout the country. So, I mean, if I said that and I have the document and I read examples from it, I feel he is just being a bit—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “He short, he short on content.”

Sen. The Hon. E. George:—well, I do not want to say mischievous, but he is perhaps displaying that he was not paying attention when I was speaking, and I will put it so, euphemistically, to say that he was not listening to me.

The MP for St. Ann’s East tried to say that I was the Permanent Secretary then in charge. That is a point very similar to the one that was raised by my good friend, the Member for La Brea, having to do with what happened with Water For All between 1995—2000. And again, I simply say that the PNM came in between and stopped everything.

The Member for St. Ann's East referred to the fact that there are many, many poor people and things are not getting down to them and so on. The response to that is simply if she was listening to the Prime Minister's discourse last Tuesday at Rienzi, she would have heard the Prime Minister speak about certain improvements under the Utilities Assistance Programme, where persons in receipt of public assistance and receiving pensions, and who fall under an income level that is determined by the Ministry of the People and Social Development—which is an income level that is very low—will have the additional benefit of having their water rates and electricity bills met by the Government. The Prime Minister did say—when she was speaking of that issue—and I want to quote from what she said:

“We are in discussions with the Minister of Public Utilities on giving further support to our less fortunate and elderly population and persons who are disabled and those in receipt of public assistance,”

Now, the reason for saying: “We are in discussions with the Minister of Public Utilities...” is that the Utilities Assistance Programme was instituted in December 2010, and it was agreed that after one year, we would review the programme. So, we are currently—December last was one year after instituting the programme—looking to see to what extent we could improve on it to benefit more persons.

So, that is why the Prime Minister, in her discourse, said: “We are in discussions with the Minister of Public Utilities...” So, we are still looking at it, and we will, in due course, come to the population with a programme that gives effect to the Prime Minister's statement that “...our less fortunate and elder population and persons who are disabled and in receipt of public assistance...” and fall under the Utilities Assistance Programme will receive additional benefits—

The MP for St. Ann's East also asked: “Why did Mr. Andrew Smith leave WASA?” I had spoken about this already, but I will repeat it again. I would not come before this House, Mr. Speaker, and say anything that is not true, because I know the implications of doing so. So, let me say what happened in respect of the departure of Mr. Andrew Smith from WASA.

He was procured by the then Water and Sewerage Authority, under the aegis of the then government, in April 2010. On May 24, this Government came into power. As Minister, I met with him, we spoke and we had a working relationship. He would do his work, I would speak with him, and so on. Then, one day, he sent me an email saying that he wanted to see me, so I said: “okay, come in.” He came

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into my office, sat down and said to me: "I know that this is a new Government that has come in, and I feel that I should give this Government a chance to determine who they want as CEO in WASA and, therefore, I am offering to leave." That is the truth. That is exactly what happened, and they could believe me, "dey could eh believe meh, dat is de truth." That was how Mr. Andrew Smith came to leave WASA. I accepted his resignation. We agreed on a separation package, and that is how he left. It had nothing to do with us pushing him out or asking him to go, and I want to disabuse the minds of anybody who believes otherwise. I close on that point in respect of the MP for St. Ann's East.

The MP for Laventille West opened by asking whether there was a request before the RIC to increase the water rate across the board in Trinidad and Tobago. Because, in the view of the MP for Laventille West, the increase in the water improvement rate was a forerunner to an increase in the rates generally for water, for the general population. I want to say that the RIC is the agency established to deal with rate determination for the Water and Sewerage Authority and for T&TEC, and the RIC in its wisdom will determine those rates and it would not be influenced by the Government; it is an independent agency. It has been established since 2000, I think, and it has done rate increases for T&TEC since then. In respect of WASA, however, there has not been a rate increase for domestic and commercial users since 1993.

May I take the opportunity also to say this: there is a suggestion on the part of the Members of the Opposition that this Government promised the population it would introduce no new taxes or would not increase taxes; however, an increase in the water rate is an increase in tax.

11.05 p.m.

Now I want to say this, Mr. Speaker: if you go to any dictionary or any book on economics, it will tell you that a water rate is not a tax. Anything that is a tax has "tax" on the end of it; for example, income tax, land and building tax, departure tax, motor vehicle tax, value added tax. It has "tax" after it. The last word in it is "tax". I could not believe the level of ignorance about what is a tax and what is not a tax. Everybody knows this, so it is just mischievous to come here and say that it is a tax. Come on!

Go to any dictionary; speak to any ordinary person who knows economics or accounting and they will tell you. Go to the people in the income tax department and they will tell you, free of charge I am certain, that any tax has the word "tax" after it.

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I repeat: income tax, value added tax, motor vehicle tax, land and building tax. Water rate is not a tax. Do not try to sell the population, by misinformation, that this Government is increasing any tax on the population if the water rate increases. The water rate goes completely to WASA. A tax goes into the Government's Consolidated Fund.

He goes on and on about perceived corruption. It appears that those on the Opposition Bench want to repeat and repeat something to the point where they believe it themselves and they feel that the population will believe it. I want to say something. I want to say to them that there is an old quotation that a lie gets halfway around the world before truth gets a chance to put its pants on; and that is exactly what is happening here. A lie gets halfway around the world before truth gets a chance to put its pants on.

Before I forget, I want to refer to something here along that very line. Mr. Speaker, you know I love my music and I cannot seem to let it go even though I wear a very different hat as I stand speaking here. One will recall, a couple of years ago, that there was a tune by Fay-Ann Lyons and Bunji Garlin. The tune was named *Red, White and Black*. I will not sing it here; I will simply embarrass myself because I have no voice for singing. It was also called *Three Colours* and it featured David Rudder. In that song, there was a voice-over of Dr. Eric Williams saying these words:

“Bacchanal and confusion cannot be the foundation of an orderly society.”

It was about three or four years, Bunji Garlin and Fay-Ann Lyons, and it featured David Rudder. Those of us who are into music will remember it. It was a calypso. Three years ago.

Bacchanal and confusion cannot be the foundation for an orderly society. All that I heard from that side today was just bacchanal and confusion; [*Desk thumping*] completely contrary to what their founding father and the father of this nation, Dr. Eric Williams, said.

I want to continue the quotation because I want to give the full quotation of Dr. Eric Williams on this:

“I have much pleasure in sending you this message today.”—He is addressing the population.—“Strive for excellence in character in the great virtues such as truthfulness, obedience and honesty, so that under God, our nation will produce worthy citizens.”

Here is where the part comes in.

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“Bacchanal and confusion cannot be the foundation of an orderly society.”

All I have heard from that side today, Mr. Speaker, is bacchanal and confusion. I think they should go back and read Dr. Eric Williams’ first statement when he made that speech because they come here and we are moving a Motion to deal with the problems that WASA is experiencing regarding its finances—it is in a really, really bad way and we are seeking to try to extricate it from that situation by taking little steps to ensure that over time WASA will become a financially viable entity—and all we hear from that side are issues of bacchanal and confusion; talking about the people in Fondes Amandes who are squatting on WASA’s land and WASA trying to remove them.

Of course, the MP for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West—my good friend and colleague, the hon. Member for Caroni East, dealt with her fully. So, I do not have to deal with the confusion and the fear that she was trying to create in the minds of the population. We, have been drinking this water for so many years, including the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West. As I said, the Member for Caroni East dealt with her adequately.

The Member of Parliament for Arouca/Maloney—I am sorry she is not here—but she spoke about the Corruption Perception Index, transparency, the promises, the old issue of no increase in taxes and here we are coming again to increase the tax on the population—in her ignorance, not knowing that this is a water improvement rate and not a tax. She spoke about this Government not keeping its promises, WASA increasing its rates for services and inspection and so on. Come on! It is so very insignificant, those comments.

Now I come to my good friend and Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Keith Rowley, who seems to have a phobia—that is all I can call it—with Mr. Ganga Singh; always trying—What is the term my good friend and Leader of Government Business in the House used?—to drown him; to push his head under the water and drown him.

This issue of the desalination plant, its establishment and the supposed bid-rigging and so on, people seem to feel that the police unit that was involved in that—What was its name? It was Mr. Lindquist and the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau—that they were infallible. Who said that Mr. Lindquist is infallible? He is the Pope? Suppose now his findings are erroneous? Suppose the Anti-Corruption Bureau’s findings are “dem say” and “dey say” and that is the reason why the court in New York threw out what they were presenting as the basis for attempting to extradite the gentleman.

That entire report is full of “dem say” and “dey say”. That is all it is. I am going to say this: when that matter first broke, I was PS in the Ministry and part of the entire team. I was at home. It was around the news time in the evening. I was sitting and I heard now—MP for Diego Martin West saying on the television—there was a clip of his statement in the House about the issue of bid-rigging and Ganga Singh and so on. I listened to it and immediately I picked up the phone and called his then campaign manager, a wonderful lady named Jackie Lazarus. We all knew one other; we used to be fêting and so on. I picked up the phone and said, “Jackie, but whey Keith going with this?” Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, but I am trying to give it to you exactly as it happened. “Whey Keith going with this? I am in the Ministry there. There is no issue having to do with corruption and bid-rigging in this thing; nothing to do with that because I am there; I am seeing it and all the things come across my desk.”

Her response to me was: “Why you ain call Keith and tell him.” When I put down the phone, I said to myself, “Emmanuel, that is politicians. You are a PS; you just stay out of that, and that is the reason I never called him on it. I have listened to this thing take wings and be running there for the last how many years and up to now the goodly Leader of the Opposition has never brought a single piece of evidence to corroborate what he is saying.

It is typical because there are many more recent occasions when he said things for which he has brought absolutely no evidence and, in some cases, they have been thrown out. I will use just one. He said that the Attorney General went to New York, to the Embassy there, and used racist—I do not want to misquote, but abused the people there, in a manner of speaking, when nothing like that happened.

I am saying that all of this issue is just a lot of “dem say” and “dey say”. The Anti-Corruption Bureau and Lindquist went about ferreting out, but you can always have people saying this and that about one another. The thing is whether it is true or not. I repeat: the court in New York threw it out when the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, represented by the then DPP, I think, tried to present this supposed information and unsound information to the courts there as the basis for extraditing the gentleman. The court said: “O-o-o wit dat” and dismissed it. There was no basis at all for it.

There is a lot more that can be said about that, but I am simply saying that I consider that all of the public servants and the senior Government officials on that team who were looking into the presentation and tenders that came in, were of impeccable integrity. I will repeat it. In my view as PS then—and I continue to

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hold that view now because nothing has been brought to shake that view—all of the people involved in that process, all of the public officials and the officials who worked in private institutions but formed that group of people who were reviewing those bids, were of impeccable integrity. [*Desk thumping*]

11.20 p.m.

Just a couple of things, before I reinforce the points I came with. Member for La Brea, the construction of the South/Oropouche Booster Station has been completed. Just for the information of the MP for La Brea, construction of the South/Oropouche Booster Station has been completed and is soon be commissioned. This station started since 2004 under the previous administration and was completed recently.

Testing has shown that schedules will be improved to five days per week from one day per week. Further benefits will be realized when the Point Fortin Desalination Plant is completed. This will benefit the areas of La Brea, Vance River, Cochrane, Quarry and the Palo Seco/Erin Station and it should be fully functional—this is the South/Oropouche Booster—by February 2012.

Mr. Jeffrey: Would you give way?

Sen. The Hon. E. George: No, no. People want to go home. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Well said.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: In respect of the Member for Laventille West, I am advised to inform him that WASA is currently obtaining approvals from relevant agencies. He said I wrote him a letter where I said we are “considering” and he does not like “considering”. He wants something more definite and “he gallery and geh on and so on”. I am saying to him, WASA is currently obtaining approvals from relative agencies for the replacement of the pipeline along the Old St. Joseph Road. Work is targeted to commence in March 2012. This will address the water supply situation in Prizgar Lands.

So when I wrote him the letter and said that since November we have been working on it and we are considering it, it means that we have done some work since that time. Any MP that writes me or communicates with me, I take their communication seriously, whether they are on the Opposition Bench or on this Bench, because I am aware that they represent constituents, and under this People’s Partnership Government, my remit is to improve the water supply to the people of Trinidad and Tobago with no discrimination. [*Desk thumping*]

I said in my discourse that I am not Mandrake. For the young people here, they may not know who Mandrake was, but Mandrake was a magician.

Mr. Sharma: The Member for La Brea knows.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: The Member for Couva North may not know. [Laughter] Mandrake was a magician. You know a magician could wave a wand, and everything will become very nice, pleasant, lovely and heavenly for everybody. In this business here, I am not Mandrake; I am simply the Minister of Public Utilities working through an agency, WASA, to get water to the population.

I want to say this again: I take no praise for work that WASA has done, although all the negatives in WASA—all the bad things—every single leak around this country belongs to me. I take responsibility for all the leaks and all the bad things, but all the praise for the good work that has been undertaken by WASA goes to all of the workers in WASA [*Desk thumping*] who took the time and effort to fix the people in Covigne Road; to fix the people in Abbe Poujade; and to fix the people who are benefiting from the Navet Trunk Main. All the workers in WASA who worked on these projects, they are the ones who one needs to pay all the tributes to and give all the praise. All the licks, put it on me. I am taking all the licks, but I do not want any praise, please, but the licks, put it on. I will consume the licks, MP for Point Fortin.

The MP for Laventille West referred to Akbar and my information here is that they have been awarded this contract by WASA. It is a firm of international repute and it has experience in managing successful water companies. Its special focus is on institutional projects in developed and developing countries where they are reputed for quick turnaround strategies in crisis management of the companies. It is also said here that the company changed its name to Agua Just Solutions SA when the contract was signed. That is for the MP for Laventille West.

The MP for Arouca/Maloney referred to a leak at the 18-mile mark at the Naparima Mayaro Road and it was repaired today. That is the problem where the MP read from the newspaper she called an editorial. Mr. Speaker, the MP for Arouca/Maloney also referred to a problem at La Horquetta and Maloney and that problem—I am aware of it because the North Oropouche Water Treatment Plant Pump went out of service and had to be repaired and it took some time doing that.

The problem at Barrackpore around January 03, 2012 which the MP also referred to was a problem that existed for only a short period due to a leak on the transmission line and the problem persisted for about one week but was repaired.

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Mr. Speaker, many of these waterlines in WASA's transmission and distribution infrastructure are aged. My good friend, the Member for La Brea, referred to the Maraval Plant being put in in 1873. I believe that there are still lines from that date existing there, and one wonders about the condition of those lines. The Hollis line was put in in the early 1930s and commissioned in 1936, and that line is also leaking profusely, and there are many aged lines throughout the country. This will mean that there are going to be leaks appearing consistently, but we have a programme, contrary to what the MP for Point Fortin indicated, for changing all these lines over time. Again, I want to say, I am not Mandrake. I cannot wave a wand and change all the lines. The lines will take time to be changed. During that time, this poor infrastructure is going to give us some problems with respect to service for water.

When we lose a big line, like an 18-inch coming out of Valencia at the Hollis Dam and coming near the Aranguéz Savannah, and we have to shut down the water there to change that 18-inch line, people will have their service interrupted. The lines are bad. It did not happen overnight. These lines have been there for quite some time. So I am saying to the population, we are still going to have some problems and stresses having to do with our water supply.

Our Achilles heel in the water sector is the condition of the transmission and distribution lines. That is our weak point, and that is what we are trying to fix as we speak. It will not happen overnight, but I assure the population and all MPs on both sides of the House that WASA is doing its best to change all these lines as quickly as it can.

I just want to say before I close—because I know that people want to go home—that I want to refer again to the points that I raised in my address earlier today in which I argued the case for the increase in the water improvement water rate from \$4 to \$8.50 and that increase will mean an overall increase in the total charge—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. C. Sharma*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: Thank you very much colleagues on both sides for giving me an extension. I would not take the full time. I am simply summing up

the arguments I presented in making this case for the increase in the water improvement rate. I indicated that the desalination plant was established primarily to serve the Point Lisas industrial plants, and that the initial water improvement rate was instituted to ensure that the plant could function and provide water to the Point Lisas companies.

I argued that WASA is in dire financial straits and should not be called upon to subsidize the Point Lisas companies. I also argued that the water improvement rate has not been increased for 13 years and that by itself, given an inflation figure that would have increased by about 109 per cent since then, that alone is a signal that we have to deal with the water improvement rate for companies.

We also discussed the matter with the representatives of the Point Lisas companies and we will continue to be in discussion with the Point Lisas companies with a view to seeing how the whole issue of the supply of water to the companies on the Point Lisas Estate could be improved, and that they will continue to be viable and competitive companies.

We indicated that the Government subsidizes WASA to the tune of about \$1.8 billion this year. We argued that the contribution of this water improvement rate to the cost to the various companies operating in Point Lisas will be minimal and we do not expect that it will seriously affect the competitiveness of those companies.

We argued that WASA's cost of operation has been increasing consistently over time, and that in 2008 it was \$2.1 million, moving from \$1.6 million in 2000. One of my colleagues, the Member for Caroni East, did mention that in 2000 a study was done, and then a VSEP was done following up on that study, and the study was to determine the numbers in terms of employees that a water utility like WASA should have and be able to function efficiently, and that study threw up a figure of 2,033 employees.

When the PNM was voted out of power in May of 2010 the numbers—I repeat this over and over, because it is such an important figure. What that government did, at that time, was to put an albatross around WASA's neck by increasing and virtually more than doubling WASA's wage bill. The number of employees moved from 2,033 to 4,800-plus.

Hon. Member: PNM party groups.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: What were those 2,800 more people doing in WASA? Nobody knows because the water service to the population did not improve. Why were these employees put in WASA?

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11.35 p.m.

In 2002 to 2010, when the PNM government was in power, I was not the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities. I hope you wake up and hear that. I want to repeat that over the period 2002 to 2010, when the PNM government came into power, I was not the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Then where were you?

Sen. the Hon. E. George: Please! “Doh worry” where I was, go and check. If you have the information, go and check. I am not going to help you. If you are brave enough to say that I was Permanent Secretary then, well go ahead and say it. You all do not check your information. You come here and just open your mouth on people.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to close now, but I wanted to say, we protect our own integrity with a passion; our own character and integrity, we do not want anybody to say anything about us, but we are always very callous about the other person’s integrity and character—very callous. That is never important to us but we protect ours. If anyone says anything, we are very quick to respond and protect our own integrity.

I am saying that all of us have to protect each other’s integrity. Your integrity must be as important to you as the other person’s. So that when you come here and say that I was PS in the Ministry, check your facts before you say that, please.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by saying that this Motion on the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate)(Variation) Order, 2011, is being brought—and I have argued the case—to assist WASA in continuing to provide a secure water service to the Point Lisas companies. I want to state that the money that will be saved from subsidizing the Point Lisas companies could now go towards improving the service to WASA’s wider population of customers, but also, to the Point Lisas companies. All of us, as Members of this Parliament, are interested in improving the lives of the population.

Mr. Peters: That is what you feel, not them.

Sen. The Hon. E. George: On that basis, I am sure that we will all support this Motion as being one that will benefit the entire population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

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Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Water Improvement Rate (Point Lisas Industrial Estate)(Variation) Order, 2011 be approved.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, February 08, 2012 at 1.30 p.m., and to serve notice on the Opposition that it is the intention of the Government to debate through all its stages the Finance Bill, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 11.46 p.m.